

**SOCIALISM AND
SENSE: A
RADICAL REVIEW**

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Socialism and sense: a radical review by William Hill

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WILLIAM HILL

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By WILLIAM HILL.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
F. CARRUTHERS GOULD.



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PREFATORY NOTE.

THERE is considerable evidence to justify the belief that a large proportion of the labouring classes of this country, particularly in the great industrial districts of the North, entertain seriously the illusions so persistently propagated by apostles of latter-day Socialism, and a grave situation is thereby created, alike for individual and for Commonwealth. By means of street-corner meetings, workshop conversations, letters and articles in the local newspapers, and other well-known ways, a great circulation has been given to the impression that the organization of Labour and the management of all the machinery of "production, distribution, and exchange" by the State, is not only highly desirable, but if the electors will assent, perfectly practicable within a very few years, and, in fact, is within an ace of realization; and there is reason to fear that considerable bodies of working men all over the Kingdom are being seduced into the conviction that if they will only give the help of their countenance, their pence, and their votes to the Socialist Parties, they will, even within their own life time, lap at the wells of the Promised Land of Equal Labour, Equal Payment, and Equal Enjoyment. It is with what has been aptly called "the Socialism of the Streets" that I have concerned myself largely in the following pages: I know that the real leaders of the movement here in London are not so foolish as to share in the impression so widely created in the country by the missionary speeches of their colleagues and supporters, but this fact only strengthens the feeling of pity inspired by the earnestness and enthusiasm of the indifferently-informed dupes of the idea in the provinces. In view of the cruel disillusionment which acceptance or persistence in the belief in the imminence of a Millennium will entail upon many honest and worthy fellows, I feel acutely the necessity for the wholesale circulation of antidotes of various descriptions; and as a personal contribution, I venture to submit a Paper prepared specially for the consideration of the artizans and labourers of Tyneside, the substance of it being

Prefatory Note.

delivered before the members of the Borough of Tynemouth Liberal and Radical Club in November, 1894. This present Paper, prepared amid other claims on attention, makes no pretence to special information, nor to scientific treatment, nor to literary finish: it is simply an attempt to indicate in a familiar and vivid way to the capable and shrewd working-men who constitute the bulk of the North-Country Constituencies the real meaning of Socialism as preached to-day, and to suggest the true line of the Path of Sense to all who seek to secure, for the benefit of existing generations, a juster distribution of the world's wealth and a wider experience of ennobling and sustaining happiness.

This being the object, I do not hesitate to express the hope that this small volume may meet with some measure of success: if such success awaits it, I shall feel that no small proportion of it is due to the co-operation of my friend, Mr. F. Carruthers Gould, whose cartoons, always inspired by sincere political feeling are amongst the greatest weapons at the command of the Party of Sense to-day.

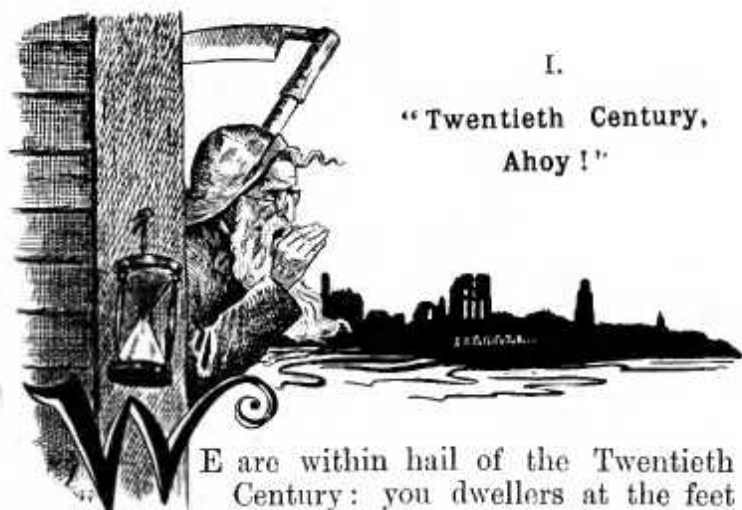
W. H.

LONDON, *June* 21, 1895.



SOCIALISM AND SENSE.

—♦♦♦—
PART I.—HISTORICAL.



I.

“ Twentieth Century,
Ahoy ! ”

ARE you within hail of the Twentieth Century: you dwellers at the feet of Father Tyne don't need to take out a telescope to your Bank-Tops to spy it coming in—you can challenge it from the end of your far-stretching Pier. As became, I suppose, a journalist in germ, I strayed oft as a lad to your local hailing-house, where a Customs' officer, armed with a speaking-trumpet, used in stentorian tones to demand from each incoming vessel passing through the Narrows of the Tyne: “ Ship Ahoy! What's your name? Who's your master? Where are you from? What's your cargo? ” In the rôle of politicians and social reformers, let us interrogate in some such rough-and-ready way the Twentieth Century: “ Where

are you from? Who's your master? With what are you laden?" Uncertainty and anxiety upon these vital points are colouring much of current controversy, and it is the duty of good citizens everywhere to undertake a free and frank consideration of the various features and aspects of our national situation to-day, in the hope that some considerable measure of social profit may follow thereupon.

The Coming Century's "Bill-of-Lading."

The Nineteenth Century, we all hope, will practically leave us politically free; the question of questions now is, how far and in what way will the exercise of political power on the part of the people at large enable us to secure a greater measure of economic justice, and right the many wrongs which still disfigure our social relationships in this country? Our national situation to-day, taken in combination with the lineaments of our national history, institutions, and character, provides politicians, philosophers, and prophets with the ample materials of a complex case; and no thinking man will venture to glibly determine the principles, position, and prospects of this Empire a hundred years hence. More vivid grows every year Matthew Arnold's picture of the voyage of the River of Time, which, by the way, bears close resemblances to our own River of Tyne:

Gone is the calm of its early shore.
 Border'd by cities, and hoarse
 With a thousand cries, is its stream;
 And we on its breast, our minds
 Are confused as the cries which we hear,
 Changing and shot as the sights which we see.

The source, the meanderings, and the final haven of "the River of Time" form too big a subject to

pursue here or elsewhere ; but, as I have suggested, we may ask of that big and heavily-freighted argosy now looming into view, the Twentieth Century : " Where are you from ? Who's your master ? What's your cargo ? " In short, the question of questions for our People is : Will the Coming Century's bill-of-lading be inscribed " Progress " or " Decay," " Misery " or " Happiness," " Joy " or " Tears," " Shadow " or " Sunshine " ?

A Picture of the Past.

As I have suggested, he would be a rash man who would play the part of a positive prophet as to the characteristics of the Coming Century. Probably at no period in our history has the nation been so uncertain as to its final destiny as it is to-day. Perhaps, not so absolutely as to the substance of it, but distinctly, and beyond doubt, as to the form and scope of it. We are emerging from a century which in some respects has been the most remarkable in history. So far as concerned the toiling portion of the population, it opened in ignorance, poverty, misery, and gloom almost unspeakable. Those critics of the time whose pens prove them to be without conception of the latitude and longitude of our national history may learn much from the opening chapters of the interesting and valuable volume (" *The Maister : or A Century of Tyneside Life,*" just published by Walter Scott & Co.) in which Mr. G. H. Haswell, in paying filial tribute to the memory of a wise and worthy pioneer teacher, to whom every son of Shields is deeply a debtor, epitomises, as part of a graphic account of the situation of affairs at the Tyne mouth, the condition of the country at large at the beginning of the Century. The whole working-class population, as Mr. Haswell therein reminds us, " was poor—miserably and chronically poor ; wretched un-