

**GEORGE MEEK,
BATH CHAIR-MAN
BY HIMSELF**

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George Meek, Bath Chair-Man by Himself by George Meek & H. G. Wells

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GEORGE MEEK & H. G. WELLS

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GEORGE MEEK

BATH CHAIR-MAN

By HIMSELF

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

H. G. WELLS

LONDON

CONSTABLE & CO. LTD.

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SONG OF THE CHAIR-MEN

WE do not live, we only starve and linger ;
We do not hope, we only drift along ;
We have no faith, the years have made us faith-less ;
Come ! listen to the chair-men's feeble song.

We have no grip on life all things pervading,
We have no cheer but what to-day *may* bring ;
There is no love for those who walk in darkness,
Oh ! listen while the trailing chair-men sing.

God send us help, or else there is no saviour ;
God send us hope, or else we die in pain ;
God send us light, or else we blindly falter,
God send us quickly back to sleep again.

Blindly we strive, the vultures gather round us,
Weakly we seek to arm ourselves and stand ;
We may not fly, there is no welcome waiting
For such as us in all this teeming land.

We would be men, and do men's work untiring ;
We would be free and never know a care ;
We would be strong and give for what life giveth,
But Hope lies wounded, dying everywhere.

We would achieve, would quarry stones or build them ;
We've but our manhood left to us to save.
Oh ! Land of England ! is there none to help us ?
Is life just this—and presently the grave ?

GEORGE MEEK.

INTRODUCTION

THERE are people who will not like this book, just as there are people who will not like its writer. As the little boys say, "Let 'em!" I am a Meek-ite, and know there will soon be other Meek-ites in the world. For them the book is published. Mr. Meek is at once a very typical and a very extraordinary man; he stands for an immense class in the modern community, and he is extraordinary in being able to reveal almost everything he stands for. The reader of books who is also a lover of life will know what I mean. Many thousands of men now-a-days, in every class, trail pens and leave a thread of ink behind them, but it is only here and there that that trail gathers itself together and lives. Mr. Meek does all sorts of dreadful things at times with that pen—there are pages in this book where he will shock even the despicable grammarian—but he writes. Reality is here, told with a frankness that marks the elect. There are no vulgarities of the would-be tactful or would-be genteel, and amazingly few affectations about

Mr. Meek. Considering all his circumstances this is, I think, amazing. There is at moments, beyond all question, the stark simplicity of literary greatness about him. A year ago—it is with real pride I add at my suggestion—he set himself to put himself upon paper, and here he is—self portrayed with quite remarkable success.

I first made Mr. Meek's acquaintance through the post. I do not distinctly remember when he emerged from that welter of generally troublesome correspondence with strangers that is an unavoidable part of an author's life. But I remember I had marked him as a rather queer and interesting correspondent before I realized just what his position in the world might be. I involved myself some years ago in the internal politics of the Socialist movement, and it was in a sort of loose connection with this that he had his beginnings. He burned with a passion for "Socialist Unity"—a thing as probable in this world as theological unanimity—and then I fancy he became personal and self-explanatory. I remember very distinctly that he produced literary projects—of an utterly impossible sort. There was to be a book on Ethics, that difficult subject, and a romantic story of scientific progress. I was no doubt discouraging, but whether civilly or not I have now no means of ascertaining;

usually I am uncivil when I find people who evidently have no special scientific or sociological knowledge propose such undertakings, undertakings simple enough in their way, but still demanding at least that much equipment. And perhaps it was then that I said, "Why, instead of writing about things upon which you are necessarily ignorant, don't you realize that the only thing anybody has any right to produce books about is a personal vision of life? You must know no end of things, and have felt no end of things I, as a writer, would give my left hand for. Try and set them down."

That was a request I repeated much more urgently after I had met Mr. Meek. He came to me in the sunshine at Bank Holiday time, and I did not see him so closely as I would have liked, because by some accident another visitor, also claiming attention strongly, happened to coincide with his call. Mr. Meek is so frank an artist, he has all the shamelessness of the wise, that I will not hesitate to tell him that his appearance shocked and interested me profoundly. He was dressed in ill-fitting black clothes, very dusty with the journey he had made that day, he was awkward in his movements, and there is something in his eyes—I do not know what a specialist would call it—a discolouration of the