

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS  
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**I**N GIVING THE FIRST OF THE AN-  
nual Memorial Lectures which have been  
instituted to commemorate Mr. Larner Sugden  
in the town where he lived and worked, it would  
be proper that some portion at least of my ad-  
dress should be devoted to Mr. Sugden himself.  
It was chiefly through his energy and devotion  
that this Church was founded six years ago,  
and that it has been sustained since. His early  
death must in any case have been a severe loss  
for this town and neighbourhood, to the cause  
of labour, to the cause of Socialism, and to the  
still wider cause of justice and humanity. That  
loss is however the greater, that, by what I  
gather was the unanimous testimony of all who  
knew him, he was a human being of rare tem-  
per and accomplishment. His influence, so I ap-  
prehend, survives here less in the many build-  
ings with which in the exercise of his daily  
work he adorned this town and district, than  
in the example which he set, and continues to  
set, in the minds of his friends, of a life lived  
single-heartedly and courageously, pursuing  
truth and right, careless of self-interest, and with  
an eye always fixed upon the high ideals which  
those are unhappy who have never known, and  
which those who have known but failed to fol-  
low are unhappier still.

But, as no doubt was known to those who asked me to give this address, I had not the privilege of your late townsman's acquaintance, and was never brought into contact with him, except for one brief exchange of correspondence some years ago. The task and the pleasure of commemorating him personally must lie with others who are qualified to do so. It is another and a greater personality with which this town is associated in my mind, that of one whom he and all of us would own as master, William Morris himself. He was the real founder of this Church, which was set up to his memory and bears his name: and it is of him that I desire to begin by speaking. By a not inappropriate coincidence, the date fixed for this annual celebration, the birthday of Mr. Sugden, is only removed by three days from the date of Morris' death; and it is very fitting that their names should be joined in one commemoration.

I do not indeed propose to sketch Morris' life or to set forth his doctrine. With his life I have dealt elsewhere, both in the detailed biography which I have written, and which I am glad to say is now issued in a form that does not remove it beyond the reach of persons of fairly moderate means; and in a summarised sketch published as a penny pamphlet by the

Independent Labour Party. To this last I would refer any one who desires to make himself familiar with the main outlines of Morris' life and the central doctrines of his belief: though with these doctrines I hope most if not all of this audience are familiar. But Morris' connection with the staple industry of Leek, a quarter of a century ago, is an episode in his life which is in itself of exceptional interest: and it so happens that the two years during which he spent weeks and months together here are also years of special importance in his whole life: for it was in those years that the change began which turned him from a poet into a preacher, and from a Radical by association and impulse into a Socialist by hardly-won and steadily-held conviction. The parting of the ways was not sudden. It cannot be fixed down to any particular date: and indeed it was not until some years after he had ceased to work here with Mr. Wardle that he turned his mind at all definitely towards what became the politics and the religion of his later life. But in the life of the individual, as in the life of the community or nation, the social revolution is not an act, but a process; a process whose roots go deep into an unseen past, and whose growth lasts as long as life itself. Nor is it a process in which

any man, or any community, can stop short somewhere and say, "I have attained the goal." The horizon recedes before our advance. The Socialist ideal will always remain an ideal; and there is a sense in which we might say that fully realised Socialism is a contradiction in terms. "My kingdom is not of this world," said the greatest of Socialists. Yet it was into the world that he charged his followers to go out and preach the Gospel of that kingdom to every creature.

The period during which Morris spent so much of his time at Leek that he might almost be called a resident here began in 1875 and went on into 1877. That he came to this rather than to any other centre of the weaving and dyeing industry was owing to the mere accident of Mr. Thomas Wardle being well known to him as the brother-in-law of his own London manager. He had found his work as a designer and manufacturer of textiles hampered from the first by the bad colours of the wool or silk in which they were executed. Not only were the colours actually in use bad, but good colours could not be got. The dyeing industry, since the introduction of the earlier anilines, had sunk to the lowest level known in history. With hardly any exceptions the colours procurable



were both crude and fugitive ; nor did it mend matters that, since the golden age of adulteration had harnessed science to the wheels of profit-making, they were also for the most part impure. More especially the art of dyeing in indigo, for which this district had been celebrated a century ago, had been completely lost. It had to be recovered through experiments made from old books and from the recollections of some of the older workmen.

During those two years Morris was more occupied with problems of indigo and madder than with social questions ; and he sought relaxation from his daily work, and exercise for the higher powers of his mind, less in politics than in poetry. The epic of " Sigurd the Volsung," his largest, and, in the opinion of some, his greatest achievement in literature, was written during that time, and great parts of it actually in this town. His Saturdays and Sundays used to be spent, according to the state of the weather or the fancy of the moment, in writing poetry (sometimes with fingers so stiff from the blue-vat that they would hardly hold the pen), or in excursions to the more romantic or historical places within reach—Lichfield, or Ashbourne, or Dovedale, and whenever the chance offered, in fishing, the one out-door or in-door

sport in which he was an enthusiast. But both in his work as a dyer of yarns and in his work as a maker of verses it is easy to trace at that time an increasing interest in what are called social questions, and an increasing sense of their importance. He was beginning to study the art and craft of life itself on the amplest scale. Perhaps there may be some present who remember his heroic and romantic figure in those days ; the noble tempestuous head with its grey eyes and delicate mouth, the blouse and sabots, the hands dyed deep in indigo. Whatever may be the chances that await Leek and its townsfolk, they are not likely to see so great a man moving among them on his daily work again. But if there are any here whose recollection goes back to those days, they can hardly have known or suspected then the inner workings of his spirit, or the strange seas of thought through which he was voyaging, chiefly in silence and alone. " Delightful work," he wrote from here, to a friend in London, of his daily employment ; " hard for the body and easy for the mind." So it was for him : in spite of all the wretchedness that attaches to modern industry, his work was always his unfailing solace and relaxation. But how difficult and profound a life he was living with his mind all the while,



we may partly guess from his more intimate letters, and even as clearly from passages in his poetry. Let me quote briefly from both.

“I am sure,” he wrote from Leek in March, 1876, to a friend who was in great trouble and perplexity, “that though I have many hopes and pleasures, or at least strong ones, and that though my life is dear to me, so much as I seem to have to do, I would gladly give them away, hopes and pleasures, one by one or all together, and my life at last, for you, for my friendship, for my honour, for the world. I claim not to be separated from those that are heavy-hearted, only because I am well in health and full of pleasant work and eager about it, and not oppressed by desires so as not to be able to take interest in it all. I love you and long to help you, and indeed I entreat you (however trite the words may be) to think that life is not empty, nor made for nothing; and that the parts of it fit one into another in some way; and that the world goes on, beautiful and strange and dreadful and worshipful.”

And again, writing, about the same time, of the religion of the ancient Northmen, a religion which in its essentials and apart from the particular mythology in which they enwrapped it, he had pretty much adopted as his own :

“ It may be,” he says, “ that the world shall worsen, that men shall grow afraid to change their life, that the world shall be weary itself, and sicken, and none but faint-hearts be left—who knows? So comes the end at last, and the evil, bound for a while, is loose, and all nameless merciless horrors. So comes the great strife ; & like the kings and heroes that they have loved, the gods also must die, the gods who made that strifeful imperfect earth. At last the great destruction breaks out over all things, and the old earth and heavens are gone, and then, a new heaven and earth. What goes on there? Who shall say, of us who know only of rest and peace by toil and strife? And what shall be our share in it? Well, sometimes we must needs think that we shall live again ; yet, if that were not, would it not be enough that we helped to make this glory, and lived not altogether deedless?”

I had it in my mind to quote one more passage, of verse this time, very likely written, as these other passages certainly were, in St. Edward Street hard by. Portions of it will be very much to the point later. And when I come to quote them, I would ask you to remember that it is in his poetry, not in his familiar talk and writing, that a poet reveals himself most completely. With his acquaintances, even with his

friends and colleagues, he has reserves and shynesses : to the whole world and to it alone he can speak his mind fully out. And thus in the lines from one of the most notable passages of Sigurd the Volsung—the famous Wisdom of Brynhild near the conclusion of the second book—which I shall have occasion to quote, will be found, even more than in those other striking and noble words which I have just read, the deepest thoughts of their author, and the full measure of the strength and the guidance which he had to bestow.

The passages I have quoted, and the passages which I shall have occasion to quote, were written in 1876. Morris was then forty-two, in the full prime and vigour of life. He had an immense & varied experience behind him, as student, artist, workman, and employer: but it had all been remote from public affairs & social problems. He had twenty years yet to live. They were divided into three almost equal periods. During the first of them, he served in the ranks of English Liberalism. During the second, he was a leader of English Socialism. In the last, he gradually withdrew from public life & active political work, but remained a great and steady influence on the Socialist side. And that, since his death, he has still remained by the effect of

his writings and his example. But through all those years he was consistent in the one great object at which he aimed, which was the RESTORATION OF HAPPINESS TO HUMAN LIFE BY ITS RECONSTRUCTION ON THE BASIS OF FREEDOM AND JUSTICE. For without freedom and justice, he held, there could be neither beauty nor enjoyment, neither art nor comfort, nor any single one of the things which give human life its value. And this reconstruction of life he sought, so soon as he became fully aware of the actual injustice and slavery in which society as it exists is rooted and founded, first as a Liberal, seeking to reach justice through freedom, negatively, by extension of self-government and abolition of privilege; and then as a Socialist, seeking to reach freedom through justice, positively, by a profound change in the structure of society and the conduct of life.

It would seem strange, to anyone who came, according to the fancy of romance-writers, into this world from another planet, or to one who had grown up here keeping, in mature years and full intelligence, the terrible simplicity of childhood, that there should be any antagonism, or even any great divergence, between Liberalism and Socialism whether in principles or in prac-

tice. To such a one it might well seem that the two doctrines both responded to the voice of reason and of the human conscience, and that though their language was different, the sense of what they said was nearly akin. An anti-social Liberalism might seem, like an illiberal Socialism, something of a contradiction. And there is a point, in both thought and practice, at which both are within reach of one another, and both are held in solution in the same mind. Yet their divergence is from the first visible ; and so far, all experience goes to prove that this divergence is cumulative, and, as regards any one person, final. A man may exchange one creed for the other : he may fluctuate back and forward between them : he may—and this is a common case—fail to hold either while he professes or believes himself to hold one, or the other, or both. But for those who have the hardihood to follow out their belief, not shrinking from consequences or cutting away their doctrine to the measure of their convenience, the parting of the ways comes sooner or later, and the choice has to be made. It is not a light choice for those who realise something of what it involves. It may not be amiss for a gathering of people who are all, I suppose, in the broad and general sense of the word, Socialists, or at



least in sympathy with Socialism, to consider a little more closely than we are apt to do, what the price of Socialism is. And I approach this question the more willingly now, because its answer depends on the principle which is the first article in the constitution of this Church, that Socialism is no mere body of economic doctrine, but is in the full sense of the word a religion.

To hold Socialism as an economic doctrine, the price that has to be paid is in no way serious. Between two bodies of economic doctrine, there may of course be antagonism both profound and far-reaching. But economic doctrine is, on either side and in any circumstances, only contingent truth. The whole vital force of any economic system depends from first to last on the moral principles upon which it is based, and the social ends towards which it is directed. It only becomes a rule for human life, so far as it is brought into connection with some larger theory of what human life is and means ; with what men believe, silently it may be and half-unconsciously, to be the final cause & the chief end of life, or in the words of a more formal theology, the will of God.

Now if one is asked whether Liberalism is not also a religion, and if so, whether it is, either



in its essential nature or as a matter of fact and as things stand, incompatible with the religion of Socialism, the answer would seem to be somewhat as follows. Liberalism has been a religion in the past, more than once; and what has happened may happen again. But at the present day it certainly does not bear that character except among a very small remnant: and when I say it is not a religion, I mean it is not a faith, an aspiration, a controlling passion which actually rules men's lives. During one generation some fifty or sixty years ago, it was in this country one of the religions that really counted, that were powers and lights in the world. George Grote, Richard Cobden, John Stuart Mill, Robert and Elizabeth Browning, Charles Dickens—all Liberals—these are among the great English names that rise to one's mind when one thinks of that period: perhaps even a more inspiring name than any of these is that of the great Italian who became in his long exile here half an Englishman, Giuseppe Mazzini. The last fifty years have made Liberalism what it is now, inert towards reform, feeble against reaction, a mere political party held together by old habit and ready to sell most of its principles at a low figure: like a shop where you may see written across the front as you pass, "Premises

coming down : the entire stock to be disposed of at an immense reduction." The fact is plain that at the present day it fails to meet one of the simplest tests that can be applied to anything claiming to be a religion, the question put to its professors, What do you give up for it and what do you keep back ? For the real meaning of religion is that to which a man subordinates and sacrifices everything else. Whatever outward religion he may profess or practise, his real religion, if he has one, is that according to which he actually lives. His life may be guided and controlled by many things—by love, by fear, by pride, by selfishness, by habit ; whichever it is that rules him, that is his religion. Morris put his Liberalism to this test : he tried to make it real, & found that the attempt led him straight into Socialism. What he concluded, during the years in which he tried to be or thought he was a Liberal, was that whether Liberalism were a religion or not, it at all events was not and could not be his religion ; that he did not live according to it and did not desire to do so. When he became a Socialist, he paid the price ; and that price included his old Liberalism.

To become Socialists in this sense, all men must make a similar payment, namely, the surrender of everything incompatible with Social-

ism. But is the surrender of Liberalism part of that price of necessity? The question is a grave one. To some, it may be little or no sacrifice. To others it is a sacrifice so great that they deliberately and conscientiously refuse to make it. For with the creed that has to be given up are involved some of the greatest and most superb ideals which have ever been placed before itself by the human race.

Human nature, in its course from one age to another, perhaps changes but little ; and if we go back in history two thousand five hundred years, we find the two great ideals between which a choice has somehow or other to be made unless they can be reconciled in any higher form of thought and belief, each working out its own course; not, as now, interwoven and intermingled within a single complex and vast society, but separately in different races & among social surroundings of comparative simplicity. In ancient Greece, the religion chosen, that by which and for which men lived, to which they postponed everything else, for the sake of which they cheerfully made every sacrifice, was summed up in a single word, liberty. For this liberty they were ready to sacrifice ease, to forgo wealth, to violate justice. The splendour of what they achieved in the power of that name has made them almost

more than human for all future generations. They invented and perfected the self-governing state. They carried the arts and the daily beauty of life to a pitch rarely, if ever, since equalled. They founded science: they consummated philosophy: they were great alike in peace and war. Among them were born patriotism, self-knowledge, obedience to law. The life that they aimed at and in great measure realised for the citizen was richer and fuller and more intense than has lain within the compass or the vision of any succeeding age or country. All this they did by virtue of Liberalism held and acted on as a religion.

Meanwhile, another Mediterranean community was passing through a very different experience. The two small kingdoms of Judah and Israel had reached what was at that time a high state of progress in civilisation. Wealth increased and commerce flourished; there was almost complete religious toleration, and public burdens were not heavy. The people, in the vivid phrase of a contemporary writer, were at ease in Zion. But among them rose up, in the hearts and brains of a series of extraordinary men, the spirit of revolutionary Socialism. "It is an evil time," said the prophets as they regarded the wealth and prosperity round them, the peace at

home and the successful wars abroad. "Your treading is upon the poor and you take from him burdens of wheat : you swallow up the needy and buy the poor for silver. What do you mean, you who beat the Lord's people to pieces and grind the faces of the poor? Woe to you that desire the day of the Lord ! to what end is it for you ? the day of the Lord is darkness and not light."

Before that fierce cry for justice all the other objects of life seemed without value. The will of God, as the prophets understood it, was not accomplished by increase of wealth, extension of territory, growth of civic institutions. Upon the ideas of progress, of empire, of patriotism they passed the same crushing condemnation : " Woe to him who builds a town with blood, and establishes a state by iniquity : it is not of the Lord that the people should labour in the very fire, and weary themselves for very vanity."

Against the revolutionary Socialism of the prophets the patriotic party could not make head. Sapped at the foundations of their strength by this terrible attack, the two kingdoms perished. The fall of the rich and the destruction of the state which they had founded did not issue in any reign of the humble. The cry of the poor still went up, bitter as before. From



a worldly point of view, that Socialist movement was a complete failure. But it bequeathed to the world an ideal which has never been forgotten, and outside of which the human spirit has never found peace or satisfaction.

In those ancient times we have the two ideals, the Greek ideal of freedom and progress, which is the religion of Liberalism, the Hebrew ideal of righteousness and peace, which is the religion of Socialism, in sharp antagonism. Is it still so now? Must each of us still, as we stand at this parting of the ways, choose which of the two he will follow? Must success in a community as in an individual be always rooted on injustice? and must the justice and peace which are the goal of Socialism be attained, if they are attained at all, at a price which includes the renunciation of some of the most stimulating ideals of mankind?

If such be indeed the choice, the choice must still be made: and the answer given by the greatest teachers is unhesitating: choose righteousness. Such was the doctrine of the Hebrew prophets, from Isaiah the courtier to Amos the herdsman; such the doctrine of Plato, that great and lonely figure of the Greek world; such the doctrine of him whose teaching, as the express and immediate Word of God, the Christian

nations profess to follow. Yet all these teachers have laid equal stress on the belief, from which no failure and no disappointment could make them swerve, that the great renunciation brings its own reward. The Old Testament prophecies are full from end to end of enthusiastic belief in a reign of justice upon earth, a golden age at the door, not in any remote future, or any other world. Plato's greatest work is devoted to establishing the doctrine that the Socialist community is in fact the only one in which there is true well-being for the individual. Of progress and freedom apart from righteousness—and the aim of the Republic is to show by stringent proof that righteousness in the community is Socialism—he would have fully accepted the description of Habakkuk, that they are very vanity and labour in the fire. Jesus Christ likewise lays down the same doctrine in well-known words: "Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you; there is no man that has left house or parents or brethren or wife or children for the Kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time."

Such is the doctrine of the great teachers of the past, such the fixed belief to-day of con-

vinced Socialists. They hold that the ideals of Liberalism, freedom, enlightenment, and progress, are attainable under Socialism; nay, that it is only under Socialism that they can in any real sense be attained.

But in this they assert more than they can prove. The will of God, as regards the future of humanity, is not clear. Of the vast curve upon which the world moves we do not possess the formula and cannot predict the ultimate direction. The Power, not ourselves, that is in things, is not demonstrably a Power that makes for righteousness.

So strongly have men in all ages felt this, that they have perpetually been driven into referring the solution of the enigma and the triumph of justice to some conjectural future life. Even Plato does so. It is the unique distinction of the Jewish prophets that they were never tempted for a single moment into accepting any such easy and dangerous solution. The reign of justice in this world was the one thing they proclaimed. It is with them that the Socialism of this twentieth century, so far as it is a religion, has perhaps most affinity. But there is a further likeness; for we find both mixed with a great deal of rash statement, of demonstrable error, and of predictions falsified

by the events. The Socialist movement of the last generation tried to prove its truth by miracles. It disastrously failed to do so. Like other religions it must discard its superstitions before it can become universal.

It is a common reproach against Socialism that it is revolutionary, that it aims at overturning the order of the world. Nor is this said of it in reproach only. This revolutionary character is claimed for it by many of its adherents as some unique quality that distinguishes it from other beliefs. The boast and the reproach are alike superficial. All religious movements are revolutionary. The greatest & most drastic revolution of which we have full historical knowledge is that which has been accomplished in the last hundred years, by the complete subversion of an established mediaeval order and the reconstruction of society on a capitalistic basis. That revolution is accepted now as a matter of course: but no one, when it began, would have been believed had he predicted the course it would take or the effect on the world it would produce. It also in its time had the reactionary forces arrayed against it; and though of the good and evil that it has wrought, the evil may seem to outweigh the good, it won its first triumphs as a religion; by appealing not only

to men's selfishness, but to their emotions and aspirations. Thus it was that it took the world by storm, and within two or three generations had transformed the whole face of civilisation. Then it slackened and faltered. A few bold men pointed out, amid a storm of obloquy, that what it was really doing was to kill art, to intensify slavery, to degrade and brutalise life; and that why this had come about was, that with all its splendid aims, it was founded on injustice. The attack on capitalist Liberalism made by Ruskin in 1860 shocked its readers without convincing them. Even later than that, it took Morris, as we have seen, seven years and untold perplexities to change his allegiance. So great is the authority of any doctrine which once has actually ruled the life of mankind.

Both in Germany, where the Socialists are numerous and well organised, and in England where they are few in numbers and torn by internal dissension, the chief danger of the present time to the cause of progress perhaps lies in those professing Socialists with whom all the ennobling and inspiring influence of their creed sinks away in a coarse and timid materialism. To give a more practical turn to the Socialist programme is the avowed object



of a large body of thought in both countries. But what is plausibly called practical Socialism is often little more than the old order based on the old injustice, but with a new set of formulas; or it might be called capitalism cleared from a few of its flagrant absurdities, and not impossibly with a few fresh absurdities added. We can see how far it has led some men in compromising with their principles and abandoning their ideals. Practical Socialism as held by them is rapidly becoming indistinguishable from the government of an armed bureaucracy. It has in substance if not in words renounced the brotherhood of mankind. It is prepared to restore hostile competition, in a more complex and dangerous form, as a main motive in life; to condone war and welcome conquest; to nationalise injustice; to take as its watchword not righteousness but efficiency. Between such a Socialism and the materialised capitalistic Liberalism against which true Socialism is a revolt and a protest, there need not be any insurmountable antagonism; it is not beyond possibility that the two might enter into an unholy alliance. A counter-alliance between what is vital in Socialism and what yet lives in Liberalism may be only a dream; yet it is a dream in which one would willingly

indulge. But it would be essential to such an alliance that it should be on either side given, and not bought or sold ; still less, that in order to make it, either party should step down on to a lower level and forfeit for no return the flower of its inheritance. A materialised Socialism might be even a worse thing than a materialised Liberalism in proportion as the ideal from which it had fallen was higher. What is quite certain is, that the ideals of Liberalism or of any other creed would be ill exchanged for a Socialism that had renounced its ideals, or "like the fiend paltered with them in a double sense." If the two must fight it out, let them at least fight it out on the highest plane. Hear the wisdom of Brynhild :

*Strive not with the fools of man-folk : for be-  
like thou shalt overcome,  
And what then is the gain of thy hunting  
when thou bearest the quarry home ?  
Or else shall the fool overcome thee, and what  
deed thereof shall grow ?  
Nay, strive with the wise man rather, and  
increase thy woe and his woe,  
Yet thereof a gain hast thou gotten, and the  
half of thine heart hast thou won  
If thou mayest prevail against him, and his  
deeds are the deeds thou hast done ;*

*Yea, and if thou fall before him, in him shalt  
thou live again,  
And thy deeds in his hand shall blossom, and  
his heart of thy heart shall be fain.*

No one held more firmly than Morris, that the material wretchedness into which capitalism had plunged a great portion of the human race must be somehow or other got rid of before real constructive work can be done towards the building up of a socialised community—or (for the two phrases to him meant the same) of a communised society. But no one held more clearly that mere material well-being was not Socialism. The law of capitalism, that under it the rich must always become richer and the poor poorer, is a mere abstract law of economics. It is checked and deflected in a thousand ways by other forces, legislative, social, and personal. Capitalism in the hands of humane and far-seeing men (if it could remain for long in such hands, which may be doubted) might produce improvements in the material structure of life to which it is difficult to fix a limit. The modern organisers of the great Trusts boldly claim just such a diffused material well-being as the outcome of their policy if it is allowed to carry itself out to its conclusion. The suspicion and dislike which they have roused in a capitalist

society might almost seem to bear out this claim. There is an uneasy feeling, that they may find it economically advantageous to alleviate the lot of the worker ; and that, if the lot of the worker be sensibly alleviated, he may have leisure and inclination to raise many awkward questions ; he may even be unwilling any longer to be treated, as he now is, with unexampled humanity. And a certain number of theoretic Socialists actually agree in this with the magnates of competitive commercialism : they claim to see, in the modern developments of the capitalistic system, such a gradual socialisation of labour and capital as will one day, quite simply and quietly, enable realised Socialism to be brought about, as it were by the touching of a button. A system rooted and grounded on injustice will flower into justice ; grapes will be gathered of thorns and figs of thistles ; and if we only go on doing wrong long enough, systematically enough, and above all, efficiently enough, it will somehow or other (such are the marvellous ways of Providence) turn into doing right of itself.

Listen to Morris' answer, long before he became a Socialist, to this amazing doctrine :

*When thou hearest the fool rejoicing, and he  
saith, It is over and past,*

*And the wrong was better than right, and hate  
turns into love at the last,  
And we strove for nothing at all, and the Gods  
are fallen asleep;  
For so good is the world a-growing that the  
evil good shall reap:—  
Then loosen thy sword in the scabbard and  
settle the helm on thy head,  
For men betrayed are mighty, and great are  
the wrongfully dead.*

The words are strong, but not too strong for the occasion. Even more stern is the condemnation of the ancient prophet: "Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of hypocrisy, that say 'Let the counsel of the Holy One draw nigh and come!' that justify the wicked, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him." Even more terse is the Christian teaching, as to those who do evil that good may come. It is in four words: "whose damnation is just."

But the relapse into materialism is a danger to which the Socialist ideal is always subject: so easy it is, so easy has it always been, to let the aspiration for justice dwindle into a mere craving for comfort. Here is the real parting of the ways: a parting that does not come to a man or to a community once only in their life, but continuously at every moment; the choice



between the one thing that is highest and the other things that would take its place or stand in its way : between that which is perhaps unattainable but which alone can satisfy, and that which may be attained but to be satisfied with which is death. Listen to the words of a great French thinker of the last generation.

“All humanitarian dreams are contradictory ; for the imagination runs in a narrow circle, and the figures it traces perpetually cross each other. The Revolution had for its motto freedom and brotherhood : it bore the Empire. The great German idealism of the Goethes and the Herders led up to an iron realism, that ignores everything but main force. What shall be said of modern Socialism, and of the changes of front it would make if ever it arrived at power ? In the sphere of science there is certainly progress : in the sphere of human morality, that is more doubtful. Yet the future rests with those who are not disillusioned. Woe to those of whom Saint Paul speaks, *qui spem non habent*, who have lost hope.”

Is this striking and eloquent passage meant as a sanction or a condemnation of the Socialist movement ? It would be difficult to say. With his French lucidity, Renan saw and stated the problem that faces us at the parting of the ways ;

he offers no solution. But there is a deep lesson in his last words. The impatience of the earlier Socialists was as marked a quality in them as their hopefulness. If we have been partly cured of impatience by the hard lessons of the past, do not let us fall into the other and the more dangerous extreme, that hopelessness which is so often the reaction from impatience, and its punishment. They cried out aloud because God's justice was slow. We are more apt to keep silence because it does not seem sure. Let the poet and prophet answer for us once more :

*Be wise, and cherish thine hope in the freshness  
of the days*

*And scatter its seed from thine hand in the  
field of the people's praise.*

*Then fair shall it fall in the furrow, and some  
the earth shall speed,*

*And the sons of men shall marvel at the blossom  
of the deed.*

*But some the earth shall speed not: nay, rather  
the wind of the heaven*

*Shall waft it away from thy longing—and a  
gift to the Gods hast thou given.*

*Love thou the Gods—and withstand them, lest  
thy fame should fail in the end*

*And thou be but their thrall and their bonds-  
man, who wert born for their very friend.*

*For few things from the Gods are hidden, and  
the hearts of men they know,  
And how that none rejoiceth to quail and  
crouch alow.*

In all the later teaching of William Morris you will find this clear courageous note, this rallying-cry against impatience and despondency. For that too he had paid the full price. It has been long observed, said Dr. Johnson, that men do not suspect faults which they do not commit. Morris was by native temperament both impatient and despondent. His impatience was the source of perpetual amusement among his friends; his despondency tinges the brightness and flaws the beauty of his earlier poetry. By hard work, by pure life, by deep thought, he schooled himself out of both these faults, and became in his later years quite remarkable for his inexhaustible patience and his constant hopefulness. Time brought him, in one hand, failure; he saw the Socialist movement of the nineteenth century (the words are his own) run into sand; in the other, it brought him a clear and unshaken belief in the Socialism of the future. It brought him, too, a reward the most precious of all that can be won by man, that impassioned contemplation of the universe in which the masters of thought agree to place

the utmost felicity of human life. "It seems to me," he wrote ten years before his death, "that no hour of the day passes that the whole world does not show itself to me." To Plato likewise, the final reward of the just was not any material ease or comfort, no, not even any common wealth and civic well-being, but to be the spectator of all time and of all existence. With such a vision Sigurd in the poem saw the world from the mountain summit after he had learned the wisdom of Brynhild.

*For far away beneath them lie the kingdoms  
of the earth,  
And the garths of men-folk's dwellings and  
the streams that water them,  
And the rich and plenteous acres and the  
silver ocean's hem ;  
And the woodland wastes and the mountains,  
and all that holdeth all :  
The house and the ship and the island, the  
loom and the mine and the stall,  
The beds of bane and healing, the crafts that  
slay and save,  
The temple of God and the Doom-ring, the  
cradle and the grave.*

In a sense, there was never any parting of the ways for Morris, because throughout life his

way was, to a degree almost unexampled in our time, single and straight forward. As soon as he was convinced that a thing was right, however strange or difficult or imprudent it were, his choice was already made, and he simply did it. In this at least, if not in his other more unapproachable qualities, he has left an example that we may humbly attempt to follow. That immense and all-embracing outlook is only for the great minds of the world, and is by them only attained through long labour and vigilant discipline. But to all of us, if our heart is fixed on doing right within our daily sphere and the limits of our narrower horizon, Socialism must needs be as Morris called it, a belief involving the very noblest ideals of human life and duty. For this Church and for all believers, the motive forces of life are manifold. One or other of them will take a place before the rest in different minds; the love of beauty, the pursuit of truth, the glory of freedom, the law of kindness, the joy of brotherhood: BUT ABOVE THEM ALL, BEFORE THEM ALL, BEYOND THEM ALL, IS THE HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS.



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