

WILLIAM MORRIS: SYNDICALIST

His Earthly Paradise the Ideal of
the Middle Ages

WILLIAM MORRIS AND THE COMMUNIST
IDEAL. By Mrs. Townshend. The Fabian
Society.

IN that all-important contribution to economics, "The Servile State," Hilaire Belloc ably divides the Socialist leaders of England into two main groups: the creators, Blatchford, Hyndman and Morris; the regimentalists, Wells, the Webbs, and Shaw. The former inherit enough of the English tradition to have, in spite of their Socialism, a glimmering that the tendencies of present-day society are not toward The Great State, but rather toward The Servile State, in which, through the legislative activities of modern "social reformers," the proletariat proper, skilled artisans and such, will be reduced to that condition of chattel slavery which the Middle Ages was (momentarily) successful in abolishing. Of the creators, Morris was infinitely the greater, infinitely the least Socialist. Indeed, had he lived to-day, we would find him emphatically denunciatory of the international socialist movement in all its activities—save one.

This pamphlet makes it clear that William Morris was a Syndicalist.

He hated Parliament. The author of this volume quotes this saying of his: "The real business of the Socialists is to impress on the workers the fact that they are a class, whereas they ought to be society. If we mix ourselves up with Parliament, we shall confuse and dull this fact in people's minds, instead of making it clear and intensifying it."

He was ferociously anti-Fabian. He is quoted as saying in this most un-Fabian of Fabian pamphlets:

Philanthropy has had its day and gone, thrift and self-help are going; participation in profits, Parliamentarianism and universal suffrage, State Socialism will have to go the same road, and the workers will be face to face at last with the fact that modern civilization, with its elaborate hierarchy and iron drill, is founded on their intolerable burden. * * * They will see that modern society can only exist as long as they bear their burden with some degree of impatience; their patience will be worn out, and to pieces modern society will go.

Further he said:

The burden of the statesman is to balance the greed and fears of the proprietary classes against the necessities and demands of the working class. This is a sorry business, and leads to all kinds of trickery and evasion, so that it is more than doubtful whether a statesman can be a moderately honest man.

He emphasized the Syndicalist ideal. He was antagonistic to the ideals political of the German Socialist Party of to-day, of the dominant leaders of the French Socialist Party of to-day. He would have been, had he lived, Ramsay Macdonald's chief opponent in England. He would

have argued with Hyndman on Marx, his "Capital," his economic analyses, his fatalistic belief in "economic evolution" as tending toward the comparatively prompt arrival of The Socialist State through the political representation of Labor in parliamentary bodies. A careful reading of his economic and political writings gives strongly the impression that his Earthly Paradise was to consist of loosely federated guilds owning the instruments of their industries. The State was to him an oppressor, because he saw, as Syndicalists and many other "Socialists" are discovering, that ownership of public utilities by the State means, with few exceptions, government and control by the politicians. Morris was a Mediævalist. He absorbed and gave comparatively complete expression to the economic ideals of the Middle Ages. He called himself a "Socialist" because, as G. K. Chesterton has delightfully expressed it, in those days one had to call one's self a Socialist or be considered a crook, a sympathizer with the capitalistic results of the Industrial Revolution, an opponent of the justifiable claims of Labor. "News from Nowhere" was a poetic expression of the economic creed of the Master. His wallpapers were another. And in each the ideals he there expressed were combatively in opposition to the methods and creeds of the Socialist movement. Some day we shall appreciate Morris's economic teachings. That will be when we come to realize that capitalistic society is developing not, as Marx prophesied, into a Socialistic State, but more and more toward an abrupt return to those servile conditions which, by law, shall break society into two parts, the freeman and the slave, in proportion of one to ten thousand. L. H. W.

RELIGIOUS ENCYCLOPAEDIA

The fifth volume has been issued of the "Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics" which is undergoing publication under the editorial direction of the Rev. Dr. James Hastings. There are a great many notable articles in the volume, contributed by scholars of standing in all parts of the world. Among those of major interest are: "Edwards and the New England Theology," by Prof. Benjamin B. Warfield of Princeton Theological Seminary; "Ethics and Morality," treated with respect to various races and religions by sixteen authoritative writers; "Faith," (Buddhist, Christian, Greek, Hindu, Moslem, and Roman,) by Prof. William Morgan of Kingston, Canada, and others; "Festivals and Fasts," covering all parts of the world, by the Rev. Dr. John A. MacCulloch of England, and others; "Dreams and Sleep," by Andrew Lang, Alfred Edward Taylor, and others; "Davidians, (South India)," by Robert W. Frazer of London; "Dress," by Alfred Ernest Crawley of England; "Druids," by Dr. MacCulloch; "Drunkenness," by J. F. Sutherland of Scotland; "Dualism," by Rudolf Christoph Eucken, and others; "Economics," by Stanley H. Turner of Scotland, and "Education," by Prof. John Adams of London, and others. (Charles Scribner's Sons.)