Chapter 44

The Beano

Now and then a transient gleam of sunshine penetrated the gloom in which the lives of the philanthropists were passed. The cheerless monotony was sometimes enlivened with a little innocent merriment. Every now and then there was a funeral which took Misery and Crass away for the whole afternoon, and although they always tried to keep the dates secret, the men generally knew when they were gone.

Sometimes the people in whose houses they were working regaled them with tea, bread and butter, cake or other light refreshments, and occasionally even with beer--very different stuff from the petrifying liquid they bought at the Cricketers for twopence a pint. At other places, where the people of the house were not so generously disposed, the servants made up for it, and entertained them in a similar manner without the knowledge of their masters and mistresses. Even when the mistresses were too cunning to permit of this, they were seldom able to prevent the men from embracing the domestics, who for their part were quite often willing to be embraced; it was an agreeable episode that helped to vary the monotony of their lives, and there was no harm done.

It was rather hard lines on the philanthropists sometimes when they happened to be working in inhabited houses of the better sort. They always had to go in and out by the back way, generally through the

kitchen, and the crackling and hissing of the poultry and the joints of meat roasting in the ovens, and the odours of fruit pies and tarts, and plum puddings and sage and onions, were simply maddening. In the back-yards of these houses there were usually huge stacks of empty beer, stout and wine bottles, and others that had contained whisky, brandy or champagne.

The smells of the delicious viands that were being prepared in the kitchen often penetrated into the dismantled rooms that the philanthropists were renovating, sometimes just as they were eating their own wretched fare out of their dinner basket, and washing it down with draughts of the cold tea or the petrifying liquid they sometimes brought with them in bottles.

Sometimes, as has been said, the people of the house used to send up some tea and bread and butter or cakes or other refreshments to the workmen, but whenever Hunter got to know of it being done he used to speak to the people about it and request that it be discontinued, as it caused the men to waste their time.

But the event of the year was the Beano, which took place on the last Saturday in August, after they had been paying in for about four months. The cost of the outing was to be five shillings a head, so this was the amount each man had to pay in, but it was expected that the total cost--the hire of the brakes and the cost of the dinner--would come out at a trifle less than the amount stated, and in that case the surplus would be shared out after the dinner. The amount

of the share-out would be greater or less according to other circumstances, for it generally happened that apart from the subscriptions of the men, the Beano fund was swelled by charitable donations from several quarters, as will be seen later on.

When the eventful day arrived, the hands, instead of working till one, were paid at twelve o'clock and rushed off home to have a wash and change.

The brakes were to start from the 'Cricketers' at one, but it was arranged, for the convenience of those who lived at Windley, that they were to be picked up at the Cross Roads at one-thirty.

There were four brakes altogether--three large ones for the men and one small one for the accommodation of Mr Rushton and a few of his personal friends, Didlum, Grinder, Mr Toonarf, an architect and Mr Lettum, a house and estate Agent. One of the drivers was accompanied by a friend who carried a long coachman's horn. This gentleman was not paid to come, but, being out of work, he thought that the men would be sure to stand him a few drinks and that they would probably make a collection for him in return for his services.

Most of the chaps were smoking twopenny cigars, and had one or two drinks with each other to try to cheer themselves up before they started, but all the same it was a melancholy procession that wended its way up the hill to Windley. To judge from the mournful expression on the long face of Misery, who sat on the box beside the driver of the

first large brake, and the downcast appearance of the majority of the men, one might have thought that it was a funeral rather than a pleasure party, or that they were a contingent of lost souls being conducted to the banks of the Styx. The man who from time to time sounded the coachman's horn might have passed as the angel sounding the last trump, and the fumes of the cigars were typical of the smoke of their torment, which ascendeth up for ever and ever.

A brief halt was made at the Cross Roads to pick up several of the men, including Philpot, Harlow, Easton, Ned Dawson, Sawkins, Bill Bates and the Semi-drunk. The two last-named were now working for Smeariton and Leavit, but as they had been paying in from the first, they had elected to go to the Beano rather than have their money back. The Semi-drunk and one or two other habitual boozers were very shabby and down at heel, but the majority of the men were decently dressed. Some had taken their Sunday clothes out of pawn especially for the occasion. Others were arrayed in new suits which they were going to pay for at the rate of a shilling a week. Some had bought themselves second-hand suits, one or two were wearing their working clothes brushed and cleaned up, and some were wearing Sunday clothes that had not been taken out of pawn for the simple reason that the pawnbrokers would not take them in. These garments were in what might be called a transition stage--old-fashioned and shiny with wear, but yet too good to take for working in, even if their owners had been in a position to buy some others to take their place for best. Crass, Slyme and one or two of the single men, however, were howling swells, sporting stand-up collars and bowler hats of the latest type, in contradistinction to some of the

others, who were wearing hats of antique patterns, and collars of various shapes with jagged edges. Harlow had on an old straw hat that his wife had cleaned up with oxalic acid, and Easton had carefully dyed the faded binding of his black bowler with ink. Their boots were the worst part of their attire: without counting Rushton and his friends, there were thirty-seven men altogether, including Nimrod, and there were not half a dozen pairs of really good boots amongst the whole crowd.

When all were seated a fresh start was made. The small brake, with Rushton, Didlum, Grinder and two or three other members of the Band, led the way. Next came the largest brake with Misery on the box. Beside the driver of the third brake was Payne, the foreman carpenter. Crass occupied a similar position of honour on the fourth brake, on the back step of which was perched the man with the coachman's horn.

Crass--who had engaged the brakes--had arranged with the drivers that the cortege should pass through the street where he and Easton lived, and as they went by Mrs Crass was standing at the door with the two young men lodgers, who waved their handkerchiefs and shouted greetings. A little further on Mrs Linden and Easton's wife were standing at the door to see them go by. In fact, the notes of the coachman's horn alarmed most of the inhabitants, who crowded to their windows and doors to gaze upon the dismal procession as it passed.

The mean streets of Windley were soon left far behind and they found themselves journeying along a sunlit, winding road, bordered with

hedges of hawthorn, holly and briar, past rich, brown fields of standing corn, shimmering with gleams of gold, past apple-orchards where bending boughs were heavily loaded with mellow fruits exhaling fragrant odours, through the cool shades of lofty avenues of venerable oaks, whose overarched and interlacing branches formed a roof of green, gilt and illuminated with quivering spots and shafts of sunlight that filtered through the trembling leaves; over old mossy stone bridges, spanning limpid streams that duplicated the blue sky and the fleecy clouds; and then again, stretching away to the horizon on every side over more fields, some rich with harvest, others filled with drowsing cattle or with flocks of timid sheep that scampered away at the sound of the passing carriages. Several times they saw merry little companies of rabbits frisking gaily in and out of the hedges or in the fields beside the sheep and cattle. At intervals, away in the distance, nestling in the hollows or amid sheltering trees, groups of farm buildings and stacks of hay; and further on, the square ivy-clad tower of an ancient church, or perhaps a solitary windmill with its revolving sails alternately flashing and darkening in the rays of the sun. Past thatched wayside cottages whose inhabitants came out to wave their hands in friendly greeting. Past groups of sunburnt, golden-haired children who climbed on fences and five-barred gates, and waved their hats and cheered, or ran behind the brakes for the pennies the men threw down to them.

From time to time the men in the brakes made half-hearted attempts at singing, but it never came to much, because most of them were too hungry and miserable. They had not had time to take any dinner and

would not have taken any even if they had the time, for they wished to reserve their appetites for the banquet at the Queen Elizabeth, which they expected to reach about half past three. However, they cheered up a little after the first halt--at the Blue Lion, where most of them got down and had a drink. Some of them, including the Semi-drunk, Ned Dawson, Bill Bates and Joe Philpot--had two or three drinks, and felt so much happier for them that, shortly after they started off again, sounds of melody were heard from the brake the three first named rode in--the one presided over by Crass--but it was not very successful, and even after the second halt--about five miles further on--at the Warrior's Head, they found it impossible to sing with any heartiness. Fitful bursts of song arose from time to time from each of the brakes in turn, only to die mournfully away. It is not easy to sing on an empty stomach even if one has got a little beer in it; and so it was with most of them. They were not in a mood to sing, or to properly appreciate the scenes through which they were passing. They wanted their dinners, and that was the reason why this long ride, instead of being a pleasure, became after a while, a weary journey that seemed as if it were never coming to an end.

The next stop was at the Bird in Hand, a wayside public house that stood all by itself in a lonely hollow. The landlord was a fat, jolly-looking man, and there were several customers in the bar--men who looked like farm-labourers, but there were no other houses to be seen anywhere. This extraordinary circumstance exercised the minds of our travellers and formed the principal topic of conversation until they arrived at the Dew Drop Inn, about half an hour afterwards. The first

brake, containing Rushton and his friends, passed on without stopping here. The occupants of the second brake, which was only a little way behind the first, were divided in opinion whether to stop or go on. Some shouted out to the driver to pull up, others ordered him to proceed, and more were undecided which course to pursue--a state of mind that was not shared by the coachman, who, knowing that if they stopped somebody or other would be sure to stand him a drink, had no difficulty whatever in coming to a decision, but drew rein at the inn, an example that was followed by both the other carriages as they drove up.

It was a very brief halt, not more than half the men getting down at all, and those who remained in the brakes grumbled so much at the delay that the others drank their beer as quickly as possible and the journey was resumed once more, almost in silence. No attempts at singing, no noisy laughter; they scarcely spoke to each other, but sat gloomily gazing out over the surrounding country.

Instructions had been given to the drivers not to stop again till they reached the Queen Elizabeth, and they therefore drove past the World Turned Upside Down without stopping, much to the chagrin of the landlord of that house, who stood at the door with a sickly smile upon his face. Some of those who knew him shouted out that they would give him a call on their way back, and with this he had to be content.

They reached the long-desired Queen Elizabeth at twenty minutes to four, and were immediately ushered into a large room where a round

table and two long ones were set for dinner--and they were set in a manner worthy of the reputation of the house.

The cloths that covered the tables and the serviettes, arranged fanwise in the drinking glasses, were literally as white as snow, and about a dozen knives and forks and spoons were laid for each person. Down the centre of the table glasses of delicious yellow custard and cut-glass dishes of glistening red and golden jelly alternated with vases of sweet-smelling flowers.

The floor of the dining-room was covered with oilcloth--red flowers on a pale yellow ground; the pattern was worn off in places, but it was all very clean and shining. Whether one looked at the walls with the old-fashioned varnished oak paper, or at the glossy piano standing across the corner near the white-curtained window, at the shining oak chairs or through the open casement doors that led into the shady garden beyond, the dominating impression one received was that everything was exquisitely clean.

The landlord announced that dinner would be served in ten minutes, and while they were waiting some of them indulged in a drink at the bar--just as an appetizer--whilst the others strolled in the garden or, by the landlord's invitation, looked over the house. Amongst other places, they glanced into the kitchen, where the landlady was superintending the preparation of the feast, and in this place, with its whitewashed walls and red-tiled floor, as in every other part of the house, the same absolute cleanliness reigned supreme.

'It's a bit differint from the Royal Caff, where we got the sack, ain't it?' remarked the Semi-drunk to Bill Bates as they made their way to the dining-room in response to the announcement that dinner was ready.

'Not arf!' replied Bill.

Rushton, with Didlum and Grinder and his other friends, sat at the round table near the piano. Hunter took the head of the longer of the other two tables and Crass the foot, and on either side of Crass were Bundy and Slyme, who had acted with him as the Committee who had arranged the Beano. Payne, the foreman carpenter, occupied the head of the other table.

The dinner was all that could be desired; it was almost as good as the kind of dinner that is enjoyed every day by those persons who are too lazy to work but are cunning enough to make others work for them.

There was soup, several entrees, roast beef, boiled mutton, roast turkey, roast goose, ham, cabbage, peas, beans and sweets galore, plum pudding, custard, jelly, fruit tarts, bread and cheese and as much beer or lemonade as they liked to pay for, the drinks being an extra; and afterwards the waiters brought in cups of coffee for those who desired it. Everything was up to the knocker, and although they were somewhat bewildered by the multitude of knives and forks, they all, with one or two exceptions, rose to the occasion and enjoyed themselves famously. The excellent decorum observed being marred only by one or two

regrettable incidents. The first of these occurred almost as soon as they sat down, when Ned Dawson who, although a big strong fellow, was not able to stand much beer, not being used to it, was taken ill and had to be escorted from the room by his mate Bundy and another man. They left him somewhere outside and he came back again about ten minutes afterwards, much better but looking rather pale, and took his seat with the others.

The turkeys, the roast beef and the boiled mutton, the peas and beans and the cabbage, disappeared with astonishing rapidity, which was not to be wondered at, for they were all very hungry from the long drive, and nearly everyone made a point of having at least one helping of everything there was to be had. Some of them went in for two lots of soup. Then for the next course, boiled mutton and ham or turkey: then some roast beef and goose. Then a little more boiled mutton with a little roast beef. Each of the three boys devoured several times his own weight of everything, to say nothing of numerous bottles of lemonade and champagne ginger beer.

Crass frequently paused to mop the perspiration from his face and neck with his serviette. In fact everybody had a good time. There was enough and to spare of everything to eat, the beer was of the best, and all the time, amid the rattle of the crockery and the knives and forks, the proceedings were enlivened by many jests and flashes of wit that continuously kept the table in a roar.

'Chuck us over another dollop of that there white stuff, Bob,' shouted

the Semi-drunk to Crass, indicating the blancmange.

Crass reached out his hand and took hold of the dish containing the 'white stuff', but instead of passing it to the Semi-drunk, he proceeded to demolish it himself, gobbling it up quickly directly from the dish with a spoon.

'Why, you're eating it all yerself, yer bleeder,' cried the Semi-drunk indignantly, as soon as he realized what was happening.

'That's all right, matey,' replied Crass affably as he deposited the empty dish on the table. 'It don't matter, there's plenty more where it come from. Tell the landlord to bring in another lot.'

Upon being applied to, the landlord, who was assisted by his daughter, two other young women and two young men, brought in several more lots and so the Semi-drunk was appeased.

As for the plum-pudding--it was a fair knock-out; just like Christmas: but as Ned Dawson and Bill Bates had drunk all the sauce before the pudding was served, they all had to have their first helping without any. However, as the landlord brought in another lot shortly afterwards, that didn't matter either.

As soon as dinner was over, Crass rose to make his statement as secretary. Thirty-seven men had paid five shillings each: that made nine pounds five shillings. The committee had decided that the three

boys--the painters' boy, the carpenters' boy and the front shop boy--should be allowed to come half-price: that made it nine pounds twelve and six. In addition to paying the ordinary five-shilling subscription, Mr Rushton had given one pound ten towards the expenses. (Loud cheers.) And several other gentlemen had also given something towards it. Mr Sweater, of the Cave, one pound. (Applause.) Mr Grinder, ten shillings in addition to the five-shilling subscription. (Applause.) Mr Lettum, ten shillings, as well as the five-shilling subscription. (Applause.) Mr Didlum, ten shillings in addition to the five shillings. (Cheers.) Mr Toonarf, ten shillings as well as the five-shilling subscription. They had also written to some of the manufacturers who supplied the firm with materials, and asked them to give something: some of 'em had sent half a crown, some five shillings, some hadn't answered at all, and two of 'em had written back to say that as things is cut so fine nowadays, they didn't hardly get no profit on their stuff, so they couldn't afford to give nothing; but out of all the firms they wrote to they managed to get thirty-two and sixpence altogether, making a grand total of seventeen pounds.

As for the expenses, the dinner was two and six a head, and there was forty-five of them there, so that came to five pounds twelve and six. Then there was the hire of the brakes, also two and six a head, five pound twelve and six, which left a surplus of five pound fifteen to be shared out (applause), which came to three shillings each for the thirty-seven men, and one and fourpence for each of the boys. (Loud and prolonged cheers.)

Crass, Slyme and Bundy now walked round the tables distributing the share-out, which was very welcome to everybody, especially those who had spent nearly all their money during the journey from Mugsborough, and when this ceremony was completed, Philpot moved a hearty vote of thanks to the committee for the manner in which they had carried out their duties, which was agreed to with acclamation. Then they made a collection for the waiters, and the three waitresses, which amounted to eleven shillings, for which the host returned thanks on behalf of the recipients, who were all smiles.

Then Mr Rushton requested the landlord to serve drinks and cigars all round. Some had cigarettes and the teetotallers had lemonade or ginger beer. Those who did not smoke themselves took the cigar all the same and gave it to someone else who did. When all were supplied there suddenly arose loud cries of 'Order!' and it was seen that Hunter was upon his feet.

As soon as silence was obtained, Misery said that he believed that everyone there present would agree with him, when he said that they should not let the occasion pass without drinking the 'ealth of their esteemed and respected employer, Mr Rushton. (Hear, hear.) Some of them had worked for Mr Rushton on and off for many years, and as far as THEY was concerned it was not necessary for him (Hunter) to say much in praise of Mr Rushton. (Hear, hear.) They knew Mr Rushton as well as he did himself and to know him was to esteem him. (Cheers.) As for the new hands, although they did not know Mr Rushton as well as the old hands did, he felt sure that they would agree that as no one could wish

for a better master. (Loud applause.) He had much pleasure in asking them to drink Mr Rushton's health. Everyone rose.

'Musical honours, chaps,' shouted Crass, waving his glass and leading off the singing which was immediately joined in with great enthusiasm by most of the men, the Semi-drunk conducting the music with a table knife:

For he's a jolly good fellow,
For he's a jolly good fellow,
For he's a jolly good fel-ell-O,
And so say all of us,
So 'ip, 'ip, 'ip, 'ooray!
So 'ip, 'ip, 'ip, 'ooray!

For he's a jolly good fellow,
For 'e's a jolly good fellow
For 'e's a jolly good fel-ell-O,
And so say all of us.

'Now three cheers!' shouted Crass, leading off.

Hip, hip, hip, hooray!
Hip, hip, hip, hooray!
Hip, hip, hip, hooray!

Everyone present drank Rushton's health, or at any rate went through

the motions of doing so, but during the roar of cheering and singing that preceded it several of the men stood with expressions of contempt or uneasiness upon their faces, silently watching the enthusiasts or looking at the ceiling or on the floor.

'I will say this much,' remarked the Semidrunk as they all resumed their seats--he had had several drinks during dinner, besides those he had taken on the journey--I will say this much, although I did have a little misunderstanding with Mr Hunter when I was workin' at the Royal Caff, I must admit that this is the best firm that's ever worked under me.'

This statement caused a shout of laughter, which, however, died away as Mr Rushton rose to acknowledge the toast to his health. He said that he had now been in business for nearly sixteen years and this was--he believed--the eleventh outing he had had the pleasure of attending. During all that time the business had steadily progressed and had increased in volume from year to year, and he hoped and believed that the progress made in the past would be continued in the future. (Hear, hear.) Of course, he realized that the success of the business depended very largely upon the men as well as upon himself; he did his best in trying to get work for them, and it was necessary--if the business was to go on and prosper--that they should also do their best to get the work done when he had secured it for them. (Hear, hear.) The masters could not do without the men, and the men could not live without the masters. (Hear, hear.) It was a matter of division of labour: the men worked with their hands and the masters worked with

their brains, and one was no use without the other. He hoped the good feeling which had hitherto existed between himself and his workmen would always continue, and he thanked them for the way in which they had responded to the toast of his health.

Loud cheers greeted the conclusion of this speech, and then Crass stood up and said that he begged to propose the health of Mr 'Unter. (Hear, hear.) He wasn't going to make a long speech as he wasn't much of a speaker. (Cries of 'You're all right,' 'Go on,' etc.) But he felt sure as they would all hagree with him when he said that--next to Mr Rushton--there wasn't no one the men had more respect and liking for than Mr 'Unter. (Cheers.) A few weeks ago when Mr 'Unter was laid up, many of them began to be afraid as they was going to lose 'im. He was sure that all the 'ands was glad to 'ave this hoppertunity of congratulating him on his recovery (Hear, hear) and of wishing him the best of 'ealth in the future and hoping as he would be spared to come to a good many more Beanos.

Loud applause greeted the conclusion of Crass's remarks, and once more the meeting burst into song:

For he's a jolly good fellow
For he's a jolly good fellow.
For he's a jolly good fellow,
And so say all of us.
So 'ip, 'ip, 'ip, 'ooray!
So 'ip, 'ip, 'ip, 'ooray!

When they had done cheering, Nimrod rose. His voice trembled a little as he thanked them for their kindness, and said that he hoped he deserved their goodwill. He could only say that as he was sure as he always tried to be fair and considerate to everyone. (Cheers.) He would now request the landlord to replenish their glasses. (Hear, hear.)

As soon as the drinks were served, Nimrod again rose and said he wished to propose the healths of their visitors who had so kindly contributed to their expenses--Mr Lettum, Mr Didlum, Mr Toonarf and Mr Grinder. (Cheers.) They were very pleased and proud to see them there (Hear, hear), and he was sure the men would agree with him when he said that Messrs Lettum, Didlum, Toonarf and Grinder were jolly good fellows.

To judge from the manner in which they sang the chorus and cheered, it was quite evident that most of the hands did agree. When they left off, Grinder rose to reply on behalf of those included in the toast. He said that it gave them much pleasure to be there and take part in such pleasant proceedings and they were glad to think that they had been able to help to bring it about. It was very gratifying to see the good feeling that existed between Mr Rushton and his workmen, which was as it should be, because masters and men was really fellow workers--the masters did the brain work, the men the 'and work. They was both workers, and their interests was the same. He liked to see men doing their best for their master and knowing that their master was doing his best for them, that he was not only a master, but a friend. That was

what he (Grinder) liked to see--master and men pulling together--doing their best, and realizing that their interests was identical. (Cheers.) If only all masters and men would do this they would find that everything would go on all right, there would be more work and less poverty. Let the men do their best for their masters, and the masters do their best for their men, and they would find that that was the true solution of the social problem, and not the silly nonsense that was talked by people what went about with red flags. (Cheers and laughter.) Most of those fellows were chaps who was too lazy to work for their livin'. (Hear, hear.) They could take it from him that, if ever the Socialists got the upper hand there would just be a few of the hartful dodgers who would get all the cream, and there would be nothing left but 'ard work for the rest. (Hear. hear.) That's wot hall those hagitators was after: they wanted them (his hearers) to work and keep 'em in idleness. (Hear, hear.) On behalf of Mr Didlum, Mr Toonarf, Mr Lettum and himself, he thanked them for their good wishes, and hoped to be with them on a sim'ler occasion in the future.

Loud cheers greeted the termination of his speech, but it was obvious from some of the men's faces that they resented Grinder's remarks. These men ridiculed Socialism and regularly voted for the continuance of capitalism, and yet they were disgusted and angry with Grinder! There was also a small number of Socialists--not more than half a dozen altogether--who did not join in the applause. These men were all sitting at the end of the long table presided over by Payne. None of them had joined in the applause that greeted the speeches, and so far neither had they made any protest. Some of them turned very red as

they listened to the concluding sentences of Grinder's oration, and others laughed, but none of them said anything. They knew before they came that there was sure to be a lot of 'Jolly good fellow' business and speechmaking, and they had agreed together beforehand to take no part one way or the other, and to refrain from openly dissenting from anything that might be said, but they had not anticipated anything quite so strong as this.

When Grinder sat down some of those who had applauded him began to jeer at the Socialists.

'What have you got to say to that?' they shouted. 'That's up against yer!'

'They ain't got nothing to say now.'

'Why don't some of you get up and make a speech?'

This last appeared to be a very good idea to those Liberals and Tories who had not liked Grinder's observations, so they all began to shout 'Owen!' 'Owen!' 'Come on 'ere. Get up and make a speech!' 'Be a man!' and so on. Several of those who had been loudest in applauding Grinder also joined in the demand that Owen should make a speech, because they were certain that Grinder and the other gentlemen would be able to dispose of all his arguments; but Owen and the other Socialists made no response except to laugh, so presently Crass tied a white handkerchief on a cane walking-stick that belonged to Mr Didlum, and stuck it in the

vase of flowers that stood on the end of the table where the Socialist group were sitting.

When the noise had in some measure ceased, Grinder again rose. 'When I made the few remarks that I did, I didn't know as there was any Socialists 'ere: I could tell from the look of you that most of you had more sense. At the same time I'm rather glad I said what I did, because it just shows you what sort of chaps these Socialists are. They're pretty artful--they know when to talk and when to keep their mouths shut. What they like is to get hold of a few ignorant workin' men in a workshop or a public house, and then they can talk by the mile--reg'ler shop lawyers, you know wot I mean--I'm right and everybody else is wrong. (Laughter.) You know the sort of thing I mean. When they finds theirselves in the company of edicated people wot knows a little more than they does theirselves, and who isn't likely to be misled by a lot of claptrap, why then, mum's the word. So next time you hears any of these shop lawyers' arguments, you'll know how much it's worth.'

Most of the men were delighted with this speech, which was received with much laughing and knocking on the tables. They remarked to each other that Grinder was a smart man: he'd got the Socialists weighed up just about right--to an ounce.

Then, it was seen that Barrington was on his feet facing Grinder and a sudden, awe-filled silence fell.

'It may or may not be true,' began Barrington, 'that Socialists always know when to speak and when to keep silent, but the present occasion hardly seemed a suitable one to discuss such subjects.

'We are here today as friends and want to forget our differences and enjoy ourselves for a few hours. But after what Mr Grinder has said I am quite ready to reply to him to the best of my ability.

'The fact that I am a Socialist and that I am here today as one of Mr Rushton's employees should be an answer to the charge that Socialists are too lazy to work for their living. And as to taking advantage of the ignorance and simplicity of working men and trying to mislead them with nonsensical claptrap, it would have been more to the point if Mr Grinder had taken some particular Socialist doctrine and had proved it to be untrue or misleading, instead of adopting the cowardly method of making vague general charges that he cannot substantiate. He would find it far more difficult to do that than it would be for a Socialist to show that most of what Mr Grinder himself has been telling us is nonsensical claptrap of the most misleading kind. He tells us that the employers work with their brains and the men with their hands. If it is true that no brains are required to do manual labour, why put idiots into imbecile asylums? Why not let them do some of the hand work for which no brains are required? As they are idiots, they would probably be willing to work for even less than the ideal "living wage". If Mr Grinder had ever tried, he would know that manual workers have to concentrate their minds and their attention on their work or they would not be able to do it at all. His talk about employers being not only

the masters but the "friends" of their workmen is also mere claptrap because he knows as well as we do, that no matter how good or benevolent an employer may be, no matter how much he might desire to give his men good conditions, it is impossible for him to do so, because he has to compete against other employers who do not do that. It is the bad employer--the sweating, slave-driving employer--who sets the pace and the others have to adopt the same methods--very often against their inclinations--or they would not be able to compete with him. If any employer today were to resolve to pay his workmen not less wages than he would be able to live upon in comfort himself, that he would not require them to do more work in a day than he himself would like to perform every day of his own life, Mr Grinder knows as well as we do that such an employer would be bankrupt in a month; because he would not be able to get any work except by taking it at the same price as the sweaters and the slave-drivers.

'He also tells us that the interests of masters and men are identical; but if an employer has a contract, it is to his interest to get the work done as soon as possible; the sooner it is done the more profit he will make; but the more quickly it is done, the sooner will the men be out of employment. How then can it be true that their interests are identical?

'Again, let us suppose that an employer is, say, thirty years of age when he commences business, and that he carries it on for twenty years. Let us assume that he employs forty men more or less regularly during that period and that the average age of these men is also thirty years

at the time the employer commences business. At the end of the twenty years it usually happens that the employer has made enough money to enable him to live for the remainder of his life in ease and comfort. But what about the workman? All through those twenty years they have earned but a bare living wage and have had to endure such privations that those who are not already dead are broken in health.

'In the case of the employer there had been twenty years of steady progress towards ease and leisure and independence. In the case of the majority of the men there were twenty years of deterioration, twenty years of steady, continuous and hopeless progress towards physical and mental inefficiency: towards the scrap-heap, the work-house, and premature death. What is it but false, misleading, nonsensical claptrap to say that their interests were identical with those of their employer?

'Such talk as that is not likely to deceive any but children or fools. We are not children, but it is very evident that Mr Grinder thinks that we are fools.

'Occasionally it happens, through one or more of a hundred different circumstances over which he has no control, or through some error of judgement, that after many years of laborious mental work an employer is overtaken by misfortune, and finds himself no better and even worse off than when he started; but these are exceptional cases, and even if he becomes absolutely bankrupt he is no worse off than the majority of the workmen.

'At the same time it is quite true that the real interests of employers and workmen are the same, but not in the sense that Mr Grinder would have us believe. Under the existing system of society but a very few people, no matter how well off they may be, can be certain that they or their children will not eventually come to want; and even those who think they are secure themselves, find their happiness diminished by the knowledge of the poverty and misery that surrounds them on every side.

'In that sense only is it true that the interests of masters and men are identical, for it is to the interest of all, both rich and poor, to help to destroy a system that inflicts suffering upon the many and allows true happiness to none. It is to the interest of all to try and find a better way.'

Here Crass jumped up and interrupted, shouting out that they hadn't come there to listen to a lot of speechmaking--a remark that was greeted with unbounded applause by most of those present. Loud cries of 'Hear, hear!' resounded through the room, and the Semi-drunk suggested that someone should sing a song.

The men who had clamoured for a speech from Owen said nothing, and Mr Grinder, who had been feeling rather uncomfortable, was secretly very glad of the interruption.

The Semi-drunk's suggestion that someone should sing a song was

received with unqualified approbation by everybody, including Barrington and the other Socialists, who desired nothing better than that the time should be passed in a manner suitable to the occasion. The landlord's daughter, a rosy girl of about twenty years of age, in a pink print dress, sat down at the piano, and the Semi-drunk, taking his place at the side of the instrument and facing the audience, sang the first song with appropriate gestures, the chorus being rendered enthusiastically by the full strength of the company, including Misery, who by this time was slightly drunk from drinking gin and ginger beer:

'Come, come, come an' 'ave a drink with me
Down by the ole Bull and Bush.
Come, come, come an' shake 'ands with me
Down by the ole Bull and Bush.
Wot cheer me little Germin band!
Fol the diddle di do!
Come an' take 'old of me 'and
Come, come, come an' 'ave a drink with me,
Down by the old Bull and Bush,
Bush! Bush!'

Protracted knocking on the tables greeted the end of the song, but as the Semi-drunk knew no other except odd verses and choruses, he called upon Crass for the next, and that gentleman accordingly sang 'Work, Boys, Work' to the tune of 'Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys are marching'. As this song is the Marseillaise of the Tariff Reform Party, voicing as it does the highest ideals of the Tory workmen of

this country, it was an unqualified success, for most of them were Conservatives.

'Now I'm not a wealthy man,
But I lives upon a plan
Wot will render me as 'appy as a King;
An' if you will allow, I'll sing it to you now,
For time you know is always on the wing.

Work, boys, work and be contented
So long as you've enough to buy a meal.
For if you will but try, you'll be wealthy--bye and bye--
If you'll only put yer shoulder to the wheel.'

'Altogether, boys,' shouted Grinder, who was a strong Tariff Reformer, and was delighted to see that most of the men were of the same way of thinking; and the 'boys' roared out the chorus once more:

Work, boys, work and be contented
So long as you've enough to buy a meal
For if you will but try, you'll be wealthy--bye and bye
If you'll only put your shoulder to the wheel.

As they sang the words of this noble chorus the Tories seemed to become inspired with lofty enthusiasm. It is of course impossible to say for certain, but probably as they sang there arose before their exalted imaginations, a vision of the Past, and looking down the long vista of

the years that were gone, they saw that from their childhood they had been years of poverty and joyless toil. They saw their fathers and mothers, weaned and broken with privation and excessive labour, sinking unhonoured into the welcome oblivion of the grave.

And then, as a change came over the spirit of their dream, they saw the Future, with their own children travelling along the same weary road to the same kind of goal.

It is possible that visions of this character were conjured up in their minds by the singing, for the words of the song gave expression to their ideal of what human life should be. That was all they wanted--to be allowed to work like brutes for the benefit of other people. They did not want to be civilized themselves and they intended to take good care that the children they had brought into the world should never enjoy the benefits of civilization either. As they often said:

'Who and what are our children that they shouldn't be made to work for their betters? They're not Gentry's children, are they? The good things of life was never meant for the likes of them. Let 'em work! That's wot the likes of them was made for, and if we can only get Tariff Reform for 'em they will always be sure of plenty of it--not only Full Time, but Overtime! As for edication, travellin' in furrin' parts, an' enjoying life an' all sich things as that, they was never meant for the likes of our children--they're meant for Gentry's children! Our children is only like so much dirt compared with Gentry's children! That's wot the likes of us is made for--to Work for

Gentry, so as they can 'ave plenty of time to enjoy theirselves; and the Gentry is made to 'ave a good time so as the likes of us can 'ave Plenty of Work.'

There were several more verses, and by the time they had sung them all, the Tories were in a state of wild enthusiasm. Even Ned Dawson, who had fallen asleep with his head pillowed on his arms on the table, roused himself up at the end of each verse, and after having joined in the chorus, went to sleep again.

At the end of the song they gave three cheers for Tariff Reform and Plenty of Work, and then Crass, who, as the singer of the last song, had the right to call upon the next man, nominated Philpot, who received an ovation when he stood up, for he was a general favourite. He never did no harm to nobody, and he was always wiling to do anyone a good turn whenever he had the opportunity. Shouts of 'Good old Joe' resounded through the room as he crossed over to the piano, and in response to numerous requests for 'The old song' he began to sing 'The Flower Show':

'Whilst walkin' out the other night, not knowing where to go
I saw a bill upon a wall about a Flower Show.

So I thought the flowers I'd go and see to pass away the night.
And when I got into that Show it was a curious sight.
So with your kind intention and a little of your aid,
Tonight some flowers I'll mention which I hope will never fade.'

Omnes:

To-night some flowers I'll mention which I hope will never fade.'

There were several more verses, from which it appeared that the principal flowers in the Show were the Rose, the Thistle and the Shamrock.

When he had finished, the applause was so deafening and the demands for an encore so persistent that to satisfy them he sang another old favourite--'Won't you buy my pretty flowers?'

'Ever coming, ever going,
Men and women hurry by,
Heedless of the tear-drops gleaming,
In her sad and wistful eye
How her little heart is sighing
Thro' the cold and dreary hours,
Only listen to her crying,
"Won't you buy my pretty flowers?"'

When the last verse of this sang had been sung five er six times, Philpot exercised his right of nominating the next singer, and called upon Dick Wantley, who with many suggestive gestures and grimaces sang 'Put me amongst the girls', and afterwards called upon Payne, the foreman carpenter, who gave 'I'm the Marquis of Camberwell Green'.

There was a lot of what music-hall artists call 'business' attached to his song, and as he proceeded, Payne, who was ghastly pale and very nervous, went through a lot of galvanic motions and gestures, bowing and scraping and sliding about and flourishing his handkerchief in imitation of the courtly graces of the Marquis. During this performance the audience maintained an appalling silence, which so embarrassed Payne that before he was half-way through the song he had to stop because he could not remember the rest. However, to make up for this failure he sang another called 'We all must die, like the fire in the grate'. This also was received in a very lukewarm manner by the crowd, same of whom laughed and others suggested that if he couldn't sing any better than that, the sooner HE was dead the better.

This was followed by another Tory ballad, the chorus being as follows:

> His clothes may be ragged, his hands may be soiled.
> But where's the disgrace if for bread he has toiled.
> His 'art is in the right place, deny it no one can
> The backbone of Old England is the honest workin' man.'

After a few more songs it was decided to adjourn to a field at the rear of the tavern to have a game of cricket. Sides were formed, Rushton, Didlum, Grinder, and the other gentlemen taking part just as if they were only common people, and while the game was in progress the rest played ring quoits or reclined on the grass watching the players, whilst the remainder amused themselves drinking beer and playing cards and shove-ha'penny in the bar parlour, or taking walks around the

village sampling the beer at the other pubs, of which there were three.

The time passed in this manner until seven o'clock, the hour at which it had been arranged to start on the return journey; but about a quarter of an hour before they set out an unpleasant incident occurred.

During the time that they were playing cricket a party of glee singers, consisting of four young girls and five men, three of whom were young fellows, the other two being rather elderly, possibly the fathers of some of the younger members of the party, came into the field and sang several part songs for their entertainment. Towards the close of the game most of the men had assembled in this field, and during a pause in the singing the musicians sent one of their number, a shy girl about eighteen years of age--who seemed as if she would rather that someone else had the task--amongst the crowd to make a collection. The girl was very nervous and blushed as she murmured her request, and held out a straw hat that evidently belonged to one of the male members of the glee party. A few of the men gave pennies, some refused or pretended not to see either the girl or the hat, others offered to give her some money for a kiss, but what caused the trouble was that two or three of those who had been drinking more than was good for them dropped the still burning ends of their cigars, all wet with saliva as they were, into the hat and Dick Wantley spit into it.

The girl hastily returned to her companions, and as she went some of the men who had witnessed the behaviour of those who had insulted her, advised them to make themselves scarce, as they stood a good chance of

getting a thrashing from the girl's friends. They said it would serve them dam' well right if they did get a hammering.

Partly sobered by fear, the three culprits sneaked off and hid themselves, pale and trembling with terror, under the box seats of the three brakes. They had scarcely left when the men of the glee party came running up, furiously demanding to see those who had insulted the girl. As they could get no satisfactory answer, one of their number ran back and presently returned, bringing the girl with him, the other young women following a little way behind.

She said she could not see the men they were looking for, so they went down to the public house to see if they could find them there, some of the Rushton's men accompanying them and protesting their indignation.

The time passed quickly enough and by half past seven the brakes were loaded up again and a start made for the return journey.

They called at all the taverns on the road, and by the time they reached the Blue Lion half of them were three sheets in the wind, and five or six were very drunk, including the driver of Crass's brake and the man with the bugle. The latter was so far gone that they had to let him lie down in the bottom of the carriage amongst their feet, where he fell asleep, while the others amused themselves by blowing weird shrieks out of the horn.

There was an automatic penny-in-the-slot piano at the Blue Lion and as that was the last house of the road they made a rather long stop there, playing hooks and rings, shove-ha'penny, drinking, singing, dancing and finally quarrelling.

Several of them seemed disposed to quarrel with Newman. All sorts of offensive remarks were made at him in his hearing. Once someone ostentatiously knocked his glass of lemonade over, and a little later someone else collided violently with him just as he was in the act of drinking, causing his lemonade to spill all over his clothes. The worst of it was that most of these rowdy ones were his fellow passengers in Crass's brake, and there was not much chance of getting a seat in either of the other carriages, for they were overcrowded already.

From the remarks he overheard from time to time, Newman guessed the reason of their hostility, and as their manner towards him grew more menacing, he became so nervous that he began to think of quietly sneaking off and walking the remainder of the way home by himself, unless he could get somebody in one of the other brakes to change seats with him.

Whilst these thoughts were agitating his mind, Dick Wantley suddenly shouted out that he was going to go for the dirty tyke who had offered to work under price last winter.

It was his fault that they were all working for sixpence halfpenny and he was going to wipe the floor with him. Some of his friends eagerly offered to assist, but others interposed, and for a time it looked as if there was going to be a free fight, the aggressors struggling hard to get at their inoffensive victim.

Eventually, however, Newman found a seat in Misery's brake, squatting on the floor with his back to the horses, thankful enough to be out of reach of the drunken savages, who were now roaring out ribald songs and startling the countryside, as they drove along, with unearthly blasts on the coach horn.

Meantime, although none of them seemed to notice it, the brake was travelling at a furious rate, and swaying about from side to side in a very erratic manner. It would have been the last carriage, but things had got a bit mixed at the Blue Lion and, instead of bringing up the rear of the procession, it was now second, just behind the small vehicle containing Rushton and his friends.

Crass several times reminded them that the other carriage was so near that Rushton must be able to hear every word that was said, and these repeated admonitions at length enraged the Semi-drunk, who shouted out that they didn't care a b--r if he could hear. Who the bloody hell was he? To hell with him!

'Damn Rushton, and you too!' cried Bill Bates, addressing Crass. 'You're only a dirty toe-rag! That's all you are--a bloody rotter!

That's the only reason you gets put in charge of jobs--'cos you're a good nigger-driver! You're a bloody sight worse than Rushton or Misery either! Who was it started the one-man, one-room dodge, eh? Why, you, yer bleeder!'

'Knock 'im orf 'is bleedin' perch,' suggested Bundy.

Everybody seemed to think this was a very good idea, but when the Semi-drunk attempted to rise for the purpose of carrying it out, he was thrown down by a sudden lurch of the carriage on the top of the prostrate figure of the bugle man and by the time the others had assisted him back to his seat they had forgotten all about their plan of getting rid of Crass.

Meantime the speed of the vehicle had increased to a fearful rate.

Rushton and the other occupants of the little wagonette in front had been for some time shouting to them to moderate the pace of their horses, but as the driver of Crass's brake was too drunk to understand what they said he took no notice, and they had no alternative but to increase their own speed to avoid being run down. The drunken driver now began to imagine that they were trying to race him, and became fired with the determination to pass them. It was a very narrow road, but there was just about room to do it, and he had sufficient confidence in his own skill with the ribbons to believe that he could get past in safety.

The terrified gesticulations and the shouts of Rushton's party only served to infuriate him, because he imagined that they were jeering at him for not being able to overtake them. He stood up on the footboard and lashed the horses till they almost flew over the ground, while the carriage swayed and skidded in a fearful manner.

In front, the horses of Rushton's conveyance were also galloping at top speed, the vehicle bounding and reeling from one side of the road to the other, whilst its terrified occupants, whose faces were blanched with apprehension, sat clinging to their seats and to each other, their eyes projecting from the sockets as they gazed back with terror at their pursuers, some of whom were encouraging the drunken driver with promises of quarts of beer, and urging on the homes with curses and yells.

Crass's fat face was pallid with fear as he clung trembling to his seat. Another man, very drunk and oblivious of everything, was leaning over the side of the brake, spewing into the road, while the remainder, taking no interest in the race, amused themselves by singing--conducted by the Semi-drunk--as loud as they could roar:

'Has anyone seen a Germin band,
Germin Band, Germin Band?
I've been lookin' about,
Pom--Pom, Pom, Pom, Pom!

'I've searched every pub, both near and far,

Near and far, near and far,

I want my Fritz,

What plays tiddley bits

On the big trombone!'

The other two brakes had fallen far behind. The one presided over by Hunter contained a mournful crew. Nimrod himself, from the effects of numerous drinks of ginger beer with secret dashes of gin in it, had become at length crying drunk, and sat weeping in gloomy silence beside the driver, a picture of lachrymose misery and but dimly conscious of his surroundings, and Slyme, who rode with Hunter because he was a fellow member of the Shining Light Chapel. Then there was another paperhanger--an unhappy wretch who was afflicted with religious mania; he had brought a lot of tracts with him which he had distributed to the other men, to the villagers of Tubberton and to anybody else who would take them.

Most of the other men who rode in Nimrod's brake were of the 'religious' working man type. Ignorant, shallow-pated dolts, without as much intellectuality as an average cat. Attendants at various PSAs and 'Church Mission Halls' who went every Sunday afternoon to be lectured on their duty to their betters and to have their minds--save the mark!--addled and stultified by such persons as Rushton, Sweater, Didlum and Grinder, not to mention such mental specialists as the holy reverend Belchers and Boshers, and such persons as John Starr.

At these meetings none of the 'respectable' working men were allowed to

ask any questions, or to object to, or find fault with anything that was said, or to argue, or discuss, or criticize. They had to sit there like a lot of children while they were lectured and preached at and patronized. Even as sheep before their shearers are dumb, so they were not permitted to open their mouths. For that matter they did not wish to be allowed to ask any questions, or to discuss anything. They would not have been able to. They sat there and listened to what was said, but they had but a very hazy conception of what it was all about.

Most of them belonged to these PSAs merely for the sake of the loaves and fishes. Every now and then they were awarded prizes--Self-help by Smiles, and other books suitable for perusal by persons suffering from almost complete obliteration of the mental faculties. Besides other benefits there was usually a Christmas Club attached to the 'PSA' or 'Mission' and the things were sold to the members slightly below cost as a reward for their servility.

They were for the most part tame, broken-spirited, poor wretches who contentedly resigned themselves to a life of miserable toil and poverty, and with callous indifference abandoned their offspring to the same fate. Compared with such as these, the savages of New Guinea or the Red Indians are immensely higher in the scale of manhood. They are free! They call no man master; and if they do not enjoy the benefits of science and civilization, neither do they toil to create those things for the benefit of others. And as for their children--most of those savages would rather knock them on the head with a tomahawk than allow them to grow up to be half-starved drudges for other men.

But these were not free: their servile lives were spent in grovelling and cringing and toiling and running about like little dogs at the behest of their numerous masters. And as for the benefits of science and civilization, their only share was to work and help to make them, and then to watch other men enjoy them. And all the time they were tame and quiet and content and said, 'The likes of us can't expect to 'ave nothing better, and as for our children wot's been good enough for us is good enough for the likes of them.'

But although they were so religious and respectable and so contented to be robbed on a large scale, yet in small matters, in the commonplace and petty affairs of their everyday existence, most of these men were acutely alive to what their enfeebled minds conceived to be their own selfish interests, and they possessed a large share of that singular cunning which characterizes this form of dementia.

That was why they had chosen to ride in Nimrod's brake--because they wished to chum up with him as much as possible, in order to increase their chances of being kept on in preference to others who were not so respectable.

Some of these poor creatures had very large heads, but a close examination would have shown that the size was due to the extraordinary thickness of the bones. The cavity of the skull was not so large as the outward appearance of the head would have led a casual observer to suppose, and even in those instances where the brain was of a fair

size, it was of inferior quality, being coarse in texture and to a great extent composed of fat.

Although most of them were regular attendants at some place of so-called worship, they were not all teetotallers, and some of them were now in different stages of intoxication, not because they had had a great deal to drink, but because--being usually abstemious--it did not take very much to make them drunk.

From time to time this miserable crew tried to enliven the journey by singing, but as most of them only knew odd choruses it did not come to much. As for the few who did happen to know all the words of a song, they either had no voices or were not inclined to sing. The most successful contribution was that of the religious maniac, who sang several hymns, the choruses being joined in by everybody, both drunk and sober.

The strains of these hymns, wafted back through the balmy air to the last coach, were the cause of much hilarity to its occupants who also sang the choruses. As they had all been brought up under 'Christian' influences and educated in 'Christian' schools, they all knew the words: 'Work, for the night is coming', 'Turn poor Sinner and escape Eternal Fire', 'Pull for the Shore' and 'Where is my Wandering Boy?'

The last reminded Harlow of a song he knew nearly all the words of, 'Take the news to Mother', the singing of which was much appreciated by all present and when it was finished they sang it all over again,

Philpot being so affected that he actually shed tears; and Easton confided to Owen that there was no getting away from the fact that a boy's best friend is his mother.

In this last carriage, as in the other two, there were several men who were more or less intoxicated and for the same reason--because not being used to taking much liquor, the few extra glasses they had drunk had got into their heads. They were as sober a lot of fellows as need be at ordinary times, and they had flocked together in this brake because they were all of about the same character--not tame, contented imbeciles like most of those in Misery's carnage, but men something like Harlow, who, although dissatisfied with their condition, doggedly continued the hopeless, weary struggle against their fate.

They were not teetotallers and they never went to either church or chapel, but they spent little in drink or on any form of enjoyment--an occasional glass of beer or a still rarer visit to a music-hall and now and then an outing more or less similar to this being the sum total of their pleasures.

These four brakes might fitly be regarded as so many travelling lunatic asylums, the inmates of each exhibiting different degrees and forms of mental disorder.

The occupants of the first--Rushton, Didlum and Co.--might be classed as criminal lunatics who injured others as well as themselves. In a properly constituted system of society such men as these would be

regarded as a danger to the community, and would be placed under such restraint as would effectually prevent them from harming themselves or others. These wretches had abandoned every thought and thing that tends to the elevation of humanity. They had given up everything that makes life good and beautiful, in order to carry on a mad struggle to acquire money which they would never be sufficiently cultured to properly enjoy. Deaf and blind to every other consideration, to this end they had degraded their intellects by concentrating them upon the minutest details of expense and profit, and for their reward they raked in their harvest of muck and lucre along with the hatred and curses of those they injured in the process. They knew that the money they accumulated was foul with the sweat of their brother men, and wet with the tears of little children, but they were deaf and blind and callous to the consequences of their greed. Devoid of every ennobling thought or aspiration, they grovelled on the filthy ground, tearing up the flowers to get at the worms.

In the coach presided over by Crass, Bill Bates, the Semi-drunk and the other two or three habitual boozers were all men who had been driven mad by their environment. At one time most of them had been fellows like Harlow, working early and late whenever they got the chance, only to see their earnings swallowed up in a few minutes every Saturday by the landlord and all the other host of harpies and profitmongers, who were waiting to demand it as soon as it was earned. In the years that were gone, most of these men used to take all their money home religiously every Saturday and give it to the 'old girl' for the house, and then, lo and behold, in a moment, yea, even in the twinkling of an

eye, it was all gone! Melted away like snow in the sun! and nothing to show for it except an insufficiency of the bare necessaries of life!
But after a time they had become heartbroken and sick and tired of that sort of thing. They hankered after a little pleasure, a little excitement, a little fun, and they found that it was possible to buy something like those in quart pots at the pub. They knew they were not the genuine articles, but they were better than nothing at all, and so they gave up the practice of giving all their money to the old girl to give to the landlord and the other harpies, and bought beer with some of it instead; and after a time their minds became so disordered from drinking so much of this beer, that they cared nothing whether the rent was paid or not. They cared but little whether the old girl and the children had food or clothes. They said, 'To hell with everything and everyone,' and they cared for nothing so long as they could get plenty of beer.

The occupants of Nimrod's coach have already been described and most of them may correctly be classed as being similar to cretin idiots of the third degree--very cunning and selfish, and able to read and write, but with very little understanding of what they read except on the most common topics.

As for those who rode with Harlow in the last coach, most of them, as has been already intimated, were men of similar character to himself. The greater number of them fairly good workmen and--unlike the boozers in Crass's coach--not yet quite heartbroken, but still continuing the hopeless struggle against poverty. These differed from Nimrod's lot

inasmuch as they were not content. They were always complaining of their wretched circumstances, and found a certain kind of pleasure in listening to the tirades of the Socialists against the existing social conditions, and professing their concurrence with many of the sentiments expressed, and a desire to bring about a better state of affairs.

Most of them appeared to be quite sane, being able to converse intelligently on any ordinary subject without discovering any symptoms of mental disorder, and it was not until the topic of Parliamentary elections was mentioned that evidence of their insanity was forthcoming. It then almost invariably appeared that they were subject to the most extraordinary hallucinations and extravagant delusions, the commonest being that the best thing that the working people could do to bring about an improvement in their condition, was to continue to elect their Liberal and Tory employers to make laws for and to rule over them! At such times, if anyone ventured to point out to them that that was what they had been doing all their lives, and referred them to the manifold evidences that met them wherever they turned their eyes of its folly and futility, they were generally immediately seized with a paroxysm of the most furious mania, and were with difficulty prevented from savagely assaulting those who differed from them.

They were usually found in a similar condition of maniacal excitement for some time preceding and during a Parliamentary election, but afterwards they usually manifested that modification of insanity which is called melancholia. In fact they alternated between these two forms

of the disease. During elections, the highest state of exalted mania; and at ordinary times--presumably as a result of reading about the proceedings in Parliament of the persons whom they had elected--in a state of melancholic depression, in their case an instance of hope deferred making the heart sick.

This condition occasionally proved to be the stage of transition into yet another modification of the disease--that known as dipsomania, the phase exhibited by Bill Bates and the Semi-drunk.

Yet another form of insanity was that shown by the Socialists. Like most of their fellow passengers in the last coach, the majority of these individuals appeared to be of perfectly sound mind. Upon entering into conversation with them one found that they reasoned correctly and even brilliantly. They had divided their favourite subject into three parts. First; an exact definition of the condition known as Poverty. Secondly; a knowledge of the causes of Poverty; and thirdly, a rational plan for the cure of Poverty. Those who were opposed to them always failed to refute their arguments, and feared, and nearly always refused, to meet them in fair fight--in open debate--preferring to use the cowardly and despicable weapons of slander and misrepresentation. The fact that these Socialists never encountered their opponents except to defeat them, was a powerful testimony to the accuracy of their reasonings and the correctness of their conclusions--and yet they were undoubtedly mad. One might converse with them for an indefinite time on the three divisions of their subject without eliciting any proofs of insanity, but directly

one inquired what means they proposed to employ in order to bring about the adoption of their plan, they replied that they hoped to do so by reasoning with the others!

Although they had sense enough to understand the real causes of poverty, and the only cure for poverty, they were nevertheless so foolish that they entertained the delusion that it is possible to reason with demented persons, whereas every sane person knows that to reason with a maniac is not only fruitless, but rather tends to fix more deeply the erroneous impressions of his disordered mind.

The wagonette containing Rushton and his friends continued to fly over the road, pursued by the one in which rode Crass, Bill Bates, and the Semi-drunk; but notwithstanding all the efforts of the drunken driver, they were unable to overtake or pass the smaller vehicle, and when they reached the foot of the hill that led up to Windley the distance between the two carriages rapidly increased, and the race was reluctantly abandoned.

When they reached the top of the hill Rushton and his friends did not wait for the others, but drove off towards Mugsborough as fast as they could.

Crass's brake was the next to arrive at the summit, and they halted there to wait for the other two conveyances and when they came up all those who lived nearby got out, and some of them sang 'God Save the King', and then with shouts of 'Good Night', and cries of 'Don't forget

six o'clock Monday morning', they dispersed to their homes and the carriages moved off once more.

At intervals as they passed through Windley brief stoppages were made in order to enable others to get out, and by the time they reached the top of the long incline that led down into Mugsborough it was nearly twelve o'clock and the brakes were almost empty, the only passengers being Owen and four or five others who lived down town. By ones and twos these also departed, disappearing into the obscurity of the night, until there was none left, and the Beano was an event of the past.