

THE THREEFOLD COMMONWEALTH

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The threefold commonwealth by Rudolf Steiner

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RUDOLF STEINER

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COMMONWEALTH**

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Authorized Translation by E. Bowen-Wedgwood

BY

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A FOREWORD AS TO THE
PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

The social life of the present day presents grave and far-reaching problems. We are confronted by demands for social reconstruction, which shew that the solution of these problems must be sought along paths unthought-of hitherto. Borne out by the actual events of the hour, the time has perhaps come for someone to gain a hearing, who is forced by life's experience to maintain, that the neglect to turn our thoughts into the paths that are now needed has stranded us in confusion and perplexity. It is under that conviction that this book is written. Its purpose is to discuss what needs doing, in order that those

demands, which are being urged by a large part of mankind to-day, may be turned in the direction of a determinate social will and purpose.

Personal likes and dislikes should enter but little into the formation of a social purpose. The demands, welcome or unwelcome, are there; and they must be reckoned with as facts of social life. This should be borne in mind by those who, from their personal situation in life, may be inclined to be annoyed at the author's way of discussing the demands of the working-class, because in their opinion he lays too one-sided a stress on these demands, as on something that must be reckoned with when determining on a social purpose. But what the author wants, is to present life as it exists to-day in all its full reality, in so far as he is able from his knowledge of it. He has ever before his eyes the fatal consequences that must ensue, if people refuse to see facts, which are actually there, which have arisen out of the life of modern mankind,—and if

they accordingly persist in ignoring a social will and purpose in which these facts find their place.

Those people again will not be pleased with the author's remarks, who regard themselves as experts in practical life,—or in what, under the influence of fond habit, has come to be regarded as practical life. They will be of opinion, that whoever wrote this book was not a practical person. These are just the people, who, in the author's opinion, have everything to unlearn and re-learn. Their practice of life seems to him the very thing, which is demonstrated by the actual facts from which mankind are suffering to be an utter mistake,—that very mistake that has led to boundless and immeasurable fatalities. These people will be obliged to recognise the practicability of much that has seemed to them absurd idealism. And although they may condemn this book at the outset, because its opening pages say less about the economic than about the spiritual life of modern mankind, yet the author's

own acquaintance with life forces him to the conviction, that, unless people can bring themselves to pay due and accurate attention to the spiritual life of modern mankind, they will only go on adding fresh mistakes to the old ones.

Neither will what is said in these pages altogether please those, who are for ever repeating with endless variations the phrases: that man must rise above absorption in purely material interests,—that he must turn to “ideals,” to the things of the “spirit.” For the author does not attach much importance to mere references to the “spirit” or to talk about a vague spiritual world. The only spirituality he can acknowledge, is that which forms the substance of man’s own life and manifests its power no less in mastering the practical problems of life than in constructing a philosophy of life and of the universe, which can satisfy the needs of man’s soul. The important point, is not the knowledge,—or supposed knowledge,—of a spiritual life, but that such a spiritual life shews it-