

Bellamy's "Looking Backward."

BY C. E. NEWMAN.

It is said there never was an age with less freedom of purpose, and more frailty of belief, than the present. We have only to look about us to see the truth of this statement. Theology and science are in conflict, and in another domain, labor and capital. The old phrase "Many men of many minds" is literally true in the present day, for nearly every man who holds an opinion, has his own particular idea of just how matters should be arranged.

The plot in brief is as follows: Mr. Julian West, a young man of 30, falls asleep on May 30th, 1887, in the city of Boston; and after existing in a trance, awakes Sept. 10th, 2000. He then describes the world as it is when he arises from this protracted sleep.

Under the new order of things the government controls everything. Instead of innumerable small firms, powerful syndicates, mammoth trusts and combines, there is but one syndicate, composed of the nation's wealth.

The members of this army are paid by a system which gives to each, at the beginning of the year, in lieu of wages, a credit corresponding to the share of the product of the nation. If he does not use this amount, the remainder is turned into the general fund. Should he do so, a limited advance is made on the next year.

Let us take an imaginary shopping expedition in this new Utopia. Within the warehouse we see samples spread around, with a full description of their make-up, price, etc., attached. The buyer, after he has made his selection, touches a button, and in a moment a clerk appears. He takes the order, which is at once forwarded to the central warehouse by pneumatic tubes.

Perhaps it may not be uninteresting to note the form in which manufacturing is carried on. An account is kept of everything that is given out from the national warehouse. By this means, the actual amount used is known. Making allowances for causes likely to affect demand, a careful estimate can be made for the year ahead.

Enough has been said to give a general idea of the system proposed by Mr. Bellamy. Whether this will be realized remains to be seen. At any rate, all necessary has not been done when the book has been launched at it. It is worthy of careful reading and study, for it grapples with problems which must be solved.

Nationalism has been spoken of as a castle in the air with no means of approach. As outlined in "Looking Backward," Joseph Cook says it is a statue with feet of clay, and limbs of iron, and forehead of brass, and crutches of splintered reeds—meaning by the crutches the political parties that are to rule under the scheme.

It has been said of Mr. Bellamy's scheme that he is not allowed sufficient time for such radical changes. He himself defends this on the ground of precedent, or of great changes that have taken place in the past, which show, as he says, that "when the moral and economical conditions of a nation are ripe, they are expected to go forward with great rapidity."

For most and drunk will be apt. This very surety is a source of weakness. The motive powers are prizes or honors gained by position. Can honor overcome desire for ease among men? If it can, this system, after it is ushered in, will be perfect in its workings.

III. Mr. Bellamy assumes that under the new order of things, the rich and the poor poorer. Statistics show the opposite. In 1850, the average income of the poorer class in Great Britain was \$265 per family. It was upwards of \$400 in 1880. The next class, with incomes from \$750 to \$3,500, was more than doubled.

He also takes for granted that the rich are growing richer at the expense of the poor. It is said 1 per cent. of the families of America own as much as the remaining 99 per cent. That statement can be misinterpreted, but it is not, for it is a vital point of the question at issue.

IV. Socialism and kindred aims are favored by the miserable condition of the working people being exaggerated. Every year, says a writer, Dives is growing richer, his purple finer, his daily fare more sumptuous, and Lazarus is growing more beggarly, his sores more loathsome, his rags scantier, the crumbs which fall from the rich man's table less available for him, because there are more to share them.

V. It is also urged against his scheme that "he does not make clear in his book how it provides for the purchase of property in private hands; that it can be reached only by processes that are untried and revolutionary; and that it fails to remember that a nationalized branch of industry may succeed only because other branches are not nationalized."

Our present civilization has been built up by our forefathers at the expense, not only of labor and self-depial, but life. Have we been building on a false foundation, or is that which was once suited to us now inadequate? Common ownership was general with our forefathers in Europe, but was abandoned as civilization advanced.

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The unselfish Alpine traveller, who was only bent on rescuing his frozen companion, and yet warmed up by his own blood by the heroic effort. Nothing warms up a Christian like working for others. He is working for the precious souls from death. The happy Christians in our churches are those who labor most for the welfare of the needy and the Christless.

"Week of Traves" with a solemn purpose of bringing, with God's help, one soul to Christ this year, then it will be a gladtime year indeed, a bit of heaven in advance. When somebody wished a certain millionaire a "happy New Year," the gruff reply was, "Well, it will be different, then, from the one, for this one has not had a happy day yet."

The poor, selfish creature had been feeding his soul on hooks; the more he swallowed, the worse he felt. One of the happiest men I know, is a devoted city missionary in this neighborhood. He has a meagre salary, lives in a scantily furnished house, and wears a threadbare coat.

So such success has realized now as have not been paralleled since the early days of missions. Standing in the vestibule, the house is not altogether in our view. Standing in one city street the whole splendid and populous area is not before us; and figures as yet cannot fully set forth what has been achieved since the oldest American missionary society found birth and being, eighty years ago.

In order to be saved, just two things are necessary. One is repentance of your sins; and the other is obedience to Christ. The faith that is a mere sound opinion, cannot save you; frames or resolutions, without the heart, will not save you. A resolute grasp of your soul on Jesus will save you.

The command given long ago is still as imperative for all who own allegiance to Christ as it was at the beginning; it will continue to be so till all shall have been saved. The things we do, and that shall be no more call or room for their fresh preaching. And it is one of the astonishing facts in the progress of modern thought, that after the vast missionary successes of the early disciples, and of those who have followed them, down to our day, the things we do, and that shall be no more call or room for their fresh preaching.

Here then appears the immense and pressing duty of our time; pressing as the inexorable movement of the years, urgent as the moral and social need of mankind, supreme as the nature of the work of the Lord! Here appears, too, our noblest privilege—the privilege of taking part in this majestic, colossal enterprise; of following in the line of those who have followed them, down to our day, the things we do, and that shall be no more call or room for their fresh preaching.

God never accepts a good inclination instead of a good action, where that action may be done; nay, so much the contrary, that if a good inclination be not seconded by a good action, the want of that action is made so much the more criminal and inexcusable.—South.

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more ready to receive it than ever before; because they see, and cannot but see, the secular benefits which march in its train. They want that it should do for others to do for them; and for themselves; and whether its doctrines and precepts suit them or not,—though these continue as offensive to them as

before they were to Roman and to Darwin did, that "The lesson of the missionary is the enchanter's wand," and they want that wand to start liberty, education, popular advancement among themselves; to turn the coal into color and power, to transform iron into steel, and to make electricity the servant of the man.

There is no mistaking this vast new trend in the attitude of the evangelized world toward the gospel of Christ. It may wait for its effects, rather than for itself; but those effects shall be felt, if quickening desire, alluring hope, as ever reigns supreme. At just this point there appears also, as almost might have been expected, another combination of colossal forces reminding one of that in which Roman power and law went with Greek speech and the world's mission.

Men who make sacrifices do not talk of them. Those are true sacrifices which have been done alone, and hidden. The world knows too much of what we feel, and what we lose. E. H. Woodson.

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