

**SIGNS OF CHANGE: SEVEN  
LECTURES, DELIVERED  
ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS**

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Signs of Change: Seven Lectures, Delivered on Various Occasions by William Morris

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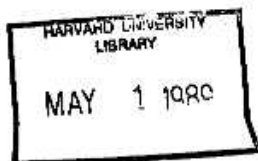
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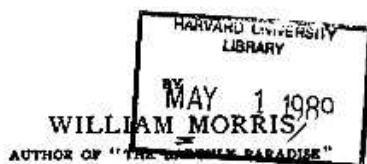
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# "SIGNS OF CHANGE"

SEVEN LECTURES

DELIVERED ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS



NEW EDITION

*A Birthday Gift, From my dau.  
Annie Paulay Pratt.  
January 21<sup>st</sup> 1901*

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1896

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## PREFACE.

OF the seven pieces printed in this book, two, "The Aims of Art" and "Useful Work *versus* Useless Toil," have been printed as pamphlets: three others, "How we Live and How we Might Live," "Whigs, Democrats, and Socialists," and "Feudal England," are reprinted from the Socialist weekly paper, *The Commonweal*, the other two are printed here for the first time.

These pieces are all of them simply Socialist lectures written for *viva voce* delivery; if any excuse be needed for their publication, as may well be, the one I have to offer is, that I have often been asked by persons among my audiences to publish them, and I would fain hope that what interested those persons may also interest others who may first come across them in a book, instead of in a lecture-room.



I must ask the reader's indulgence for the repetitions which occur in these pieces. Socialist lecturers speak almost always to mixed audiences, and hope on every occasion that amongst those who listen to them there may be some to whom Socialism is only a name, and who have sometimes a dim idea, and sometimes none at all, what that name means ; I say "hope," since it is to such persons as this that they are specially anxious to give accurate information about their creed. Therefore they can scarcely omit in any lecture the statement of certain elementary propositions—such, *e.g.*, as the necessity for the abolition of monopoly in the means of production. Indeed, they are by some among their audiences often expected to do much more than this, and blamed for falling short of giving information which no ingenuity could compress into the space of an hour's lecture, over and above the special subject which they may be speaking to.

For the rest, I have only to say that these lectures put some sides of Socialism before the

reader from the point of view of a man who is neither a professional economist nor a professional politician. My ordinary work has forced on me the contrast between times past and the present day, and has made me look with grief and pain on things which many men notice but little, if at all. The repulsion to pessimism which is, I think, natural to a man busily engaged in the arts, compelled me once to hope that the ugly disgraces of civilization might be got rid of by the conscious will of intelligent persons: yet as I strove to stir up people to this reform, I found that the causes of the vulgarities of civilization lay deeper than I had thought, and little by little I was driven to the conclusion that all these uglinesses are but the outward expression of the innate moral baseness into which we are forced by our present form of society, and that it is futile to attempt to deal with them from the outside. Whatever I have written, or spoken on the platform, on these social subjects is the result of the truths of Socialism meeting my earlier impulse, and giving it a

definite and much more serious aim; and I can only hope, in conclusion, that any of my readers who have found themselves hard-pressed by the sordidness of civilization, and have not known where to turn to for encouragement, may receive the same enlightenment as I have, and that even the rough pieces in this book may help them to that end.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

HAMMERSMITH,

*March 1885.*