Our New Masters

Thomas Wright

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Also Published

By THOMAS WRIGHT

The Great Unwashed [1868]

Some Habits and Customs of the Working Classes [1867]

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THE JOURNEYMAN ENGINEER

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The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this reprint but points out that some imperfections in the original may be apparent

OUR NEW MASTERS

"Books will speak plainly when counsellors blanch; therefore it is good to be conversant in them, specially the books of such as themselves have been actors upon the stage."—BACON.

"Meantime, the questions, Why are the working classes discontented; what is their condition, economical, moral, in their houses, and their hearts, as it is in reality, and as they figure it to themselves to be; what do they complain of; what ought they and what ought they not to complain of?—these are measurable questions. On some of these any common mortal, did he but turn his eyes to them, might throw some light."—CARLYLE.

OUR NEW MASTERS

By THOMAS WRIGHT

("THE JOURNEYMAN ENGINEER")

AUTHOR OF "SOME HABITS AND CUSTOMS OF THE WORKING CLASSES,"
"THE GREAT UNWASHED," ETC., ETC.

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1873

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PREFACE.

THE greater part of the present work has already been before the public in the shape of articles in *Fraser's Magazine* and the *Contemporary Review*, which are now reprinted by the kind permission of their respective publishers. I think it due, however, alike to readers and myself to state that the work is not a mere collection of magazine articles brought together just because there happens to be enough of them to make up a volume. The book was planned as a book from the first; the fact that the bulk of it readily lent itself to publication in magazine form was a mere accident. This explanation applies to the whole of the book, with the exception of one article—the one, namely, on "The English Working Classes and the Paris Commune." That article was not originally intended to form part of this work—was not thought of when the general idea of the work was conceived. It arose incidentally out of a private corre-

spondence; and on its first appearance—in *Fraser* for July, 1871—was doubtless better "timed" than it is just now. Still, the main part of it has lost nothing of whatever value it may have had as a statement of working-class views upon an important social question, and I have therefore ventured to add it to the present volume.

I have taken Mr. Lowe's phrase as a fitting and expressive title for a book dealing with the working classes and their views, as they stand in these latter days, when those classes are, potentially at any rate, the New Masters of the political and social situation. When, on the passing of the bill that gave the last extension of the franchise, Mr. Lowe said, "Let us educate our New Masters!" he did more than merely add another to the already tolerably lengthy list of synonyms for the working classes. He indicated a policy—the policy of the future; a policy which it must be evident to all thinking minds it will be imperatively necessary for those having the direction of the national policy to adopt. The key-note struck by Mr. Lowe was largely taken up. "Our New Masters" became *the* topic of the day. They formed the theme of newspaper and magazine articles, platform speeches, and parliamentary debates. On all hands they were treated as "objects of interest," on many hands as objects of flattery; were told that they were all-powerful, and begged to be merciful as they were strong. Such of the New Masters as took note of all

this, looked on amazed; and to the more intelligent and thoughtful among them the most wonderful feature of the whole matter was the ignorance respecting the class in question made manifest in the course of this abundant writing and speaking. They saw that in many things the New Masters were unknown, in others very much misknown; that their views upon questions in which they were intimately concerned were apparently undreamt of in the philosophy of those setting up as exponents and advisers; while views which they did not hold were freely fathered upon them. Seeing how matters stood on this point, it occurred to me that a volume by one of the New Masters, setting forth what manner of men they were, how their class was composed, what views they really did and did not entertain on the more prominent "questions of the day," and wherein lay their strength and weakness, might be of some practical utility—might afford a little *useful* information to those of other classes who have to deal with or legislate for "Our New Masters." Having the opportunity of putting my idea before some whose opinions carry weight with the public, I did so; and finding that they were of opinion that such a work was required, and *would* be likely to prove useful to those seeking to understand the New Masters, I wrote the book, and, having written it, I can only hope that it may in some degree fulfil its intended mission.

Here and there in the course of the work I have ven-

tured to *express* opinions. Such expressions of opinion will of course only be received for what they may be considered worth, and are open to any criticisms or contradictions that it may be thought proper to bestow upon them. But, as a rule, it will be found that in giving working-class opinions upon topics in which the class are concerned, we merely *state* them; and, whatever may be thought of the rightness or wrongness of those opinions, it may, at any rate, be depended upon that they are fairly stated, and are the opinions actually held by working men.

Deptford,
January, 1873.

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Part I.

THE COMPOSITION OF THE WORKING CLASSES.

"If a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand."—MARK iii. 25.

PEOPLE in the upper and middle ranks of society, who, from taking an active and friendly interest in the welfare of the working classes, are anxious to understand them, often ask how those who have a practical acquaintance with the classes in question account for or reconcile a variety of matters in connection with them, which seem to throw doubt upon or are inconsistent with each other. The half-surprised, half-distrustful feeling which gives rise to such questioning is, as things stand, a very natural one. Judged by the contradictory character of some of their actions and opinions—or, to speak strictly, some of the actions and opinions generally attributed to them—the working classes must to others appear not only an unreasonable body, but an incomprehensible one also. For instance, the allegation that republicanism is the political creed of the working classes, may sound, we

won't say more strange than true, but at any rate *curious*, to those who weigh the assertion in conjunction with the facts, that while the working classes have in their hands ample means whereby to send members to Parliament to advocate their political views, the House of Commons does not number a single expressly republican member—and yet the assertion *is* true.

This and many other *seeming* contradictions are easily explainable. The reason—and the blame, if there is blame—of them lies rather with others than the working classes themselves. Though they *speak* of the working classes, most people in other grades of society *think* only of a working class—a class comprehending species as well as genus, and capable of being generalized by being individualized in the person of that great and well-known character of the day, "the working man." A more material error than this there could scarcely be, and it would be strange, indeed, if to those labouring under it the working classes did not appear in an incomprehensible light. That it is a most prevalent error need not be specially demonstrated here. A glance through newspaper leaders and parliamentary and other speeches bearing upon topics in which the working class are concerned, will give abundant proof that such is the case, even if we put aside such evidence as self-examination upon the part of our readers might afford.

The working classes are not a single-acting, single-

idea'd body. They are practically and plurally *classes*, distinct classes, classes between which there are as decisively marked differences as there are between any one of them and the upper or middle classes. And this explains many of the inconsistencies that are laid to the charge of the classes in the aggregate. The proceedings of a section are taken to be those of the whole, and presently when another section does something of an entirely opposite nature puzzled or indignant lookers-on exclaim: "There, my masters, is inconsistency for you! What can be done with or for a body like this?" Of the various "questions of the day," those more directly affecting the working classes are admittedly among the most pressing and important, and to the efficient dealing with such questions we think that two essential preliminaries are—firstly, a realisation of the fact that "the working classes" are literally classes, and not merely a class; and secondly, a general idea of the distinctive characteristics of at least the chief of those classes. Holding this belief, we are naturally of opinion that an account of the composition of the working classes, founded upon knowledge gathered from within them, by one of themselves, may have an attraction for, and possibly be of some slight use to, the many outside those classes who take an interest in them, and the great social questions in which they are concerned. It is at any rate in the hope that such may be the case,

that we come to the subject proper of the present paper, as indicated in its title.

Taken literally, the phrase "the working classes" would include large numbers of all ranks of society, but in the popular and generally accepted sense—and that is the sense in which we wish to deal with it—it may be taken as broadly meaning the artisan and manual labouring classes, excluding even clerks and shopmen, who, though no better paid, and in other respects less advantageously situated than artisans, are yet ranked apart from and above the latter class, on the ground that they follow "genteel occupations." With this much premised, "the working man" becomes a partially admissible figure of speech. The working man as in contra-distinction to the man who does not work, or as distinct from the employing, or genteelly-employed man, can be easily understood. In this simple sense the phrase is self-explanatory, but when used, as it generally is, as a synonym for the working classes, it not only loses definiteness, but becomes an altogether misleading generalization. As such a generalizing synonym, it has for years past been in the mouths of all manner of men in connection with the discussion of the social and political problems of the age. Yet if a score of those professing to be the friends, to understand, and speak in the name of this assumedly representative individual were asked to define him, it would be found that each definition at-

tributed to him some qualification in antagonism with one or more of those given to him by the others; while, could the attributes of all the definitions be combined, they would go to produce such a monster as happily for itself the world ne'er saw. As a stock phrase, or a rallying battle or party cry, "the working man" is sufficiently well-sounding; but as a matter of fact there is no wholly typical working man. Putting aside mere individual traits as outside the scope of our present purpose, there are characteristics marking considerable sections, which are altogether inapplicable to others. What would be true of the mechanic as "the working man," would not be true of the labourer in the same character. There is an educated and really intelligent section, and an uneducated and ignorant section; a political section (broken up again into several sub-sections), and a non-political section; a trade-unionist, and a non-trade-unionist section; a sober, steady, saving section, and a drunken, unsteady, thriftless section; and with the labour market habitually overstocked, there is fast arising a sectional difference of mode of life and feeling between the regularly and irregularly employed classes. Between all these sections there is difference, and in most instances antagonism of feeling. Between the artisan and the unskilled labourer a gulf is fixed. While the former resents the spirit in which he believes the followers of "genteel occupations" look down upon him, he in his turn looks down

upon the labourer. The artisan creed with regard to labourers is, that the latter are an inferior class, and that they should be made to know and kept in their place. In the eyes alike of unionist and non-unionist mechanics, any clever or ambitious labourer who shows a desire to get out of his place, by attempting to pick up or creep into "the trade" to which he is attached as an unskilled assistant, is guilty of deadly sin, and deserving of the abhorrence of all right-thinking members of the craft. In the same way artisans' wives hold the wives of labourers to be of a lower social grade, and very often will either not "neighbour" with them at all, or else only in a patronising way.

On the other hand, the labourer looks upon the mechanic with much the same feeling that mechanics in general look upon many of those above them in the social scale. The mechanic is, as a rule, somewhat of a clever fellow, and he knows that by his daily labour he contributes to the national wealth and well-being, and has a more or less full belief in the doctrine so often preached to him that the working class are practically the sole creators of all national wealth. With this knowledge and belief in his mind he sees others whom he holds to be his inferiors in intelligence, usefulness, and everything else save some accident of birth or fortune, obtaining a far larger share of the substantial advantages of labour-created wealth than falls to his share. This state of things he holds to be wrong in the

abstract and an injustice to him individually; a perversion of what ought to be. As a result he comes to entertain—either consciously or unconsciously—levelling doctrines, but like most other levellers he would only level down. Now the labourer is also a leveller, and as he too would likewise level down, his levelling ideas apply to the mechanic as well as to others; indeed more pointedly to him than to others. Many labourers have brighter natural parts than *some* mechanics; perhaps than the very mechanic at whose command they are. Most of them are of opinion that they have at least equal natural parts to the general run of mechanics, and that with the same opportunities they would have been as good or it may be better men—as skilful as craftsmen, as intelligent as members of society. Their lack of opportunity in regard to the acquisition of education or a trade, they argue, is visited upon them as a fault, while it is really a misfortune. Why, they ask, should they be regarded as the inferior of the mechanic, and be subject to him? Why, to come to more substantial things, should they whose work is harder and more disagreeable than that of the mechanic, be so much worse paid that they must perforce live in less comfortable homes, fare and dress more coarsely, and have less of all money-costing pleasures of life? To them it seems that there is no *necessary* or just Wherefore to these Whys. They see, in the existing state of affairs, undeserved wrong

to themselves individually and as a class, and a proof that society is ill-constructed and in need of reconstruction. It may be a law of nature that in all societies there shall be a class of hewers of wood and drawers of water to their social brethren. The history of mankind hitherto is in favour of such a supposition, but the hewers and drawers are very decidedly of opinion that the hewing and drawing should be divided among all classes, or that otherwise the hewing and drawing class should be rewarded in a manner that would enable them to command the good things of life to an extent that would be equitably compensatory to them for the degree in which the hard things of life fell upon them. Coming most in contact with the mechanic class, they, as we have said, apply these ideas pointedly to them. The mechanic knows this; knows that the labourer's notion of a radical reconstruction of the social system would involve the swamping of his comparative social superiority, and to this extreme inclusiveness of the levelling idea he objects. He cannot "see the beauty" of the idea when made operative *upon* him, as he can when made operative for him. In the same way the workman—whether labourer or mechanic —who may have a house of his own, or money in the bank, knows that the idea with regard to the "redistribution of property" of those who have neither house nor money, would include in the total to be redistributed his savings, as well as the millions of a Rothschild, or the

lands of a Westminster or a Bute; a view of the question which the better-off workman is inclined to consider as too much of a good thing. Thus though artizans and labourers, well-off and ill-off workmen, may broadly and theoretically hold the same article of political belief, and to outsiders appear to be "all of a bunch," they are really divided, are mutually distrustful, and afraid of acting unitedly; the one fearing that they may be dragged down, the other that they may be made tools of.

That many even of the uneducated among the working classes are endowed with a considerable degree of the quality generally spoken of as "shrewd common sense," is well known, and in comparing them with others it should also be borne in mind that their lack of education is their misfortune, not their fault. But with all due allowance made on this score, and speaking in a spirit the reverse of unkindly, it must be confessed that the ignorance, and—if we may be allowed the expression—uninformed-ness characteristic of a large proportion of the uneducated section, is so great and dense, and extends to such simple every-day matters, that to more or less educated men who are habitually brought into contact with it, it becomes irritating and seems contemptible. This is of course a wrong feeling upon the matter, but at present we are not speaking to extenuate but to explain. It may be "pity 'tis true," but it *is* true that no one has so impatient a contempt for the uneducated

working man as has the educated working man. This feeling is not concealed; the uneducated men naturally resent it, and so arises another bar to the unity which would be strength to the working classes. The educated workman holds the uneducated one to be responsible for a low general estimate of the working classes being taken by other classes, and he thinks it a matter of right that the other should be ruled by him in all matters of opinion, and indeed that he should scarcely presume to have an opinion at all. This idea the uneducated man regards as a piece either of self-seeking or "cheek," and in a mere spirit of opposition to it—if there is no other ground of difference—will act in antagonism to the views of his educated fellow.

The political section of the working classes is, as we have already mentioned, broken up into various sub-sections. The views of one sub-section may, in comparison with the extremer views of most of the others, be called conservative; but a conservative working man in the generally understood sense of the term, "the conservative working man" who sometimes figures on paper as a member of a "constitutional association," is, if not an absolute myth, a very infinitesimal reality. In the course of a tolerably extensive experience, we have met with very few who would admit that they were even nominally of this type, and none who would admit it save under cross-examination, and in a shamefaced manner, or the purity

of whose conservatism did not labour under suspicion ; who were not in the employ of, or otherwise dependent upon, or desirous of, the favour of some active and pronounced "gentleman member" of the particular "constitutional association" to which they belonged, or who did not bear the reputation among the fellow-workmen who had the best opportunities of knowing them, of being just the kind of men who would be likely to join *any* association that gave poor and accommodating members tickets for "banquets" at which baronets, colonels, and county members are the speakers, and the number of working-men banqueters bears about the same proportion to county gentry as did the one halfpenny worth of bread to the "intolerable deal of sack" in Falstaff's tavern bill. In short, though Conservative "organs" parade him as a type of a class, "the conservative working man" is *nil* for all practical purposes of estimating the composition of the working classes. The *creed* of the political section of the working classes is *at present* republicanism, or ultra-liberalism broadening down towards republicanism. It is on the question of the best means for gaining their end that they divide into sub-sections. One set says:—We must go in for a republic; we shall do no good till we get it. Another—Our fight must be against capital. As things stand, it is practically lord of all, and till it falls we cannot rise. Another—What we want is working men in parliament, and we shall never be able to achieve anything for

ourselves till we have got them. And another—It is mere waste and misdirection of energy to make home politics the first consideration; that the one thing really needful is an international combination of the working classes throughout the world. Of course, each sub-section is strongly of opinion that their view alone is *the* correct one, and is intolerant of the views of the others, except as secondary to theirs. But they are unanimous upon one point—to wit, that the non-political section are less true, dutiful, and deserving members of their general brotherhood than they are, and they are given to expressing this belief in rather hectoring fashion. This assumption of superiority is of course resented, and, moreover, the charge of class apathy is retorted by a counter one, of personal self-seeking. Many of the non-political justify themselves by saying that they do not see that they would gain anything by "bothering" themselves with politics, and they argue as a corollary from this that the others would not interest themselves in politics did they not believe they saw some prospect of special personal gain to be obtained by such means.

Between trade-unionist and non-unionist workmen there is, generally speaking, a certain degree of coolness and suspicious watchfulness which leads to divided ideas and action. The unionists are almost of necessity more or less cliqueish, and this leads to non-unionist cliqueism. There are—to use a paradoxical expression—unions of non-

unionists; exclusively non-union, as well as exclusively union workshops. That some trade-unions are seriously faulty, and even the best of them not faultless, is no doubt true; but still, so far as regards the larger, better, and more representative ones, it may safely be said that very few men qualified to become members of them refrain from doing so on the ground of conscientious objections to features of their constitution. The great majority of the non-unionist members of trades having well-organised unions, are either men who are not eligible for admission by reason of their not being considered up to the union standard of skill, or men who, being in regular employment, and having good prospects of remaining in it, decline to join the union on the ground that, as they are not likely to stand in need of its out-of-work pay, they do not see why they should subscribe to its funds for the benefit of others. The first kind are regarded—not only by the unionists, but by the more skilful non-unionists also—with somewhat of an evil eye, as being likely to bring down the trade—that is, the rate of wages in it. The others are by the unionists considered ignobly selfish; men without brotherly sympathy, and therefore little deserving of the sympathy of others should evil days come upon them. On the other hand, the non-unionists are of opinion that the unionists are unjustifiably and offensively dictatorial, and too much given to meddling and wire-pulling; and the general result is another and serious bar to that unity and feeling

of mutual confidence by which the working classes might achieve so much; for want of which they achieve so little.

That the drunkards, and too liberal drinkers, among the working classes are so numerous as to constitute a considerable section, is unfortunately but too well known a fact. Between them and the sober men there are decided differences of opinion. The sober men, generally speaking, despise the drunken ones, and in many instances look upon them as enemies, on the ground that their proceedings have the effect of giving a degraded aspect to the whole body, and that their sins are often visited upon the whole body, in the shape of workshop regulations, and other things which, though necessary and just as applied to drunkards, become harsh in respect to others. But while this is the opinion of others, the drinkers regard themselves as being simply "jolly good fellows," or at the very worst, "nobody's enemy but their own," and look upon those who censure them as prigs—men so lost to all proper feeling and sense of jolly-good-fellowship as to be capable of lending their aid to measures, the tendency of which would be in the language of jolly-good-fellowship to "rob a poor man of his beer"—men, consequently, against whom it behoves all jolly good fellows to be on their guard.

Between the steady and the unsteady section of the working classes, and between the saving, forethoughtful section, and that which in a too literal sense takes no heed for the morrow, there is much the same difference of opinion and

distrustfulness. And this, of course, serves to further break up the working classes, and to show that "the working man," as an all-typical generalization, cannot but be inadequate and misleading.

With the chief of their antagonistic sections, together with their respective characteristics, and points of difference thus indicated, the working classes may, we think, for the convenience of a proximate generalization, be broadly divided into three "schools," of which representative members may be bodied forth. First comes the old school—the school in which the largest percentage of the lack of education, prejudice, and feeling of class-antagonism that stand in the way of the self-elevation of the working classes is to be found; a school that was once the predominating one, and, though now a declining, is still a large and influential one. The members of it, like the members of other old schools, are given to speak of it as the *good* old school, and the time of its supremacy as the good old time. Though, seeing that the period in question was anterior to the passing of most of the laws at present in force for the protection of labour, other divisions of the working classes are disposed to look back to it as rather a bad old time. A majority of the old school are middle-aged, or more than middle-aged men, but this is not necessarily the case. Though it may sound somewhat paradoxical, it is a fact that there are many young men in the old school—men who, though young in years, are

"old school" in feeling and opinion. The man of this school is pleased to regard himself as "rough and tough," and other working men as, comparatively speaking, effete. He is chary of admitting anything good in things "new-fangled," and still stoutly retains a belief in ideas that are generally looked upon as exploded. As, for instance, in the self-satisfactory and once almost universally accepted doctrine that an Englishman is as good as three Frenchmen (or any other foreigners); that in fighting he could "lick" them; in the peaceful contests of labour "work their heads off." He has a considerable contempt for mere "book learning," or perhaps it would be more accurate to say, for what he conceives to be the excessive importance attached to education nowadays. He believes in an elementary knowledge of the three R's, but is inclined to regard any attempt upon the part of a working man to go beyond that as affectation and evidence of a desire to set himself above his class—a sin not lightly forgiven by the old school. His reading is generally limited to the criminal records, and social and political philippics, of his weekly newspaper; which latter, though often sound enough in substance, have nevertheless an injurious effect upon him, as by their violent invective and utter one-sidedness they pander to, and perpetuate, his class prejudices. Moreover, they so flatter him—as "the working man," the "brawny son of toil," the only real creator of wealth, and so forth—that he turns a deaf

ear to all would-be advisers, who will not flatter, and all the more readily falls a prey to those who flatter in order to fleece. He is inclined to condemn as idlers all who, in the course of their avocations, do not need to soil their hands or pull their coats off. He regards himself as the Ishmael of modern society—the man upon whom all other classes seek to prey. And, holding this opinion, he deems that it behoves him to be watchful of others, to guard against their too close approach, and be scantily civil to them.

But if the workman of the old school has many faults, he has also many good qualities. He has plenty of "bottom" in him. He is of a self-reliant, self-helpful, independent spirit, and has none of those demi-semi genteel ideas and ways that are sometimes to be found among other sections of the working classes, and that make those afflicted by them so contemptible in the eyes of others. He dresses and lives plainly, and sees that his wife and family do the same. In his opinion a few pounds in the bank are better than a lot of fine clothes, and if he is ordinarily fortunate he *will* have money in the bank, and not unfrequently he is the proprietor of the house in which he lives. He is upright in his dealings, will stand by his friend and his class, and even when not individually affected by the matter in hand, is prepared to make the greatest personal sacrifices in support of the view of the working classes upon any principle affecting the welfare of the general body.

Gradually growing from the old school — from the explosion of old ideas ere they had engrained themselves in comparatively young minds, and the influence of new institutions, experiences, and knowledge—has arisen a division of the working classes which may be styled the school of the day. In point of numbers this is the greatest of the several schools, but still it is not preponderatingly great—not so great as to justify the putting up of its typical man as *the* working man, nor yet so great but that it would be swamped, both in numbers and influence, by a combination of the old school and the other leading school to be presently adverted to. It is not so "pronounced" a school as the old school, for though it has distinguishing traits, it has also important characteristics that are common to other schools. For instance, it is inclined to take the Ishmael view of itself—to believe that the hand of every other class is against it, and that therefore it becomes a self-defensive duty upon its part to have its hand against every other class. It, too, believes that all the best and truest political wisdom, honesty, and courage of the country are centred in those newspapers which profess themselves the "organs" of the working classes; and it has been so vitiated by the persistent flattery of those "organs," that again, like the old school, it will accept no friendship but that which flatters. And from this cause it lends too ready and credulous an ear to those "friends of the working man" who do flatter them

—who would fain persuade them that, like the king, they can do no wrong—who make a trade of their friendship, and, flattering to live, live to flatter. On the whole, however, the man of this school is a decided improvement upon the men of the schools that have gone before. His general views are much broader and more cosmopolitan. He has got rid of some of the more offensive phases of what the old school are pleased to consider John Bullism. He does not believe it to be a law of nature that one Englishman is equal to several foreigners, or that the exercise of the manufacturing arts is a right divine of England alone. While he is of opinion that the extent and importance of foreign competition is designedly exaggerated by those whose interests are identified with capital, he concedes that it is a material fact of sufficient magnitude to be taken into account as one of the elements of the relations between capital and labour. In the face of it, he not only admits that the once generally—and by the old school still—despised foreigner is a man and a brother, but is anxious to be on friendly terms with him, and to co-operate with him upon labour and other specially working-class questions. Nay, on one point he is even willing to take pattern by him, to avail himself, would the State afford him the means, of that technical education, the machinery for acquiring which foreign governments have been wise and liberal enough to organize for the benefit of their working populations. Without having

any very clear or definite idea of what constitute the much-talked-of "rights" of labour, he is firmly impressed with the notion that some of them are withheld by those having might upon their side. On the other hand, he is perfectly willing to grant that capital too may have rights—in the abstract. But he thinks that at present it has all its rights, and more. Though prepared, if need be, to take part in strikes, he regards them with a doubtful eye; looks upon them as a last instead of a first resource—as in any case an undesirable means even to a good end, and things, if possible, to be avoided. He prefers arbitration as a means of settling disputes, and in this regard it is only fair to him to say that he has shown greater earnestness and sincerity in attempting to establish courts of arbitration than has been displayed upon the side of capital.

Though comparatively little educated himself, he does not make light of education. On the contrary, he sets a high value upon it, and while regretting his own deficiencies, strives to give his children better educational opportunities than have fallen to his own lot. He takes a more or less warm and active interest in politics and in questions of social progress, and has an earnest though vague longing for a better state of things than now exists, and is ever willing to support this or that "movement" which he believes or is assured will lead to the desired improvement in the constitution of society. But

at the same time he labours under a certain bitterness of spirit at finding how little actual material benefit has accrued to his class from even such of those movements as have been prosecuted to a successful end.

Naturally influenced by the tendencies of the times, he is more given to amusements, holiday-making, and dress, than the man of the old school—more perhaps than is altogether good for him. But with all due allowance of his faults, he is, upon the whole, a favourable style of man. A man meaning well, inclining to improvement—as a husband and father affectionate, as a neighbour and workfellow staunch and kindly.

The third school among the working classes is the one that may be spoken of as the "coming" or rising school. Numerically it is smaller than either of the other two schools, and it is also less demonstrative, and from these reasons is much less well known to the outer public. Still it is a large and influential school, and in the natural progress of events it is daily increasing, and is in all probability destined to become a predominating one in a greater degree than either of the other two have ever been or are likely to be. It is a natural development from the other schools. It has reaped the riper and later benefits of institutions that they have helped to establish, and of the general advances of the age; of increased facilities of home and foreign intercommunication, beneficial legislation, improved political status, and extended education.

The man of this school is necessarily a young man—too young as yet, generally speaking, to exhibit that stern persistent interest in the great questions affecting the working classes that many men of the other schools show. Still he does think of such questions, and time, while making him fitter to deal with them, will also deepen his interest in them. If superficially, he is at any rate tolerably widely educated—widely, that is, in comparison with the other schools. He is the man who has availed himself of the plentiful and diversified means of education now within the reach of all; not only of the elementary and technical means, but also of the—in many respects still more important—supplementary means, the wide-spreading press, public libraries, and cheap standard literature. He knows what the *Times*, the *Saturday*, and the *Pall Mall*, as well as *Reynolds'*, *Lloyd's*, and the *Beehive* have to say upon working-class questions, and he does not take it for granted that in regard to such questions all the right must be upon the working-class side, all the wrong on the side of those who hold different views. Nor does he take it as an understood thing that a working man must of necessity be a good man; a man of aristocratic birth a bad one. He has little class prejudice, his knowledge being more extensive than that of the men of the other working-class schools; his sympathies are as a consequence broader. He admits that there are bad as well as good members among the working, as among other

classes; and while he believes that a good deal is yet due from the governing to the working classes, he knows, and has no desire to conceal, that much *self*-improvement is needed among the latter body—improvement that will tend to eradicate the intemperance, ignorance, and bigotry that unhappily still largely prevail among them—improvement, without which improvement coming from the outside will be of but little avail.

He is not led away by Utopian ideas; does not believe in social panaceas. But he does believe in "sweetness and light" and in the elevating effects of culture. Believes that education, abundant and easily accessible literature, and the resources of modern science, have already placed means within the reach of the working classes which, rightly appreciated and used by them, would diffuse a far higher and more general happiness among them than is to be found at present. Believes that a time may—probably will—come, when self-organized, self-supporting "Working Men's Clubs" will supersede the public-house, intelligent social intercourse the "booz-ing" and horse-play of the tap-room; a time when a choicely-filled little bookcase will be an ordinary article of furniture in working-class homes, and working men generally acquainted with (through their works)—

> "The great of old,
> The dead but sceptred sovereigns who still rule
> Our spirits from their urns;"

a time, in short, when mental culture will give such sweetness and light to the home and social life of the bulk of the working classes as, combined with the material improvement in their condition that—with education and knowledge thus advancing—may be reasonably expected from national progress in other matters, will make their lot one that to a *cultivated* mind will leave little room for envy.

The man of this school believes in liberty and fraternity, but not in equality. He knows that there is no natural equality, and is inclined to think that—

> "Beneath the sun
> The many still must labour for the one:
> 'Tis nature's doom;"

that there must always be a working class, but that there is no necessary reason why they should not be as happy—perhaps happier—than the classes who do not work. And for the bringing about of such possible happiness he looks to a general and individual improvement *in* the working classes even more than to legislative action.

The man of the rising school has of course his faults, and the most prominent of them are unfortunately of such a character that, by their irritating action upon the men of the other schools, they stand as much in the way of the unity of the working classes as does the intolerant spirit of the other schools. Under existing circumstances he is inclined to be too egotistical and self-assured. He is given to drawing comparisons in his own favour between him-

self and the men of the other schools; to being hard upon their educational shortcomings, and on the strength of his superiority on this point, letting it be seen that he assumes a general superiority.

Though so generally spoken of, thought of, and legislated for as a single and unanimous body, any part of which characteristically represented, and might be taken as speaking for, the whole—though so generally regarded in this light, the working classes really are, as we hope we have shown, divided and subdivided; and not only that, but divided into antagonising sections. They are as a house divided against itself. To use the point of the old fable, they are a *number*, but not a *bundle*, of sticks. Their strength is wasted and made ineffective by want of coherence. Though all schools and sections of them have broad interests in common, they are so divided in feeling as to be incapable of united action even for a common object. That they will in time become more united is tolerably certain; education is spreading, and ideas are enlarging among them, though slowly. In the meantime they stand divided in the manner we have attempted to describe, and those who would understand the working classes, or deal effectively with the great questions affecting them, must not only realise the fact that they are a divided body, but must also study their composition.

ON THE CONDITION OF THE WORKING CLASSES.

"There must be something wrong. A full-formed horse will in any market bring from twenty to as high as two hundred Friedrich's-d'or; such is his worth to the world. A full-formed man is not only worth nothing to the world, but the world could afford him a round sum would he simply engage to go and hang himself. Nevertheless, which of the two was the more cunningly-devised article, even as an engine? Good heavens! A white European man, standing on his two legs, with his two five-fingered hands at his shackle-bones and miraculous head on his shoulders, is worth, I should say, from fifty to a hundred horses!"—CARLYLE's "Sartor Resartus."

"Man now presides
In power, where once he trembled in his weakness;
Science advances with gigantic strides;
But are we aught enriched in love and meekness?
Aught dost thou see, bright star! of pure and wise
More than in humbler times graced human story;
That makes our hearts more apt to sympathise
With heaven, our souls more fit for future glory,
When earth shall vanish from our closing eyes,
Ere we lie down in our last dormitory?"

WORDSWORTH.

TO those who understand its true significance, and see how wide and important are its bearings, it must be evident that the subject of the condition of the working classes is in this country fast becoming an Aaron's rod among the questions of the day. Its tendency is to swallow up the rest, for the complexion to which most others come at last is—How will they affect the working