

**NEW ÆRA; A SOCIALIST  
ROMANCE,  
WITH A CHAPTER  
ON VACCINATION**

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New æra; a socialist romance, with a chapter on vaccination by Edward G. Herbert

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**EDWARD G. HERBERT**

**NEW ERA; A SOCIALIST  
ROMANCE,  
WITH A CHAPTER  
ON VACCINATION**



*Vaccination*

# NEW ÆRA

A Socialist Romance

WITH A CHAPTER ON VACCINATION

BY

EDWARD G. HERBERT, B.Sc.

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H.H.M.

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Part I  
THE DISCUSSION

# NEWÆRA

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## PART I.

### THE DISCUSSION.

"THE present state of things is intolerable, and there is no other remedy."

So said Frank Ledingham, as he paced the sumptuously furnished dining-room of St. Michael's Hall.

The person he addressed was his father, Sir Philip Ledingham, who, half-reclining in his easy chair, with cigar in hand and coffee on the little table by his side, watched the restless movements of his son with an expression of earnest attention, tinged with sadness or even disappointment. Frank was indeed a trouble to him. Not that he had ever indulged in any of those extravagances and foolish or vicious escapades with which young men sometimes sadden the hearts of rich and indulgent fathers. Frank Ledingham had been a straight and clean-living youth and man: generous, impulsive, an affectionate son and brother, he had early shown an aptitude for his father's profession; and when Sir Philip sent him to college to get the best training in the scientific and theoretical side of engineering, it was with the confident anticipation that in a few years he would be able to hand over the reins of the great engineering business which represented his own life-work, to one who would start with the best intellectual equipment that money could buy, added to something, perhaps, of his own natural ability and strength of character.

Frank had gone to college, and in the course of three strenuous years had done himself credit, rather by steady



work than by any specially brilliant achievement. He had come home a trained scientific engineer, and—a red-hot socialist. That was the trouble. At first, indeed, Sir Philip regarded this latest and most unexpected development with something of amused equanimity. The wild ideas his son had imbibed from a band of very young men with whom he had got mixed up at college would soon get their corners rubbed off in daily contact with the problems and responsibilities of business life. But Sir Philip had seen with growing uneasiness that the expected change did not occur. Frank's generous and sympathetic impulses had only received fresh stimulus from the social inequalities among which he found himself in the great manufacturing city, where the extremes of wealth and poverty jostled each other with seeming indifference on the one hand and hopeless misery on the other. His own wealth and social station, and the position of deputy autocrat which he was often called upon to occupy in his father's works, gave him opportunities of trying experiments of a socialistic nature, and when a period of slack trade brought unemployment in its wake, he had initiated some socialistic schemes, both in the works and in the city, on such a scale and with such results as to cause his father serious anxiety. Frank himself was quite undeterred by failure, which he was too honest not to acknowledge. If socialistic experiments failed, it was because the people were not ready for socialism, and he set himself with redoubled vigour to inculcate his own high ideals of social action, giving up the whole of his income and his spare time to the work. Increased contact with his less fortunate fellow creatures brought an ever-increasing sense of the incongruity, the injustice, of his own surroundings, in his father's sumptuous suburban home, when contrasted with the lot of those whose only fault was, that they had been born of poor instead of wealthy parents. So much did this sense of injustice weigh upon him that he had lived, for nearly a year past, in a workman's cottage in the heart of the city. Only his deep affection for his father and sister induced him periodically to overcome the sense of repugnance

which was never entirely absent when he visited his father's house in the suburbs, or his lovely island home at St. Michael's.

To such a man was Sir Philip to hand over the great business which had become a part of his life. Himself of humble origin, he had risen by sheer force of character and will, aided by uncommon mechanical genius, to a foremost place in his profession. With success had come wealth—he was reputed to be a millionaire; but money, with him, had ever been rather the sign and seal of professional success than the aim of even his business life. His wealth he regarded as a measure of the service he had rendered to the community. Stern, but just in all his relations, he was respected rather than loved by those in his employ. Above all, he was an individualist. Having himself achieved success without extraneous aid, he had little sympathy with those who cast reproaches on the state of society, the industrial system, the capitalists—blaming everyone and everything but themselves and their own want of grit and energy for their failure to make a good thing of life. He judged others by the standard by which he himself was willing to be judged.

A man of simple tastes, with a hatred of ostentation, his chief delight (after his business, which was always his principal hobby) was to retire to the island of St. Michael, which he had bought. In this secluded spot he had built himself a house after his own heart, and here, within a day's journey of London, but in a climate like that of the Riviera and surrounded by almost tropical vegetation, he was wont to retire from the world, not for the purpose of selfish ease, but to ponder with entire freedom from distraction those problems—mechanical, social, and political—which were never far from his thoughts.

As his years advanced, he spent more and more of his time in the island, and he looked forward to soon retiring there to end his days in peace. But his retirement meant the handing over of his life's work to—a socialist. Not one of your socialists who preach the iniquity of wage-slavery and capitalist robbery in the intervals of paying wages and pocketing profits, but a socialist who believed in socialism,

and who, when placed in the position of autocrat of a little community, would certainly put his principles in practice, with results that might be foreseen.

Frank and he had often had it out. They were two able men who respected one another, and who were able to exchange hard knocks without bad blood; but Sir Philip felt ever-greater misgivings in looking forward to that future for which he had been planning and working ever since this son of his was born twenty-six years ago.

Frank had run over to St. Michael's to discuss with his father certain business arrangements, and, as usual, the conversation had drifted into the old channel.

"The present state of things is intolerable, and there is no other remedy," said Frank.

"That the present state of things is far from satisfactory I freely admit; that socialism would remedy any existing evil without introducing a greater one I absolutely deny."

"Well, then, what do you propose to do about it? Leave things to take their own course? If not, what is your remedy?"

Sir Philip smoked in silence for a minute before replying. Frank flung himself into a chair opposite his father and waited with an air that seemed to express "Checkmate."

"You ask me for my remedy," said Sir Philip. "Do you take me for a quack doctor with pills for earthquakes in my pocket? I will answer your question by asking another. You remember the burglary at Salter's house last autumn? A valuable old silver tea-set was stolen. The thief was caught and is now in prison; but he had melted down the silver. His wife and children are on the parish." Then, turning suddenly to Frank, "What is your remedy?"

"Remedy for what?"

"For the human suffering I have mentioned—that of the Salters, of the burglar, and of his family?"

"I don't know what you mean. I have no remedy for that kind of suffering."

"Yet you are a socialist. If I were one I should have my remedy ready. I would alter the law so that in future anyone who stole should not be punished, but that the State