Chapter 43

The Good Old Summer-time

All through the summer the crowd of ragged-trousered philanthropists continued to toil and sweat at their noble and unselfish task of making money for Mr Rushton.

Painting the outsides of houses and shops, washing off and distempering ceilings, stripping old paper off walls, painting and papering rooms and staircases, building new rooms or other additions to old houses or business premises, digging up old drains, repairing leaky roofs and broken windows.

Their zeal and enthusiasm in the good cause was unbounded. They were supposed to start work at six o'clock, but most of them were usually to be found waiting outside the job at about a quarter to that hour, sitting on the kerbstones or the doorstep.

Their operations extended all over the town: at all hours of the day they were to be seen either going or returning from 'jobs', carrying ladders, planks, pots of paint, pails of whitewash, earthenware, chimney pots, drainpipes, lengths of guttering, closet pans, grates, bundles of wallpaper, buckets of paste, sacks of cement, and loads of bricks and mortar. Quite a common spectacle--for gods and men--was a procession consisting of a handcart loaded up with such materials being

pushed or dragged through the public streets by about half a dozen of these Imperialists in broken boots and with battered, stained, discoloured bowler hats, or caps splashed with paint and whitewash; their stand-up collars dirty, limp and crumpled, and their rotten second-hand misfit clothing saturated with sweat and plastered with mortar.

Even the assistants in the grocers' and drapers' shops laughed and ridiculed and pointed the finger of scorn at them as they passed.

The superior classes--those who do nothing--regarded them as a sort of lower animals. A letter appeared in the Obscurer one week from one of these well-dressed loafers, complaining of the annoyance caused to the better-class visitors by workmen walking on the pavement as they passed along the Grand Parade in the evening on their way home from work, and suggesting that they should walk in the roadway. When they heard of the letter a lot of the workmen adopted the suggestion and walked in the road so as to avoid contaminating the idlers.

This letter was followed by others of a somewhat similar kind, and one or two written in a patronizing strain in defence of the working classes by persons who evidently knew nothing about them. There was also a letter from an individual who signed himself 'Morpheus' complaining that he was often awakened out of his beauty sleep in the middle of the night by the clattering noise of the workmen's boots as they passed his house on their way to work in the morning. 'Morpheus' wrote that not only did they make a dreadful noise with their horrible

iron-clad boots, but they were in the habit of coughing and spitting a great deal, which was very unpleasant to hear, and they conversed in loud tones. Sometimes their conversation was not at all edifying, for it consisted largely of bad language, which 'Morpheus' assumed to be attributable to the fact that they were out of temper because they had to rise so early.

As a rule they worked till half-past five in the evening, and by the time they reached home it was six o'clock. When they had taken their evening meal and had a wash it was nearly eight: about nine most of them went to bed so as to be able to get up about half past four the next morning to make a cup of tea before leaving home at half past five to go to work again. Frequently it happened that they had to leave home earlier than this, because their 'job' was more than half an hour's walk away. It did not matter how far away the 'job' was from the shop, the men had to walk to and fro in their own time, for Trades Union rules were a dead letter in Mugsborough. There were no tram fares or train fares or walking time allowed for the likes of them.

Ninety-nine out of every hundred of them did not believe in such things as those: they had much more sense than to join Trades Unions: on the contrary, they believed in placing themselves entirely at the mercy of their good, kind Liberal and Tory masters.

Very frequently it happened, when only a few men were working together, that it was not convenient to make tea for breakfast or dinner, and then some of them brought tea with them ready made in bottles and drank

it cold; but most of them went to the nearest pub and ate their food there with a glass of beer. Even those who would rather have had tea or coffee had beer, because if they went to a temperance restaurant or coffee tavern it generally happened that they were not treated very civilly unless they bought something to eat as well as to drink, and the tea at such places was really dearer than beer, and the latter was certainly quite as good to drink as the stewed tea or the liquid mud that was sold as coffee at cheap 'Workmen's' Eating Houses.

There were some who were--as they thought--exceptionally lucky: the firms they worked for were busy enough to let them work two hours' overtime every night--till half past seven--without stopping for tea. Most of these arrived home about eight, completely flattened out. Then they had some tea and a wash and before they knew where they were it was about half past nine. Then they went to sleep again till half past four or five the next morning.

They were usually so tired when they got home at night that they never had any inclination for study or any kind of self-improvement, even if they had had the time. They had plenty of time to study during the winter: and their favourite subject then was, how to preserve themselves from starving to death.

This overtime, however, was the exception, for although in former years it had been the almost invariable rule to work till half past seven in summer, most of the firms now made a practice of ceasing work at five-thirty. The revolution which had taken place in this matter was a

favourite topic of conversation amongst the men, who spoke regretfully of the glorious past, when things were busy, and they used to work fifteen, sixteen and even eighteen hours a day. But nowadays there were nearly as many chaps out of work in the summer as in the winter. They used to discuss the causes of the change. One was, of course, the fact that there was not so much building going on as formerly, and another was the speeding up and slave-driving, and the manner in which the work was now done, or rather scamped. As old Philpot said, he could remember the time, when he was a nipper, when such a 'job' as that at 'The Cave' would have lasted at least six months, and they would have had more hands on it too! But it would have been done properly, not messed up like that was: all the woodwork would have been rubbed down with pumice stone and water: all the knots cut out and the holes properly filled up, and the work properly rubbed down with glass-paper between every coat. But nowadays the only place you'd see a bit of pumice stone was in a glass case in a museum, with a label on it.

'Pumice Stone: formerly used by house-painters.'

Most of them spoke of those bygone times with poignant regret, but there were a few--generally fellows who had been contaminated by contact with Socialists or whose characters had been warped and degraded by the perusal of Socialist literature--who said that they did not desire to work overtime at all--ten hours a day were quite enough for them--in fact they would rather do only eight. What they wanted, they said, was not more work, but more grub, more clothes, more

leisure, more pleasure and better homes. They wanted to be able to go for country walks or bicycle rides, to go out fishing or to go to the seaside and bathe and lie on the beach and so forth. But these were only a very few; there were not many so selfish as this. The majority desired nothing but to be allowed to work, and as for their children, why, 'what was good enough for themselves oughter be good enough for the kids'.

They often said that such things as leisure, culture, pleasure and the benefits of civilization were never intended for 'the likes of us'.

They did not--all--actually say this, but that was what their conduct amounted to; for they not only refused to help to bring about a better state of things for their children, but they ridiculed and opposed and cursed and abused those who were trying to do it for them. The foulest words that came out of their mouths were directed against the men of their own class in the House of Commons--the Labour Members--and especially the Socialists, whom they spoke of as fellows who were too bloody lazy to work for a living, and who wanted the working classes to keep them.

Some of them said that they did not believe in helping their children to become anything better than their parents had been because in such cases the children, when they grew up, 'looked down' upon and were ashamed of their fathers and mothers! They seemed to think that if they loved and did their duty to their children, the probability was that the children would prove ungrateful: as if even if that were true,

it would be any excuse for their indifference.

Another cause of the shortage of work was the intrusion into the trade of so many outsiders: fellows like Sawkins and the other lightweights. Whatever other causes there were, there could be no doubt that the hurrying and scamping was a very real one. Every 'job' had to be done at once! as if it were a matter of life or death! It must be finished by a certain time. If the 'job' was at an empty house, Misery's yarn was that it was let! the people were coming in at the end of the week! therefore everything must be finished by Wednesday night. All the ceilings had to be washed off, the walls stripped and repapered, and two coats of paint inside and outside the house. New drains were to be put in, and all broken windows and locks and broken plaster repaired. A number of men--usually about half as many as there should have been--would be sent to do the work, and one man was put in charge of the 'job'. These sub-foremen or 'coddies' knew that if they 'made their jobs pay' they would be put in charge of others and be kept on in preference to other men as long as the firm had any work; so they helped Misery to scheme and scamp the work and watched and drove the men under their charge; and these latter poor wretches, knowing that their only chance of retaining their employment was to 'tear into it', tore into it like so many maniacs. Instead of cleaning any parts of the woodwork that were greasy or very dirty, they brushed them over with a coat of spirit varnish before painting to make sure that the paint would dry: places where the plaster of the walls was damaged were repaired with what was humorously called 'garden cement'--which was the technical term for dirt out of the garden--and the surface was skimmed

over with proper material. Ceilings that were not very dirty were not washed off, but dusted, and lightly gone over with a thin coat of whitewash. The old paper was often left upon the wails of rooms that were supposed to be stripped before being repapered, and to conceal this the joints of the old paper were rubbed down so that they should not be perceptible through the new paper. As far as possible, Misery and the sub-foreman avoided doing the work the customers paid for, and even what little they did was hurried over anyhow.

A reign of terror--the terror of the sack--prevailed on all the 'jobs', which were carried on to the accompaniment of a series of alarums and excursions: no man felt safe for a moment: at the most unexpected times Misery would arrive and rush like a whirlwind all over the 'job'. If he happened to find a man having a spell the culprit was immediately discharged, but he did not get the opportunity of doing this very often for everybody was too terrified to leave off working even for a few minutes' rest.

From the moment of Hunter's arrival until his departure, a state of panic, hurry, scurry and turmoil reigned. His strident voice rang through the house as he bellowed out to them to 'Rouse themselves! Get it done! Smear it on anyhow! Tar it over! We've got another job to start when you've done this!'

Occasionally, just to keep the others up to concert pitch, he used to

sack one of the men for being too slow. They all trembled before him and ran about whenever he spoke to or called them, because they knew that there were always a lot of other men out of work who would be willing and eager to fill their places if they got the sack.

Although it was now summer, and the Distress Committee and all the other committees had suspended operations, there was still always a large number of men hanging about the vicinity of the Fountain on the Parade--The Wage Slave Market. When men finished up for the firm they were working for they usually made for that place. Any master in want of a wage slave for a few hours, days or weeks could always buy one there. The men knew this and they also knew that if they got the sack from one firm it was no easy matter to get another job, and that was why they were terrified.

When Misery was gone--to repeat the same performance at some other job--the sub-foreman would have a crawl round to see how the chaps were getting on: to find out if they had used up all their paint yet, or to bring them some putty so that they should not have to leave their work to go to get anything themselves: and then very often Rushton himself would come and stalk quietly about the house or stand silently behind the men, watching them as they worked. He seldom spoke to anyone, but just stood there like a graven image, or walked about like a dumb animal--a pig, as the men used to say. This individual had a very exalted idea of his own importance and dignity. One man got the sack for presuming to stop him in the street to ask some questions about some work that was being done.

Misery went round to all the jobs the next day and told all the 'coddies' to tell all the hands that they were never to speak to Mr Rushton if they met him in the street, and the following Saturday the man who had so offended was given his back day, ostensibly because there was nothing for him to do, but really for the reason stated above.

There was one job, the outside of a large house that stood on elevated ground overlooking the town. The men who were working there were even more than usually uncomfortable, for it was said that Rushton used to sit in his office and watch them through a telescope.

Sometimes, when it was really necessary to get a job done by a certain time, they had to work late, perhaps till eight or nine o'clock. No time was allowed for tea, but some of them brought sufficient food with them in the morning to enable them to have a little about six o'clock in the evening. Others arranged for their children to bring them some tea from home. As a rule, they partook of this without stopping work: they had it on the floor beside them and ate and drank and worked at the same time--a paint-brushful of white lead in one hand, and a piece of bread and margarine in the other. On some jobs, if the 'coddy' happened to be a decent sort, they posted a sentry to look out for Hunter or Rushton while the others knocked off for a few minutes to snatch a mouthful of grub; but it was not safe always to do this, for there was often some crawling sneak with an ambition to become a 'coddy' who would not scruple to curry favour with Misery by reporting the crime.

As an additional precaution against the possibility of any of the men idling or wasting their time, each one was given a time-sheet on which he was required to account for every minute of the day. The form of these sheets vary slightly with different firms: that of Rushton & Co., was as shown.

TIME SHEET

OF WORK DONE BY IN THE EMPLOY OF

RUSHTON & CO

BUILDERS & DECORATORS : MUGSBOROUGH

NO SMOKING OR INTOXICANTS ALLOWED DURING WORKING HOURS

EACH PIECE OF WORK MUST BE FULLY DESCRIBED, WHAT IT WAS, AND HOW LONG

IT TOOK TO DO.

	Where Working	Time When Started	Time When Finished	Hours	What Doing	
						Sat
						Mon
						Tues
						Wed

				Thur
				Fri
		Total Hours		

One Monday morning Misery gave each of the sub-foremen an envelope containing one of the firm's memorandum forms. Crass opened his and found the following:

Crass

When you are on a job with men under you, check and initial their time-sheets every night.

If they are called away and sent to some other job, or stood off, check and initial their time-sheets as they leave your job.

Any man coming on your job during the day, you must take note of the exact time of his arrival, and see that his sheet is charged right.

Any man who is slow or lazy, or any man that you notice talking more than is necessary during working hours, you must report him to Mr

Hunter. We expect you and the other foremen to help us to carry out these rules, AND ANY INFORMATION GIVEN US ABOUT ANY MAN IS TREATED IN CONFIDENCE.

Rushton & Co.

Note: This applies to all men of all trades who come on the jobs of which you are the foreman.

Every week the time-sheets were scrutinized, and every now and then a man would be 'had up on the carpet' in the office before Rushton and Misery, and interrogated as to why he had taken fifteen hours to do ten hours work? In the event of the accused being unable to give a satisfactory explanation of his conduct he was usually sacked on the spot.

Misery was frequently called 'up on the carpet' himself.

If he made a mistake in figuring out a 'job', and gave in too high a tender for it, so that the firm did not get the work, Rushton grumbled. If the price was so low that there was not enough profit, Rushton was very unpleasant about it, and whenever it happened that there was not only no profit but an actual loss, Rushton created such a terrible disturbance that Misery was nearly frightened to death and used to get on his bicycle and rush off to the nearest 'job' and howl and bellow at

the 'chaps' to get it done.

All the time the capabilities of the men--especially with regard to speed--were carefully watched and noted: and whenever there was a slackness of work and it was necessary to discharge some hands those that were slow or took too much pains were weeded out: this of course was known to the men and it had the desired effect upon them.

In justice to Rushton and Hunter, it must be remembered that there was a certain amount of excuse for all this driving and cheating, because they had to compete with all the other firms, who conducted their business in precisely the same way. It was not their fault, but the fault of the system.

A dozen firms tendered for every 'job', and of course the lowest tender usually obtained the work. Knowing this, they all cut the price down to the lowest possible figure and the workmen had to suffer.

The trouble was that there were too many 'masters'. It would have been far better for the workmen if nine out of every ten of the employers had never started business. Then the others would have been able to get a better price for their work, and the men might have had better wages and conditions. The hands, however, made no such allowances or excuses as these for Misery and Rushton. They never thought or spoke of them except with hatred and curses. But whenever either of them came to the 'job' the 'coddies' cringed and grovelled before them, greeting them with disgustingly servile salutations, plentifully

interspersed with the word 'Sir', greetings which were frequently either ignored altogether or answered with an inarticulate grunt. They said 'Sir' at nearly every second word: it made one feel sick to hear them because it was not courtesy: they were never courteous to each other, it was simply abject servility and self-contempt.

One of the results of all the frenzied hurrying was that every now and then there was an accident: somebody got hurt: and it was strange that accidents were not more frequent, considering the risk, that were taken. When they happened to be working on ladders in busy streets they were not often allowed to have anyone to stand at the foot, and the consequence was that all sorts and conditions of people came into violent collision with the bottoms of the ladders. Small boys playing in the reckless manner characteristic of their years rushed up against them. Errand boys, absorbed in the perusal of penny instalments of the adventures of Claude Duval, and carrying large baskets of green-groceries, wandered into them. Blind men fell foul of them. Adventurous schoolboys climbed up them. People with large feet became entangled in them. Fat persons of both sexes who thought it unlucky to walk underneath, tried to negotiate the narrow strip of pavement between the foot of the ladder and the kerb, and in their passage knocked up against the ladder and sometimes fell into the road. Nursemaids wheeling perambulators--lolling over the handle, which they usually held with their left hands, the right holding a copy of Orange Blossoms or some halfpenny paper, and so interested in the story of the Marquis of Lymejuice--a young man of noble presence and fabulous wealth, with a drooping golden moustache and very long legs, who,

notwithstanding the diabolical machinations of Lady Sibyl Malvoise, who loves him as well as a woman with a name like that is capable of loving anyone, is determined to wed none other than the scullery-maid at the Village Inn--inevitably bashed the perambulators into the ladders. Even when the girls were not reading they nearly always ran into the ladders, which seemed to possess a magnetic attraction for perambulators and go-carts of all kinds, whether propelled by nurses or mothers. Sometimes they would advance very cautiously towards the ladder: then, when they got very near, hesitate a little whether to go under or run the risk of falling into the street by essaying the narrow passage: then they would get very close up to the foot of the ladder, and dodge and dance about, and give the cart little pushes from side to side, until at last the magnetic influence exerted itself and the perambulator crashed into the ladder, perhaps at the very moment that the man at the top was stretching out to do some part of the work almost beyond his reach.

Once Harlow had just started painting some rainpipes from the top of a 40-ft ladder when one of several small boys who were playing in the street ran violently against the foot. Harlow was so startled that he dropped his brushes and clutched wildly at the ladder, which turned completely round and slid about six feet along the parapet into the angle of the wall, with Harlow hanging beneath by his hands. The paint pot was hanging by a hook from one of the rungs, and the jerk scattered the brown paint it contained all over Harlow and all over the brickwork of the front of the house. He managed to descend safely by clasping his legs round the sides of the ladder and sliding down. When Misery

came there was a row about what he called carelessness. And the next day Harlow had to wear his Sunday trousers to work.

On another occasion they were painting the outside of a house called 'Gothic Lodge'. At one corner it had a tower surmounted by a spire or steeple, and this steeple terminated with an ornamental wrought-iron pinnacle which had to be painted. The ladder they had was not quite long enough, and besides that, as it had to stand in a sort of a courtyard at the base of the tower, it was impossible to slant it sufficiently: instead of lying along the roof of the steeple, it was sticking up in the air.

When Easton went up to paint the pinnacle he had to stand on almost the very top rung of the ladder, to be exact, the third from the top, and lean over to steady himself by holding on to the pinnacle with his left hand while he used the brush with his right. As it was only about twenty minutes' work there were two men to hold the foot of the ladder.

It was cheaper to do it this way than to rig up a proper scaffold, which would have entailed perhaps two hours' work for two or three men. Of course it was very dangerous, but that did not matter at all, because even if the man fell it would make no difference to the firm--all the men were insured and somehow or other, although they frequently had narrow escapes, they did not often come to grief.

On this occasion, just as Easton was finishing he felt the pinnacle that he was holding on to give way, and he got such a fright that his

heart nearly stopped beating. He let go his hold and steadied himself on the ladder as well as he was able, and when he had descended three or four steps--into comparative safety--he remained clinging convulsively to the ladder and feeling so limp that he was unable to go down any further for several minutes. When he arrived at the bottom and the others noticed how white and trembling he was, he told them about the pinnacle being loose, and the 'coddy' coming along just then, they told him about it, and suggested that it should be repaired, as otherwise it might fall down and hurt someone: but the 'coddy' was afraid that if they reported it they might be blamed for breaking it, and the owner might expect the firm to put it right for nothing, so they decided to say nothing about it. The pinnacle is stilt on the apex of the steeple waiting for a sufficiently strong wind to blow it down on somebody's head.

When the other men heard of Easton's 'narrow shave', most of them said that it would have served him bloody well right if he had fallen and broken his neck: he should have refused to go up at all without a proper scaffold. That was what THEY would have done. If Misery or the coddy had ordered any of THEM to go up and paint the pinnacle off that ladder, they would have chucked their tools down and demanded their ha'pence!

That was what they said, but somehow or other it never happened that any of them ever 'chucked their tools down' at all, although such dangerous jobs were of very frequent occurrence.

The scamping business was not confined to houses or properties of an inferior class: it was the general rule. Large good-class houses, villas and mansions, the residences of wealthy people, were done in exactly the same way. Generally in such places costly and beautiful materials were spoilt in the using.

There was a large mansion where the interior woodwork--the doors, windows and staircase--had to be finished in white enamel. It was rather an old house and the woodwork needed rubbing down and filling up before being repainted, but of course there was not time for that, so they painted it without properly preparing it and when it was enamelled the rough, uneven surface of the wood looked horrible: but the owner appeared quite satisfied because it was nice and shiny. The dining-room of the same house was papered with a beautiful and expensive plush paper. The ground of this wall-hanging was made to imitate crimson watered silk, and it was covered with a raised pattern in plush of the same colour. The price marked on the back of this paper in the pattern book was eighteen shillings a roll. Slyme was paid sixpence a roll for hanging it: the room took ten rolls, so it cost nine pounds for the paper and five shillings to hang it! To fix such a paper as this properly the walls should first be done with a plain lining paper of the same colour as the ground of the wallpaper itself, because unless the paperhanger 'lapps' the joints--which should not be done--they are apt to open a little as the paper dries and to show the white wall underneath--Slyme suggested this lining to Misery, who would not entertain the idea for a moment--they had gone to quite enough expense as it was, stripping the old paper off!

So Slyme went ahead, and as he had to make his wages, he could not spend a great deal of time over it. Some of the joints were 'lapped' and some were butted, and two or three weeks after the owner of the house moved in, as the paper became more dry, the joints began to open and to show the white plaster of the wall, and then Owen had to go there with a small pot of crimson paint and a little brush, and touch out the white line.

While he was doing this he noticed and touched up a number of other faults; places where Slyme--in his haste to get the work done--had slobbered and smeared the face of the paper with fingermarks and paste.

The same ghastly mess was made of several other 'jobs' besides this one, and presently they adopted the plan of painting strips of colour on the wall in the places where the joints would come, so that if they opened the white wall would not show: but it was found that the paste on the back of the paper dragged the paint off the wall, and when the joints opened the white streaks showed all the same, so Misery abandoned all attempts to prevent joints showing, and if a customer complained, he sent someone to 'touch it up': but the lining paper was never used, unless the customer or the architect knew enough about the work to insist upon it.

In other parts of the same house the ceilings, the friezes, and the dados, were covered with 'embossed' or 'relief' papers. These hangings require very careful handling, for the raised parts are easily damaged;

but the men who fixed them were not allowed to take the pains and time necessary to make good work: consequently in many places--especially at the joints--the pattern was flattened out and obliterated.

The ceiling of the drawing-room was done with a very thick high-relief paper that was made in sheets about two feet square. These squares were not very true in shape: they had evidently warped in drying after manufacture: to make them match anything like properly would need considerable time and care. But the men were not allowed to take the necessary time. The result was that when it was finished it presented a sort of 'higgledy-piggledy' appearance. But it didn't matter: nothing seemed to matter except to get it done. One would think from the way the hands were driven and chivvied and hurried over the work that they were being paid five or six shillings an hour instead of as many pence.

'Get it done!' shouted Misery from morning till night. 'For God's sake get it done! Haven't you finished yet? We're losing money over this "job"! If you chaps don't wake up and move a bit quicker, I shall see if I can't get somebody else who will.'

These costly embossed decorations were usually finished in white; but instead of carefully coating them with specially prepared paint of patent distemper, which would need two or three coats, they slobbered one thick coat of common whitewash on to it with ordinary whitewash brushes.

This was a most economical way to get over it, because it made it unnecessary to stop up the joints beforehand--the whitewash filled up all the cracks: and it also filled up the hollow parts, the crevices and interstices of the ornament, destroying the sharp outlines of the beautiful designs and reducing the whole to a lumpy, formless mass. But that did not matter either, so long as they got it done.

The architect didn't notice it, because he knew that the more Rushton & Co. made out of the 'job', the more he himself would make.

The man who had to pay for the work didn't notice it; he had the fullest confidence in the architect.

At the risk of wearying the long-suffering reader, mention must be made of an affair that happened at this particular 'job'.

The windows were all fitted with venetian blinds. The gentleman for whom all the work was being done had only just purchased the house, but he preferred roller blinds: he had had roller blinds in his former residence--which he had just sold--and as these roller blinds were about the right size, he decided to have them fitted to the windows of his new house: so he instructed Mr Rushton to have all the venetian blinds taken down and stored away up in the loft under the roof. Mr Rushton promised to have this done; but they were not ALL put away under the roof: he had four of them taken to his own place and fitted up in the conservatory. They were a little too large, so they had to be narrowed before they were fixed.

The sequel was rather interesting, for it happened that when the gentleman attempted to take the roller blinds from his old house, the person to whom he had sold it refused to allow them to be removed; claiming that when he bought the house, he bought the blinds also. There was a little dispute, but eventually it was settled that way and the gentleman decided that he would have the venetian blinds in his new house after all, and instructed the people who moved his furniture to take the venetians down again from under the roof, and refix them, and then, of course, it was discovered that four of the blinds were missing. Mr Rushton was sent for, and he said that he couldn't understand it at all! The only possible explanation that he could think of was that some of his workmen must have stolen them! He would make inquiries, and endeavour to discover the culprits, but in any case, as this had happened while things were in his charge, if he did not succeed in recovering them, he would replace them.

As the blinds had been narrowed to fit the conservatory he had to have four new ones made.

The customer was of course quite satisfied, although very sorry for Mr Rushton. They had a little chat about it. Rushton told the gentleman that he would be astonished if he knew all the facts: the difficulties one has to contend with in dealing with working men: one has to watch them continually! directly one's back is turned they leave off working! They come late in the morning, and go home before the proper time at night, and then unless one actually happens to catch them--they charge

the full number of hours on their time sheets! Every now and then something would be missing, and of course Nobody knew anything about it. Sometimes one would go unexpectedly to a 'job' and find a lot of them drunk. Of course one tried to cope with these evils by means of rules and restrictions and organization, but it was very difficult--one could not be everywhere or have eyes at the back of one's head. The gentleman said that he had some idea of what it was like: he had had something to do with the lower orders himself at one time and another, and he knew they needed a lot of watching.

Rushton felt rather sick over this affair, but he consoled himself by reflecting that he had got clear away with several valuable rose trees and other plants which he had stolen out of the garden, and that a ladder which had been discovered in the hayloft over the stable and taken--by his instructions--to the 'yard' when the 'job' was finished had not been missed.

Another circumstance which helped to compensate for the blinds was that the brass fittings throughout the house, finger-plates, sash-lifts and locks, bolts and door handles, which were supposed to be all new and which the customer had paid a good price for--were really all the old ones which Misery had had re-lacquered and refixed.

There was nothing unusual about this affair of the blinds, for Rushton and Misery robbed everybody. They made a practice of annexing every thing they could lay their hands upon, provided it could be done without danger to themselves. They never did anything of a heroic or

dare-devil character: they had not the courage to break into banks or jewellers' shops in the middle of the night, or to go out picking pockets: all their robberies were of the sneak-thief order.

At one house that they 'did up' Misery made a big haul. He had to get up into the loft under the roof to see what was the matter with the water tank. When he got up there he found a very fine hall gas lamp made of wrought brass and copper with stained and painted glass sides. Although covered with dust, it was otherwise in perfect condition, so Misery had it taken to his own house and cleaned up and fixed in the hail.

In the same loft there were a lot of old brass picture rods and other fittings, and three very good planks, each about ten feet in length; these latter had been placed across the rafters so that one could walk easily and safely over to the tank. But Misery thought they would be very useful to the firm for whitewashing ceilings and other work, so he had them taken to the yard along with the old brass, which was worth about fourpence a pound.

There was another house that had to be painted inside: the people who used to live there had only just left: they had moved to some other town, and the house had been re-let before they vacated it. The new tenant had agreed with the agent that the house was to be renovated throughout before he took possession.

The day after the old tenants moved away, the agent gave Rushton the

key so that he could go to see what was to be done and give an estimate for the work.

While Rushton and Misery were looking over the house they discovered a large barometer hanging on the wall behind the front door: it had been overlooked by those who removed the furniture. Before returning the key to the agent, Rushton sent one of his men to the house for the barometer, which he kept in his office for a few weeks to see if there would be any inquiries about it. If there had been, it would have been easy to say that he had brought it there for safety--to take care of till he could find the owner. The people to whom it belonged thought the thing had been lost or stolen in transit, and afterwards one of the workmen who had assisted to pack and remove the furniture was dismissed from his employment on suspicion of having had something to do with its disappearance. No one ever thought of Rushton in connection with the matter, so after about a month he had it taken to his own dwelling and hung up in the hall near the carved oak marble-topped console table that he had sneaked last summer from 596 Grand Parade.

And there it hangs unto this day: and close behind it, supported by cords of crimson silk, is a beautiful bevelled-edged card about a foot square, and upon this card is written, in letters of gold: 'Christ is the head of this house; the unseen Guest at every meal, the silent Listener to every conversation.'

And on the other side of the barometer is another card of the same kind and size which says: 'As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.'

From another place they stole two large brass chandeliers. This house had been empty for a very long time, and its owner--who did not reside in the town--wished to sell it. The agent, to improve the chances of a sale, decided to have the house overhauled and redecorated. Rushton & Co.'s tender being the lowest, they got the work. The chandeliers in the drawing-room and the dining-room were of massive brass, but they were all blackened and tarnished. Misery suggested to the agent that they could be cleaned and relacquered, which would make them equal to new: in fact, they would be better than new ones, for such things as these were not made now, and for once Misery was telling the truth. The agent agreed and the work was done: it was an extra, of course, and as the firm got twice as much for the job as they paid for having it done, they were almost satisfied.

When this and all the other work was finished they sent in their account and were paid.

Some months afterwards the house was sold, and Nimrod interviewed the new proprietor with the object of securing the order for any work that he might want done. He was successful. The papers on the walls of several of the rooms were not to the new owner's taste, and, of course, the woodwork would have to be re-painted to harmonize with the new paper. There was a lot of other work besides this: a new conservatory to build, a more modern bath and heating apparatus to be put in, and the electric light to be installed, the new people having an objection to the use of gas.

The specifications were prepared by an architect, and Rushton secured the work. When the chandeliers were taken down, the men, instructed by Misery, put them on a handcart, and covered them over with sacks and dust-sheets and took them to the front shop, where they were placed for sale with the other stock.

When all the work at the house was finished, it occurred to Rushton and Nimrod that when the architect came to examine and pass the work before giving them the certificate that would enable them to present their account, he might remember the chandeliers and inquire what had become of them. So they were again placed on the handcart, covered with sacks and dust-sheets, taken back to the house and put up in the loft under the roof so that, if he asked for them, there they were.

The architect came, looked ever the house, passed the work, and gave his certificate; he never mentioned or thought of the chandeliers. The owner of the house was present and asked for Rushton's bill, for which he at once gave them a cheque and Rushton and Misery almost grovelled and wallowed on the ground before him. Throughout the whole interview the architect and the 'gentleman' had kept their hats on, but Rushton and Nimrod had been respectfully uncovered all the time, and as they followed the other two about the house their bearing had been expressive of the most abject servility.

When the architect and the owner were gone the two chandeliers were taken down again from under the roof, and put upon a handcart, covered

over with sacks and dust-sheets and taken back to the shop and again placed for sale with the other stock.

These are only a few of the petty thefts committed by these people. To give anything approaching a full account of all the rest would require a separate volume.

As a result of all the hurrying and scamping, every now and again the men found that they had worked themselves out of a job.

Several times during the summer the firm had scarcely anything to do, and nearly everybody had to stand off for a few days or weeks.

When Newman got his first start in the early part of the year he had only been working for about a fortnight when--with several others--he was 'stood off'. Fortunately, however, the day after he left Rushtons, he was lucky enough to get a start for another firm, Driver and Botchit, where he worked for nearly a month, and then he was again given a job at Rushton's, who happened to be busy again.

He did not have to lose much time, for he 'finished up' for Driver and Botchit on a Thursday night and on the Friday he interviewed Misery, who told him they were about to commence a fresh 'jab' on the following Monday morning at six o'clock, and that he could start with them. So this time Newman was only out of work the Friday and Saturday, which

was another stroke of luck, because it often happens that a man has to lose a week or more after 'finishing up' for one firm before he gets another 'job'.

All through the summer Crass continued to be the general 'colour-man', most of his time being spent at the shop mixing up colours for all the different 'jobs'. He also acted as a sort of lieutenant to Hunter, who, as the reader has already been informed, was not a practical painter. When there was a price to be given for some painting work, Misery sometimes took Crass with him to look over it and help him to estimate the amount of time and material it would take. Crass was thus in a position of more than ordinary importance, not only being superior to the 'hands', but also ranking above the other sub-foremen who had charge of the 'jobs'.

It was Crass and these sub-foremen who were to blame for most of the scamping and driving, because if it had not been for them neither Rushton nor Hunter would have known how to scheme the work.

Of course, Hunter and Rushton wanted to drive and scamp, but not being practical men they would not have known how if it had not been for Crass and the others, who put them up to all the tricks of the trade.

Crass knew that when the men stayed till half past seven they were in the habit of ceasing work for a few minutes to eat a mouthful of grub about six o'clock, so he suggested to Misery that as it was not possible to stop this, it would be a good plan to make the men stop

work altogether from half past five till six, and lose half an hour's pay; and to make up the time, instead of leaving off at seven-thirty, they could work till eight.

Misery had known of and winked at the former practice, for he knew that the men could not work all that time without something to eat, but Crass's suggestion seemed a much better way, and it was adopted.

When the other masters in Mugsborough heard of this great reform they all followed suit, and it became the rule in that town, whenever it was necessary to work overtime, for the men to stay till eight instead of half past seven as formerly, and they got no more pay than before.

Previous to this summer it had been the almost invariable rule to have two men in each room that was being painted, but Crass pointed out to Misery that under such circumstances they wasted time talking to each other, and they also acted as a check on one another: each of them regulated the amount of work he did by the amount the other did, and if the 'job' took too long it was always difficult to decide which of the two was to blame: but if they were made to work alone, each of them would be on his mettle; he would not know how much the others were doing, and the fear of being considered slow in comparison with others would make them all tear into it all they could.

Misery thought this a very good idea, so the solitary system was introduced, and as far as practicable, one room, one man became the rule.

They even tried to make the men distemper large ceilings single-handed, and succeeded in one or two cases, but after several ceilings had been spoilt and had to be washed off and done over again, they gave that up: but nearly all the other work was now arranged on the 'solitary system', and it worked splendidly: each man was constantly in a state of panic as to whether the others were doing more work than himself.

Another suggestion that Crass made to Misery was that the sub-foremen should be instructed never to send a man into a room to prepare it for painting.

'If you sends a man into a room to get it ready,' said Crass, ''e makes a meal of it! 'E spends as much time messin' about rubbin' down and stoppin' up as it would take to paint it. But,' he added, with a cunning leer, 'give 'em a bit of putty and a little bit of glass-paper, and the paint at the stand, and then 'e gits it in 'is mind as 'e's going in there to paint it! And 'e doesn't mess about much over the preparing of it'.

These and many other suggestions--all sorts of devices for scamping and getting over the work--were schemed out by Crass and the other sub-foremen, who put them into practice and showed them to Misery and Rushton in the hope of currying favour with them and being 'kept on'. And between the lot of them they made life a veritable hell for themselves, and the hands, and everybody else around them. And the mainspring of it all was--the greed and selfishness of one man, who

desired to accumulate money! For this was the only object of all the driving and bullying and hatred and cursing and unhappiness--to make money for Rushton, who evidently considered himself a deserving case.

It is sad and discreditable, but nevertheless true, that some of the more selfish of the philanthropists often became weary of well-doing, and lost all enthusiasm in the good cause. At such times they used to say that they were 'Bloody well fed up' with the whole business and 'Tired of tearing their bloody guts out for the benefit of other people' and every now and then some of these fellows would 'chuck up' work, and go on the booze, sometimes stopping away for two or three days or a week at a time. And then, when it was all over, they came back, very penitent, to ask for another 'start', but they generally found that their places had been filled.

If they happened to be good 'sloggers'--men who made a practice of 'tearing their guts out' when they did work--they were usually forgiven, and after being admonished by Misery, permitted to resume work, with the understanding that if ever it occurred again they would get the 'infernal'--which means the final and irrevocable--sack.

There was once a job at a shop that had been a high-class restaurant kept by a renowned Italian chef. It had been known as

'MACARONI'S ROYAL ITALIAN CAFE'

Situated on the Grand Parade, it was a favourite resort of the 'Elite', who frequented it for afternoon tea and coffee and for little suppers after the theatre.

It had plate-glass windows, resplendent with gilding, marble-topped tables with snow white covers, vases of flowers, and all the other appurtenances of glittering cut glass and silver. The obsequious waiters were in evening dress, the walls were covered with lofty plate-glass mirrors in carved and gilded frames, and at certain hours of the day and night an orchestra consisting of two violins and a harp discoursed selections of classic music.

But of late years the business had not been paying, and finally the proprietor went bankrupt and was sold out. The place was shut up for several months before the shop was let to a firm of dealers in fancy articles, and the other part was transformed into flats.

Rushton had the contract for the work. When the men went there to 'do it up' they found the interior of the house in a state of indescribable filth: the ceilings discoloured with smoke and hung with cobwebs, the wallpapers smeared and black with grease, the handrails and the newel posts of the staircase were clammy with filth, and the edges of the doors near the handles were blackened with greasy dirt and finger-marks. The tops of the skirtings, the mouldings of the doors, the sashes of the windows and the corners of the floors were thick with the accumulated dust of years.

In one of the upper rooms which had evidently been used as a nursery or playroom for the children of the renowned chef, the wallpaper for about two feet above the skirting was blackened with grease and ornamented with childish drawings made with burnt sticks and blacklead pencils, the door being covered with similar artistic efforts, to say nothing of some rude attempts at carving, evidently executed with an axe or a hammer. But all this filth was nothing compared with the unspeakable condition of the kitchen and scullery, a detailed description of which would cause the blood of the reader to curdle, and each particular hair of his head to stand on end.

Let it suffice to say that the walls, the ceiling, the floor, the paintwork, the gas-stove, the kitchen range, the dresser and everything else were uniformly absolutely and literally--black. And the black was composed of soot and grease.

In front of the window there was a fixture--a kind of bench or table, deeply scored with marks of knives like a butcher's block. The sill of the window was about six inches lower than the top of the table, so that between the glass of the lower sash of the window, which had evidently never been raised, and the back of the table, there was a long narrow cavity or trough, about six inches deep, four inches wide and as long as the width of the window, the sill forming the bottom of the cavity.

This trough was filled with all manner of abominations: fragments of

fat and decomposed meat, legs of rabbits and fowls, vegetable matter, broken knives and forks, and hair: and the glass of the window was caked with filth of the same description.

This job was the cause of the sacking of the Semi-drunk and another man named Bill Bates, who were sent into the kitchen to clean it down and prepare it for painting and distempering.

They commenced to do it, but it made them feel so ill that they went out and had a pint each, and after that they made another start at it. But it was not long before they felt that it was imperatively necessary to have another drink. So they went over to the pub, and this time they had two pints each. Bill paid for the first two and then the Semi-drunk refused to return to work unless Bill would consent to have another pint with him before going back. When they had drunk the two pints, they decided--in order to save themselves the trouble and risk of coming away from the job--to take a couple of quarts back with them in two bottles, which the landlord of the pub lent them, charging twopence on each bottle, to be refunded when they were returned.

When they got back to the job they found the 'coddy' in the kitchen, looking for them and he began to talk and grumble, but the Semi-drunk soon shut him up: he told him he could either have a drink out of one of the bottles or a punch in the bloody nose--whichever he liked! Or if he did not fancy either of these alternatives, he could go to hell!

As the 'coddy' was a sensible man he took the beer and advised them to

pull themselves together and try to get some work done before Misery came, which they promised to do.

When the 'coddy' was gone they made another attempt at the work. Misery came a little while afterwards and began shouting at them because he said he could not see what they had done. It looked as if they had been asleep all the morning: Here it was nearly ten o'clock, and as far as he could see, they had done Nothing!

When he was gone they drank the rest of the beer and then they began to feel inclined to laugh. What did they care for Hunter or Rushton either? To hell with both of 'em! They left off scraping and scrubbing, and began throwing buckets of water over the dresser and the walls, laughing uproariously all the time.

'We'll show the b--s how to wash down paintwork!' shouted the Semi-drunk, as he stood in the middle of the room and hurled a pailful of water over the door of the cupboard. 'Bring us another bucket of water, Bill.'

Bill was out in the scullery filling his pail under the tap, and laughing so much that he could scarcely stand. As soon as it was full he passed it to the Semi-drunk, who threw it bodily, pail and all, on to the bench in front of the window, smashing one of the panes of glass. The water poured off the table and all over the floor.

Bill brought the next pailful in and threw it at the kitchen door,

splitting one of the panels from top to bottom, and then they threw about half a dozen more pailfuls over the dresser.

'We'll show the b--rs how to clean paintwork,' they shouted, as they hurled the buckets at the walls and doors.

By this time the floor was deluged with water, which mingled with the filth and formed a sea of mud.

They left the two taps running in the scullery and as the waste pipe of the sink was choked up with dirt, the sink filled up and overflowed like a miniature Niagara.

The water ran out under the doors into the back-yard, and along the passage out to the front door. But Bill Bates and the Semi-drunk remained in the kitchen, smashing the pails at the walls and doors and the dresser, and cursing and laughing hysterically.

They had just filled the two buckets and were bringing them into the kitchen when they heard Hunter's voice in the passage, shouting out inquiries as to where all that water came from. Then they heard him advancing towards them and they stood waiting for him with the pails in their hands, and directly he opened the door and put his head into the room they let fly the two pails at him. Unfortunately, they were too drunk and excited to aim straight. One pail struck the middle rail of the door and the other the wall by the side of it.

Misery hastily shut the door again and ran upstairs, and presently the 'coddy' came down and called out to them from the passage.

They went out to see what he wanted, and he told them that Misery had gone to the office to get their wages ready: they were to make out their time sheets and go for their money at once. Misery had said that if they were not there in ten minutes he would have the pair of them locked up.

The Semi-drunk said that nothing would suit them better than to have all their pieces at once--they had spent all their money and wanted another drink. Bill Bates concurred, so they borrowed a piece of blacklead pencil from the 'coddy' and made out their time sheets, took off their aprons, put them into their tool bags, and went to the office for their money, which Misery passed out to them through the trap-door.

The news of this exploit spread all over the town during that day and evening, and although it was in July, the next morning at six o'clock there were half a dozen men waiting at the yard to ask Misery if there was 'any chance of a job'.

Bill Bates and the Semi-drunk had had their spree and had got the sack for it and most of the chaps said it served them right. Such conduct as that was going too far.

Most of them would have said the same thing no matter what the circumstances might have been. They had very little sympathy for each

other at any time.

Often, when, for instance, one man was sent away from one 'job' to another, the others would go into his room and look at the work he had been doing, and pick out all the faults they could find and show them to each other, making all sorts of ill-natured remarks about the absent one meanwhile. 'Jist run yer nose over that door, Jim,' one would say in a tone of disgust. 'Wotcher think of it? Did yer ever see sich a mess in yer life? Calls hisself a painter!' And the other man would shake his head sadly and say that although the one who had done it had never been up to much as a workman, he could do it a bit better than that if he liked, but the fact was that he never gave himself time to do anything properly: he was always tearing his bloody guts out! Why, he'd only been in this room about four hours from start to finish! He ought to have a watering cart to follow him about, because he worked at such a hell of a rate you couldn't see him for dust! And then the first man would reply that other people could do as they liked, but for his part, HE was not going to tear his guts out for nobody!

The second man would applaud these sentiments and say that he wasn't going to tear his out either: and then they would both go back to their respective rooms and tear into the work for all they were worth, making the same sort of 'job' as the one they had been criticizing, and afterwards, when the other's back was turned, each of them in turn would sneak into the other's room and criticize it and point out the faults to anyone else who happened to be near at hand.

Harlow was working at the place that had been Macaroni's Cafe when one day a note was sent to him from Hunter at the shop. It was written on a scrap of wallpaper, and worded in the usual manner of such notes--as if the writer had studied how to avoid all suspicion of being unduly civil:

Harlow go to the yard at once take your tools with you.
Crass will tell you where you have to go.

J.H.

They were just finishing their dinners when the boy brought this note; and after reading it aloud for the benefit of the others, Harlow remarked that it was worded in much the same way in which one would speak to a dog. The others said nothing; but after he was gone the other men--who all considered that it was ridiculous for the 'likes of us' to expect or wish to be treated with common civility--laughed about it, and said that Harlow was beginning to think he was Somebody: they supposed it was through readin' all those books what Owen was always lendin' 'im. And then one of them got a piece of paper and wrote a note to be given to Harlow at the first opportunity. This note was properly worded, written in a manner suitable for a gentleman like him, neatly folded and addressed:

Mr Harlow Esq.,
c/o Macaroni's Royal Cafe
till called for.

Mister Harlow,

Dear Sir: Wood you kinely oblige me bi cummin to the paint shop as soon as you can make it convenient as there is a sealin' to be wate-woshed hoppin this is not trubbling you to much

I remane
Yours respeckfully
Pontius Pilate.

This note was read out for the amusement of the company and afterwards stored away in the writer's pocket till such a time as an opportunity should occur of giving it to Harlow.

As the writer of the note was on his way back to his room to resume work he was accosted by a man who had gone into Harlow's room to criticize it, and had succeeded in finding several faults which he pointed out to the other, and of course they were both very much disgusted with Harlow.

'I can't think why the coddy keeps him on the job,' said the first man. 'Between you and me, if I had charge of a job, and Misery sent Harlow there--I'd send 'im back to the shop.'

'Same as you,' agreed the other as he went back to tear into his own room. 'Same as you, old man: I shouldn't 'ave 'im neither.'

It must not be supposed from this that either of these two men were on exceptionally bad terms with Harlow; they were just as good friends with him--to his face--as they were with each other--to each other's faces--and it was just their way: that was all.

If it had been one or both of these two who had gone away instead of Harlow, just the same things would have been said about them by the others who remained--it was merely their usual way of speaking about each other behind each other's backs.

It was always the same: if any one of them made a mistake or had an accident or got into any trouble he seldom or never got any sympathy from his fellow workmen. On the contrary, most of them at such times seemed rather pleased than otherwise.

There was a poor devil--a stranger in the town; he came from London--who got the sack for breaking some glass. He had been sent to 'burn off' some old paint of the woodwork of a window. He was not very skilful in the use of the burning-off lamp, because on the firm when he had been working in London it was a job that the ordinary hands were seldom or never called upon to do. There were one or two men who did it all. For that matter, not many of Rushton's men were very skilful at it either. It was a job everybody tried to get out of, because nearly always the lamp went wrong and there was a row about the time the work took. So they worked this job on to the stranger.

This man had been out of work for a long time before he got a start at

Rushton's, and he was very anxious not to lose the job, because he had a wife and family in London. When the 'coddy' told him to go and burn off this window he did not like to say that he was not used to the work: he hoped to be able to do it. But he was very nervous, and the end was that although he managed to do the burning off all right, just as he was finishing he accidentally allowed the flame of the lamp to come into contact with a large pane of glass and broke it.

They sent to the shop for a new pane of glass, and the man stayed late that night and put it in in his own time, thus bearing half the cost of repairing it.

Things were not very busy just then, and on the following Saturday two of the hands were 'stood off'. The stranger was one of them, and nearly everybody was very pleased. At mealtimes the story of the broken window was repeatedly told amid jeering laughter. It really seemed as if a certain amount of indignation was felt that a stranger--especially such an inferior person as this chap who did not know how to use a lamp--should have had the cheek to try to earn his living at all! One thing was very certain--they said, gleefully--he would never get another job at Rushton's: that was one good thing.

And yet they all knew that this accident might have happened to any one of them.

Once a couple of men got the sack because a ceiling they distempered had to be washed off and done again. It was not really the men's fault

at all: it was a ceiling that needed special treatment and they had not been allowed to do it properly.

But all the same, when they got the sack most of the others laughed and sneered and were glad. Perhaps because they thought that the fact that these two unfortunates had been disgraced, increased their own chances of being 'kept on'. And so it was with nearly everything. With a few exceptions, they had an immense amount of respect for Rushton and Hunter, and very little respect or sympathy for each other.

Exactly the same lack of feeling for each other prevailed amongst the members of all the different trades. Everybody seemed glad if anybody got into trouble for any reason whatever.

There was a garden gate that had been made at the carpenter's shop: it was not very well put together, and for the usual reason; the man had not been allowed the time to do it properly. After it was fixed, one of his shopmates wrote upon it with lead pencil in big letters: 'This is good work for a joiner. Order one ton of putty.'

But to hear them talking in the pub of a Saturday afternoon just after pay-time one would think them the best friends and mates and the most independent spirits in the world, fellows whom it would be very dangerous to trifle with, and who would stick up for each other through thick and thin. All sorts of stories were related of the wonderful things they had done and said; of jobs they had 'chucked up', and masters they had 'told off': of pails of whitewash thrown over

offending employers, and of horrible assaults and batteries committed upon the same. But strange to say, for some reason or other, it seldom happened that a third party ever witnessed any of these prodigies. It seemed as if a chivalrous desire to spare the feelings of their victims had always prevented them from doing or saying anything to them in the presence of witnesses.

When he had drunk a few pints, Crass was a very good hand at these stories. Here is one that he told in the bar of the Cricketers on the Saturday afternoon of the same week that Bill Bates and the Semi-drunk got the sack. The Cricketers was only a few minutes walk from the shop and at pay-time a number of the men used to go in there to take a drink before going home.

'Last Thursday night about five o'clock, 'Unter comes inter the paint-shop an' ses to me, "I wants a pail o' wash made up tonight, Crass," 'e ses, "ready for fust thing in the mornin'," 'e ses. "Oh," I ses, lookin' 'im straight in the bloody eye, "Oh, yer do, do yer?"--just like that. "Yes," 'e ses. "Well, you can bloody well make it yerself!" I ses, "'cos I ain't agoin' to," I ses--just like that. "Wot the 'ell do yer mean," I ses, "by comin' 'ere at this time o' night with a order like that?" I ses. You'd a larfed,' continued Crass, as he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand after taking another drink out of his glass, and looking round to note the effect of the story, 'you'd a larfed if you'd bin there. 'E was fairly flabbergasted! And wen I said that to 'im I see 'is jaw drop! An' then 'e started apoligizing and said as 'e 'adn't meant no offence, but

I told 'im bloody straight not to come no more of it. "You bring the horder at a reasonable time," I ses--just like that--"and I'll attend to it," I ses, "but not otherwise," I ses.'

As he concluded this story, Crass drained his glass and gazed round upon the audience, who were full of admiration. They looked at each other and at Crass and nodded their heads approvingly. Yes, undoubtedly, that was the proper way to deal with such bounders as Nimrod; take up a strong attitude, an' let 'em see as you'll stand no nonsense!

'Yer don't blame me, do yer?' continued Crass. 'Why should we put up with a lot of old buck from the likes of 'im! We're not a lot of bloody Chinamen, are we?'

So far from blaming him, they all assured him that they would have acted in precisely the same way under similar circumstances.

'For my part, I'm a bloke like this,' said a tall man with a very loud voice--a chap who nearly fell down dead every time Rushton or Misery looked at him. 'I'm a bloke like this 'ere: I never stands no cheek from no gaffers! If a guv'nor ses two bloody words to me, I downs me tools and I ses to 'im, "Wot! Don't I suit yer, guv'ner? Ain't I done enuff for yer? Werry good! Gimmie me bleedin' a'pence."'

'Quite right too,' said everybody. That was the way to serve 'em. If only everyone would do the same as the tall man--who had just paid for

another round of drinks--things would be a lot more comfortable than they was.

'Last summer I was workin' for ole Buncer,' said a little man with a cutaway coat several sizes too large for him. 'I was workin' for ole Buncer, over at Windley, an' you all knows as 'e don't arf lower it. Well, one day, when I knowed 'e was on the drunk, I 'ad to first coat a room out--white; so thinks I to meself, "If I buck up I shall be able to get this lot done by about four o'clock, an' then I can clear orf 'ome. 'Cos I reckoned as 'e'd be about flattened out by that time, an' you know 'e ain't got no foreman. So I tears into it an' gets this 'ere room done about a quarter past four, an' I'd just got me things put away for the night w'en 'oo should come fallin' up the bloody stairs but ole Buncer, drunk as a howl! An' no sooner 'e gits inter the room than 'e starts yappin' an' rampin'." "Is this 'ere hall you've done?" 'e shouts out. "Wotcher bin up to hall day?" 'e ses, an' 'e keeps on shouting' an' swearin' till at last I couldn't stand it no longer, 'cos you can guess I wasn't in a very good temper with 'im comin' along jist then w'en I thought I was goin' to get orf a bit early--so w'en 'e kept on shoutin' I never made no answer to 'im, but ups with me fist an' I gives 'im a slosh in the dial an' stopped 'is clock! Then I chucked the pot o' w'ite paint hover 'im, an' kicked 'im down the bloody stairs.'

'Serve 'im blooming well right, too,' said Crass as he took a fresh glass of beer from one of the others, who had just 'stood' another round.

'What did the b--r say to that?' inquired the tall man.

'Not a bloody word!' replied the little man, ''E picked 'isself up, and called a keb wot was passin' an' got inter it an' went 'ome; an' I never seen no more of 'im until about 'arf-past eleven the next day, w'en I was second-coatin' the room, an' 'e comes up with a noo suit o' clothes on, an' arsts me if I'd like to come hover to the pub an' 'ave a drink? So we goes hover, an' 'e calls for a w'iskey an' soda for isself an' arsts me wot I'd 'ave, so I 'ad the same. An' w'ile we was gettin' it down us, 'e ses to me, "Ah, Garge," 'e ses. "You losed your temper with me yesterday,"' 'e ses.'

'There you are, you see!' said the tall man. 'There's an example for yer! If you 'adn't served 'im as you did you'd most likely 'ave 'ad to put up with a lot more ole buck.'

They all agreed that the little man had done quite right: they all said that they didn' blame him in the least: they would all have done the same: in fact, this was the way they all conducted themselves whenever occasion demanded it. To hear them talk, one would imagine that such affairs as the recent exploit of Bill Bates and the Semi-drunk were constantly taking place, instead of only occurring about once in a blue moon.

Crass stood the final round of drinks, and as he evidently thought that circumstance deserved to be signalized in some special manner, he

proposed the following toast, which was drunk with enthusiasm:

'To hell with the man,
May he never grow fat,
What carries two faces,
Under one 'at.'

Rushton & Co. did a lot of work that summer. They did not have many big jobs, but there were a lot of little ones, and the boy Bert was kept busy running from one to the other. He spent most of his time dragging a handcart with loads of paint, or planks and steps, and seldom went out to work with the men, for when he was not taking things out to the various places where the philanthropists were working, he was in the paintshop at the yard, scraping out dirty paint-pots or helping Crass to mix up colours. Although scarcely anyone seemed to notice it, the boy presented a truly pitiable spectacle. He was very pale and thin. Dragging the handcart did not help him to put on flesh, for the weather was very hot and the work made him sweat.

His home was right away on the other side of Windley. It took him more than three-quarters of an hour to walk to the shop, and as he had to be at work at six, that meant that he had to leave home at a few minutes past five every morning, so that he always got up about half past four.

He was wearing a man's coat--or rather jacket--which gave the upper part of his body a bulky appearance. The trousers were part of a suit of his own, and were somewhat narrowly cut, as is the rule with boys'

cheap ready-made trousers. These thin legs appearing under the big jacket gave him a rather grotesque appearance, which was heightened by the fact that all his clothes, cap, coat, waistcoat, trousers and boots, were smothered with paint and distemper of various colours, and there were generally a few streaks of paint of some sort or other upon his face, and of course his hands--especially round the fingernails--were grimed with it. But the worst of all were the dreadful hobnailed boots: the leather of the uppers of these was an eighth of an inch thick, and very stiff. Across the fore part of the boot this hard leather had warped into ridges and valleys, which chafed his feet, and made them bleed. The soles were five-eighths of an inch thick, covered with hobnails, and were as hard and inflexible and almost as heavy as iron. These boots hurt his feet dreadfully and made him feel very tired and miserable, for he had such a lot of walking to do. He used to be jolly glad when dinner-time came, for then he used to get out of sight in some quiet spot and lie down for the whole hour. His favourite dining-place was up in the loft over the carpenter's shop, where they stored the mouldings and architraves. No one ever came there at that hour, and after he had eaten his dinner he used to lie down and think and rest.

He nearly always had an hour for dinner, but he did not always have it at the same time: sometimes he had it at twelve o'clock and sometimes not till two. It all depended upon what stuff had to be taken to the job.

Often it happened that some men at a distant job required some material

to use immediately after dinner, and perhaps Crass was not able to get it ready till twelve o'clock, so that it was not possible to take it before dinner-time, and if Bert left it till after dinner the men would be wasting their time waiting for it: so in such cases he took it there first and had his dinner when he came back.

Sometimes he got back about half past twelve, and it was necessary for him to take out another lot of material at one o'clock.

In such a case he 'charged' half an hour overtime on his time sheet--he used to get twopence an hour for overtime.

Sometimes Crass sent him with a handcart to one job to get a pair of steps or tressels, or a plank, or some material or other, and take them to another job, and on these occasions it was often very late before he was able to take his meals. Instead of getting his breakfast at eight, it was often nearly nine before he got back to the shop, and frequently he had to go without dinner until half past one or two.

Sometimes he could scarcely manage to carry the pots of paint to the jobs; his feet were so hot and sore. When he had to push the cart it was worse still, and often when knocking-off time came he felt so tired that he could scarcely manage to walk home.

But the weather was not always hot or fine: sometimes it was quite cold, almost like winter, and there was a lot of rain that summer. At such times the boy frequently got wet through several times a day as he

went from one job to another, and he had to work all the time in his wet clothes and boots, which were usually old and out of repair and let in the water.

One of the worst jobs that he had to do was when a new stock of white lead came in. This stuff came in wooden barrels containing two hundredweight, and he used to have to dig it out of these barrels with a trowel, and put it into a metal tank, where it was kept covered with water, and the empty barrels were returned to the makers.

When he was doing this work he usually managed to get himself smeared all over with the white lead, and this circumstance, and the fact that he was always handling paint or some poisonous material or other was doubtless the cause of the terrible pains he often had in his stomach--pains that sometimes caused him to throw himself down and roll on the ground in agony.

One afternoon Crass sent him with a handcart to a job that Easton, Philpot, Harlow and Owen were just finishing. He got there about half past four and helped the men to load up the things, and afterwards walked alongside the cart with them back to the shop.

On the way they all noticed and remarked to each other that the boy looked tired and pale and that he seemed to limp: but he did not say anything, although be guessed that they were talking about him. They arrived at the shop a little before knocking-off time--about ten minutes past five. Bert helped them to unload, and afterwards, while

they were putting their things away and 'charging up' the unused materials they had brought back, he pushed the cart over to the shed where it was kept, on the other side of the yard. He did not return to the shop at once and a few minutes later when Harlow came out into the yard to get a bucket of water to wash their hands with, he saw the boy leaning on the side of the cart, crying, and holding one foot off the ground.

Harlow asked him what was the matter, and while he was speaking to him the others came out to see what was up: the boy said he had rheumatism or growing pains or something in his leg, 'just here near the knee'. But he didn't say much, he just cried miserably, and turned his head slowly from side to side, avoiding the looks of the men because he felt ashamed that they should see him cry.

When they saw how ill and miserable he looked, the men all put their hands in their pockets to get some coppers to give to him so that he could ride home on the tram. They gave him fivepence altogether, more than enough to ride all the way; and Crass told him to go at once--there was no need to wait till half past; but before he went Philpot got a small glass bottle out of his tool bag and filled it with oil and turps--two of turps and one of oil--which he gave to Bert to rub into his leg before going to bed: The turps--he explained--was to cure the pain and the oil was to prevent it from hurting the skin. He was to get his mother to rub it in for him if he were too tired to do it himself. Bert promised to observe these directions, and, drying his tears, took his dinner basket and limped off to catch the tram.

It was a few days after this that Hunter met with an accident. He was tearing off on his bicycle to one of the jobs about five minutes to twelve to see if he could catch anyone leaving off for dinner before before the proper time, and while going down a rather steep hill the front brake broke--the rubbers of the rear one were worn out and failed to act--so Misery to save himself from being smashed against the railings of the houses at the bottom of the hill, threw himself off the machine, with the result that his head and face and hands were terribly cut and bruised. He was so badly knocked about that he had to remain at home for nearly three weeks, much to the delight of the men and the annoyance--one might even say the indignation--of Mr Rushton, who did not know enough about the work to make out estimates without assistance. There were several large jobs to be tendered for at the same time, so Rushton sent the specifications round to Hunter's house for him to figure out the prices, and nearly all the time that Misery was at home he was sitting up in bed, swathed in bandages, trying to calculate the probable cost of these jobs. Rushton did not come to see him, but he sent Bert nearly every day, either with some specifications, or some accounts, or something of that sort, or with a note inquiring when Hunter thought he would be able to return to work.

All sorts of rumours became prevalent amongst the men concerning Hunter's condition. He had 'broken his spiral column', he had 'conjunction of the brain', or he had injured his 'innards' and would probably never be able to 'do no more slave-drivin''. Crass--who had helped Mr Rushton to 'price up' several small jobs--began to think it

might not be altogether a bad thing for himself if something were to happen to Hunter, and he began to put on side and to assume airs of authority. He got one of the light-weights to assist him in his work of colourman and made him do all the hard work, while he spent part of his own time visiting the different jobs to see how the work progressed.

Crass's appearance did him justice. He was wearing a pair of sporting trousers the pattern of which consisted of large black and white squares. The previous owner of these trousers was taller and slighter than Crass, so although the legs were about a couple of inches too long, they fitted him rather tightly, so much so that it was fortunate that he had his present job of colourman, for if he had had to do any climbing up and down ladders or steps, the trousers would have burst. His jacket was also two or three sizes too small, and the sleeves were so short that the cuffs of his flanelette shirt were visible. This coat was made of serge, and its colour had presumably once been blue, but it was now a sort of heliotrope and violet: the greater part being of the former tint, and the parts under the sleeves of the latter. This jacket fitted very tightly across the shoulders and back and being much too short left his tightly clad posteriors exposed to view.

He however seemed quite unconscious of anything peculiar in his appearance and was so bumptious and offensive that most of the men were almost glad when Nimrod came back. They said that if Crass ever got the job he would be a dam' sight worse than Hunter. As for the latter, for a little while after his return to work it was said that his illness had improved his character: he had had time to think things

over; and in short, he was ever so much better than before: but it was not long before this story began to be told the other way round. He was worse than ever! and a thing that happened about a fortnight after his return caused more ill feeling and resentment against him and Rushton than had ever existed previously. What led up to it was something that was done by Bundy's mate, Ted Dawson.

This poor wretch was scarcely ever seen without a load of some sort or other: carrying a sack of cement or plaster, a heavy ladder, a big bucket of mortar, or dragging a load of scaffolding on a cart. He must have been nearly as strong as a horse, because after working in this manner for Rushton & Co. from six in the morning till half past five at night, he usually went to work in his garden for two or three hours after tea, and frequently went there for an hour or so in the morning before going to work. The poor devil needed the produce of his garden to supplement his wages, for he had a wife and three children to provide for and he earned only--or rather, to be correct, he was paid only--fourpence an hour.

There was an old house to which they were making some alterations and repairs, and there was a lot of old wood taken out of it: old, decayed floorboards and stuff of that kind, wood that was of no use whatever except to burn.

Bundy and his mate were working there, and one night, Misery came a few minutes before half past five and caught Dawson in the act of tying up a small bundle of this wood. When Hunter asked him what he was going

to do with it he made no attempt at prevarication or concealment: he said he was going to take it home for fire-wood, because it was of no other use. Misery kicked up a devil of a row and ordered him to leave the wood where it was: it had to be taken to the yard, and it was nothing to do with Dawson or anyone else whether it was any use or not! If he caught anyone taking wood away he would sack them on the spot. Hunter shouted very loud so that all the others might hear, and as they were all listening attentively in the next room, where they were taking their aprons off preparatory to going home, they got the full benefit of his remarks.

The following Saturday when the hands went to the office for their money they were each presented with a printed card bearing the following legend:

> Under no circumstances is any article or material, however trifling, to be taken away by workmen for their private use, whether waste material or not, from any workshop or place where work is being done. Foremen are hereby instructed to see that this order is obeyed and to report any such act coming to their knowledge. Any man breaking this rule will be either dismissed without notice or given into custody.
>
> Rushton & Co.

Most of the men took these cards with the envelopes containing their wages and walked away without making any comment--in fact, most of them were some distance away before they realized exactly what the card was

about. Two or three of them stood a few steps away from the pay window in full view of Rushton and Misery and ostentatiously tore the thing into pieces and threw them into the street. One man remained at the pay window while he read the card--and then flung it with an obscene curse into Rushton's face, and demanded his back day, which they gave him without any remark or delay, the other men who were not yet paid having to wait while he made out his time-sheet for that morning.

The story of this card spread all over the place in a very short time. It became the talk of every shop in the town. Whenever any of Rushton's men encountered the employees of another firm, the latter used to shout after them--'However trifling!'--or 'Look out, chaps! 'Ere comes some of Rushton's pickpockets.'

Amongst Rushton's men themselves it became a standing joke or form of greeting to say when one met another--'Remember! However trifling!'

If one of their number was seen going home with an unusual amount of paint or whitewash on his hands or clothes, the others would threaten to report him for stealing the material. They used to say that however trifling the quantity, it was against orders to take it away.

Harlow drew up a list of rules which he said Mr Rushton had instructed him to communicate to the men. One of these rules provided that everybody was to be weighed upon arrival at the job in the morning and again at leaving-off time: any man found to have increased in weight was to be discharged.

There was also much cursing and covert resentment about it; the men used to say that such a thing as that looked well coming from the likes of Rushton and Hunter, and they used to remind each other of the affair of the marble-topped console table, the barometer, the venetian blinds and all the other robberies.

None of them ever said anything to either Misery or Rushton about the cards, but one morning when the latter was reading his letters at the breakfast table, on opening one of them he found that it contained one of the notices, smeared with human excrement. He did not eat any more breakfast that morning.

It was not to be much wondered at that none of them had the courage to openly resent the conditions under which they had to work, for although it was summer, there were many men out of employment, and it was much easier to get the sack than it was to get another job.

None of the men were ever caught stealing anything, however trifling, but all the same during the course of the summer five or six of them were captured by the police and sent to jail--for not being able to pay their poor rates.

All through the summer Owen continued to make himself objectionable and to incur the ridicule of his fellow workmen by talking about the causes of poverty and of ways to abolish it.

Most of the men kept two shillings or half a crown of their wages back from their wives for pocket money, which they spent on beer and tobacco. There were a very few who spent a little more than this, and there were a still smaller number who spent so much in this way that their families had to suffer in consequence.

Most of those who kept back half a crown or three shillings from their wives did so on the understanding that they were to buy their clothing out of it. Some of them had to pay a shilling a week to a tallyman or credit clothier. These were the ones who indulged in shoddy new suits--at long intervals. Others bought--or got their wives to buy for them--their clothes at second-hand shops, 'paying off' about a shilling or so a week and not receiving the things till they were paid for.

There were a very large proportion of them who did not spend even a shilling a week for drink: and there were numerous others who, while not being formally total abstainers, yet often went for weeks together without either entering a public house or tasting intoxicating drink in any form.

Then there were others who, instead of drinking tea or coffee or cocoa with their dinners or suppers, drank beer. This did not cost more than the teetotal drinks, but all the same there are some persons who say that those who swell the 'Nation's Drink Bill' by drinking beer with their dinners or suppers are a kind of criminal, and that they ought to be compelled to drink something else: that is, if they are working people. As for the idle classes, they of course are to be allowed to

continue to make merry, 'drinking whisky, wine and sherry', to say nothing of having their beer in by the barrel and the dozen--or forty dozen--bottles. But of course that's a different matter, because these people make so much money out of the labour of the working classes that they can afford to indulge in this way without depriving their children of the necessaries of life.

There is no more cowardly, dastardly slander than is contained in the assertion that the majority or any considerable proportion of working men neglect their families through drink. It is a condemned lie. There are some who do, but they are not even a large minority. They are few and far between, and are regarded with contempt by their fellow workmen.

It will be said that their families had to suffer for want of even the little that most of them spent in that way: but the persons that use this argument should carry it to its logical conclusion. Tea is an unnecessary and harmful drink; it has been condemned by medical men so often that to enumerate its evil qualities here would be waste of time. The same can be said of nearly all the cheap temperance drinks; they are unnecessary and harmful and cost money, and, like beer, are drunk only for pleasure.

What right has anyone to say to working men that when their work is done they should not find pleasure in drinking a glass or two of beer together in a tavern or anywhere else? Let those who would presume to condemn them carry their argument to its logical conclusion and condemn pleasure of every kind. Let them persuade the working classes to lead

still simpler lives; to drink water instead of such unwholesome things as tea, coffee, beer, lemonade and all the other harmful and unnecessary stuff. They would then be able to live ever so much more cheaply, and as wages are always and everywhere regulated by the cost of living, they would be able to work for lower pay.

These people are fond of quoting the figures of the 'Nation's Drink Bill,' as if all this money were spent by the working classes! But if the amount of money spent in drink by the 'aristocracy', the clergy and the middle classes were deducted from the 'Nation's Drink Bill', it would be seen that the amount spent per head by the working classes is not so alarming after all; and would probably not be much larger than the amount spent on drink by those who consume tea and coffee and all the other unwholesome and unnecessary 'temperance' drinks.

The fact that some of Rushton's men spent about two shillings a week on drink while they were in employment was not the cause of their poverty. If they had never spent a farthing for drink, and if their wretched wages had been increased fifty percent, they would still have been in a condition of the most abject and miserable poverty, for nearly all the benefits and privileges of civilization, nearly everything that makes life worth living, would still have been beyond their reach.

It is inevitable, so long as men have to live and work under such heartbreaking, uninteresting conditions as at present that a certain proportion of them will seek forgetfulness and momentary happiness in the tavern, and the only remedy for this evil is to remove the cause;

and while that is in process, there is something else that can be done and that is, instead of allowing filthy drinking dens, presided over by persons whose interest it is to encourage men to drink more bad beer than is good for them or than they can afford,--to have civilized institutions run by the State or the municipalities for use and not merely for profit. Decent pleasure houses, where no drunkenness or filthiness would be tolerated--where one could buy real beer or coffee or tea or any other refreshments; where men could repair when their day's work was over and spend an hour or two in rational intercourse with their fellows or listen to music and singing. Taverns to which they could take their wives and children without fear of defilement, for a place that is not fit for the presence of a woman or a child is not fit to exist at all.

Owen, being a teetotaller, did not spend any of his money on drink; but he spent a lot on what he called 'The Cause'. Every week he bought some penny or twopenny pamphlets or some leaflets about Socialism, which he lent or gave to his mates; and in this way and by means of much talk he succeeded in converting a few to his party. Philpot, Harlow and a few others used to listen with interest, and some of them even paid for the pamphlets they obtained from Owen, and after reading them themselves, passed them on to others, and also occasionally 'got up' arguments on their own accounts. Others were simply indifferent, or treated the subject as a kind of joke, ridiculing the suggestion that it was possible to abolish poverty. They repeated that there had 'always been rich and poor in the world and there always would be, so there was an end of it'. But the majority were bitterly hostile; not

to Owen, but to Socialism. For the man himself most of them had a certain amount of liking, especially the ordinary hands because it was known that he was not a 'master's man' and that he had declined to 'take charge' of jobs which Misery had offered to him. But to Socialism they were savagely and malignantly opposed. Some of those who had shown some symptoms of Socialism during the past winter when they were starving had now quite recovered and were stout defenders of the Present System.

Barrington was still working for the firm and continued to maintain his manner of reserve, seldom speaking unless addressed but all the same, for several reasons, it began to be rumoured that he shared Owen's views. He always paid for the pamphlets that Owen gave him, and on one occasion, when Owen bought a thousand leaflets to give away, Barrington contributed a shilling towards the half-crown that Owen paid for them. But he never took any part in the arguments that sometimes raged during the dinner-hour or at breakfast-time.

It was a good thing for Owen that he had his enthusiasm for 'the cause' to occupy his mind. Socialism was to him what drink was to some of the others--the thing that enable them to forget and tolerate the conditions under which they were forced to exist. Some of them were so muddled with beer, and others so besotted with admiration of their Liberal and Tory masters, that they were oblivious of the misery of their own lives, and in a similar way, Owen was so much occupied in trying to rouse them from their lethargy and so engrossed in trying to think out new arguments to convince them of the possibility of bringing

about an improvement in their condition that he had no time to dwell upon his own poverty; the money that he spent on leaflets and pamphlets to give away might have been better spent on food and clothing for himself, because most of those to whom he gave them were by no means grateful; but he never thought of that; and after all, nearly everyone spends money on some hobby or other. Some people deny themselves the necessaries or comforts of life in order that they may be able to help to fatten a publican. Others deny themselves in order to enable a lazy parson to live in idleness and luxury; and others spend much time and money that they really need for themselves in buying Socialist literature to give away to people who don't want to know about Socialism.

One Sunday morning towards the end of July, a band of about twenty-five men and women on bicycles invaded the town. Two of them--who rode a few yards in front of the others, had affixed to the handlebars of each of their machines a slender, upright standard from the top of one of which fluttered a small flag of crimson silk with 'International Brotherhood and Peace' in gold letters. The other standard was similar in size and colour, but with a different legend: 'One for all and All for one.'

As they rode along they gave leaflets to the people in the streets, and whenever they came to a place where there were many people they dismounted and walked about, giving their leaflets to whoever would accept them. They made several long halts during their progress along the Grand Parade, where there was a considerable crowd, and then they

rode over the hill to Windley, which they reached a little before opening time. There were little crowds waiting outside the several public houses and a number of people passing through the streets on their way home from Church and Chapel. The strangers distributed leaflets to all those who would take them, and they went through a lot of the side streets, putting leaflets under the doors and in the letter-boxes. When they had exhausted their stock they remounted and rode back the way they came.

Meantime the news of their arrival had spread, and as they returned through the town they were greeted with jeers and booing. Presently someone threw a stone, and as there happened to be plenty of stones just there several others followed suit and began running after the retreating cyclists, throwing stones, hooting and cursing.

The leaflet which had given rise to all this fury read as follows:

WHAT IS SOCIALISM?

> At present the workers, with hand and brain produce continually food, clothing and all useful and beautiful things in great abundance.
>
> BUT THEY LABOUR IN VAIN--for they are mostly poor and often in want. They find it a hard struggle to live. Their women and children suffer, and their old age is branded with pauperism.

Socialism is a plan by which poverty will be abolished, and everyone enabled to live in plenty and comfort, with leisure and opportunity for ampler life.

If you wish to hear more of this plan, come to the field at the Cross Roads on the hill at Windley, on Tuesday evening next at 8 P.M. and

LOOK OUT FOR THE SOCIALIST VAN

The cyclists rode away amid showers of stones without sustaining much damage. One had his hand cut and another, who happened to look round, was struck on the forehead, but these were the only casualties.

On the following Tuesday evening, long before the appointed time, there was a large crowd assembled at the cross roads or the hill at Windley, waiting for the appearance of the van, and they were evidently prepared to give the Socialists a warm reception. There was only one policeman in uniform there but there were several in plain clothes amongst the crowd.

Crass, Dick Wantley, the Semi-drunk, Sawkins, Bill Bates and several other frequenters of the Cricketers were amongst the crowd, and there were also a sprinkling of tradespeople, including the Old Dear and Mr Smallman, the grocer, and a few ladies and gentlemen--wealthy visitors--but the bulk of the crowd were working men, labourers, mechanics and boys.

As it was quite evident that the crowd meant mischief--many of them had their pockets filled with stones and were armed with sticks--several of the Socialists were in favour of going to meet the van to endeavour to persuade those in charge from coming, and with that object they withdrew from the crowd, which was already regarding them with menacing looks, and went down the road in the direction from which the van was expected to come. They had not gone very far, however, before the people, divining what they were going to do, began to follow them and while they were hesitating what course to pursue, the Socialist van, escorted by five or six men on bicycles, appeared round the corner at the bottom of the hill.

As soon as the crowd saw it, they gave an exultant cheer, or, rather, yell, and began running down the hilt to meet it, and in a few minutes it was surrounded by a howling mob. The van was drawn by two horses; there was a door and a small platform at the back and over this was a sign with white letters on a red ground: 'Socialism, the only hope of the Workers.'

The driver pulled up, and another man on the platform at the rear attempted to address the crowd, but his voice was inaudible in the din of howls, catcalls, hooting and obscene curses. After about an hour of this, as the crowd began pushing against the van and trying to overturn it, the terrified horses commenced to get restive and uncontrollable, and the man on the box attempted to drive up the hill. This seemed to still further infuriate the horde of savages who surrounded the van.

Numbers of them clutched the wheels and turned them the reverse way, screaming that it must go back to where it came from; several of them accordingly seized the horses' heads and, amid cheers, turned them round.

The man on the platform was still trying to make himself heard, but without success. The strangers who had come with the van and the little group of local Socialists, who had forced their way through the crowd and gathered together close to the platform in front of the would-be speaker, only increased the din by their shouts of appeal to the crowd to 'give the man a fair chance'. This little bodyguard closed round the van as it began to move slowly downhill, but they were not sufficiently numerous to protect it from the crowd, which, not being satisfied with the rate at which the van was proceeding, began to shout to each other to 'Run it away!' 'Take the brake off!' and several savage rushes were made with the intention of putting these suggestions into execution.

Some of the defenders were hampered with their bicycles, but they resisted as well as they were able, and succeeded in keeping the crowd off until the foot of the hill was reached, and then someone threw the first stone, which by a strange chance happened to strike one of the cyclists whose head was already bandaged--it was the same man who had been hit on the Sunday. This stone was soon followed by others, and the man on the platform was the next to be struck. He got it right on the mouth, and as he put up his handkerchief to staunch the blood another struck him on the forehead just above the temple, and he

dropped forward on his face on to the platform as if he had been shot.

As the speed of the vehicle increased, a regular hail of stones fell upon the roof and against the sides of the van and whizzed past the retreating cyclists, while the crowd followed close behind, cheering, shrieking out volleys of obscene curses, and howling like wolves.

'We'll give the b--rs Socialism!' shouted Crass, who was literally foaming at the mouth.

'We'll teach 'em to come 'ere trying to undermined our bloody morality,' howled Dick Wantley as he hurled a lump of granite that he had torn up from the macadamized road at one of the cyclists.

They ran on after the van until it was out of range, and then they bethought themselves of the local Socialists; but they were nowhere to be seen; they had prudently withdrawn as soon as the van had got fairly under way, and the victory being complete, the upholders of the present system returned to the piece of waste ground on the top of the hill, where a gentleman in a silk hat and frockcoat stood up on a little hillock and made a speech. He said nothing about the Distress Committee or the Soup Kitchen or the children who went to school without proper clothes or food, and made no reference to what was to be done next winter, when nearly everybody would be out of work. These were matters he and they were evidently not at all interested in. But he said a good deal about the Glorious Empire! and the Flag! and the Royal Family. The things he said were received with rapturous

applause, and at the conclusion of his address, the crowd sang the National Anthem with great enthusiasm and dispersed, congratulating themselves that they had shown to the best of their ability what Mugsborough thought of Socialism and the general opinion of the crowd was that they would hear nothing more from the Socialist van.

But in this they were mistaken, for the very next Sunday evening a crowd of Socialists suddenly materialized at the Cross Roads. Some of them had come by train, others had walked from different places and some had cycled.

A crowd gathered and the Socialists held a meeting, two speeches being delivered before the crowd recovered from their surprise at the temerity of these other Britishers who apparently had not sense enough to understand that they had been finally defeated and obliterated last Tuesday evening: and when the cyclist with the bandaged head got up on the hillock some of the crowd actually joined in the hand-clapping with which the Socialists greeted him.

In the course of his speech he informed them that the man who had come with the van and who had been felled whilst attempting to speak from the platform was now in hospital. For some time it had been probable that he would not recover, but he was now out of danger, and as soon as he was well enough there was no doubt that he would come there again.

Upon this Crass shouted out that if ever the Vanners did return, they would finish what they had begun last Tuesday. He would not get off so

easy next time. But when he said this, Crass--not being able to see into the future--did not know what the reader will learn in due time, that the man was to return to that place under different circumstances.

When they had finished their speech-making one of the strangers who was acting as chairman invited the audience to put questions, but as nobody wanted to ask any, he invited anyone who disagreed with what had been said to get up on the hillock and state his objections, so that the audience might have an opportunity of judging for themselves which side was right; but this invitation was also neglected. Then the chairman announced that they were coming there again next Sunday at the same time, when a comrade would speak on 'Unemployment and Poverty, the Cause and the Remedy', and then the strangers sang a song called 'England Arise', the first verse being:

> England Arise, the long, long night is over,
> Faint in the east, behold the Dawn appear
> Out of your evil dream of toil and sorrow
> Arise, O England! for the day is here!

During the progress of the meeting several of the strangers had been going out amongst the crowd giving away leaflets, which many of the people gloomily refused to accept, and selling penny pamphlets, of which they managed to dispose of about three dozen.

Before declaring the meeting closed, the chairman said that the speaker who was coming next week resided in London: he was not a millionaire,

but a workman, the same as nearly all those who were there present. They were not going to pay him anything for coming, but they intended to pay his railway fare. Therefore next Sunday after the meeting there would be a collection, and anything over the amount of the fare would be used for the purchase of more leaflets such as those they were now giving away. He hoped that anyone who thought that any of the money went into the pockets of those who held the meeting would come and join: then they could have their share.

The meeting now terminated and the Socialists were suffered to depart in peace. Some of them, however, lingered amongst the crowd after the main body had departed, and for a long time after the meeting was over little groups remained on the field excitedly discussing the speeches or the leaflets.

The next Sunday evening when the Socialists came they found the field at the Cross Roads in the possession of a furious, hostile mob, who refused to allow them to speak, and finally they had to go away without having held a meeting. They came again the next Sunday, and on this occasion they had a speaker with a very loud--literally a stentorian--voice, and he succeeded in delivering an address, but as only those who were very close were able to hear him, and as they were all Socialists, it was not of much effect upon those for whom it was intended.

They came again the next Sunday and nearly every other Sunday during the summer: sometimes they were permitted to hold their meeting in

comparative peace and at other times there was a row. They made several converts, and many people declared themselves in favour of some of the things advocated, but they were never able to form a branch of their society there, because nearly all those who were convinced were afraid to publicly declare themselves lest they should lose their employment or customers.