

Turriff:
THE DEVERON PRESS
1916-2016
www.theveronpress.scot

Matter, Spirit, and Karl Marx

Is our Science all wrong?

Startling Claims from a Spiritualist Angle

The Rally of an Expelled Communist

(first published July 1927)

‘The history of each of the sciences is a record of the progressive substitution of matter for spirit and law for sponteneity.’ Encyclopedia Britannica.

Recent achievements of applied physical science – such as the gramophone, wireless, telegraphy, and the promised television, with, above all, the new subdivision of matter called the electron – are supposed to have given the philosophical materialist pause, and on this assumption the Spiritists are inclined to be aggressive. When Shakespeare said there were more things between heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy he was making a wise allowance for the extension of the realm of the knowable. We have been extending that realm, and all the legitimate, *real* extensions of it have been along the lines of simple naturalism. There was a time when spirits pervaded all things. Animism put kelpies in the pools, furies in the winds, fairies on the green, fauns and satyrs in the woods, and ghosts everywhere. ‘Devils’ were exorcised with priestly abracadabra, witches were burnt after they had been forced to confess impossible deeds by the applications of pincers. Even the astronomer Kepler believed there were spirits of the planets, and similarly biology was not yet got rid of ‘final causes.’

An Arrestive Treatise.

These reflections are suggested by a pamphlet of an unusually arrestive, and on its human side valuable, kind. The treatise is an answer to the question ‘Is Materialism the Basis of Communism?’ (Henderson, 66 Charing Cross Road, London ,6d). The

author, Mrs. Isabel Kingsley makes out an excellent case against the materialist conception of history; and many who see in Collectivism an ideal or ideals which will change, not only the economic basis of society, but will revolutionise the whole of life and human nature itself, will be glad of this excursion into the more attractive realm which lies beyond the politico-economic wrangle.

There are some of us who grudge having to be politicians at all. Decently-minded people want to cultivate their bodies and minds, and enjoy life peacefully in a society where one part of the population does *not* live by picking the pockets of the majority; and politics represent, broadly, a mere attempt to suppress pocketpicking and to force men like the Duke of Northumberland and the average idle shareholder to do their fair share of the necessary work of the world.

But Mrs Kingsley is not concerned about the wrangle, the immediate thing, such as fighting the Trade Disputes Bill or the attempt to set the House of Lords over both the Commons and the Monarchy. Still less is she concerned with the gradual extension of Municipal and State Collectivism. One of the advantages of keeping free from legislative and administrative entanglements is that one can project one's mind into the future and get busy over matters that have nothing to do with current issues.

Gradualness Rejected

Mrs. Kingsley apparently rejects the philosophy of gradualness. She says the slow course of organic transformation may be 'rejected on strictly scientific grounds' and refers to De Vries having shown by verified experiments the abrupt appearance of new vegetable species without any immediate transitional forms. These changes he calls 'mutations' and from his observations it is seriously argued that abrupt transformation may well be the rule in evolution.

This is an immensely convenient theory. I have never seen the blue rose that gardeners have long tried to evolve by stages of crossing. I have read of a blue rose and have heard of a black one. But there is such a thing as colour blindness. There is also a thing called throwing the hatchet. When the loganberry was produced by crossing the bramble with the raspberry, gardeners made some noise about it; but if a new variety sprang up like a weed, without being man-planted, and with no known antecedents, there would surely be some shout about the miraculous apparition. The much canvassed problem of priority touching the hen and the egg would have a kindred conundrum. When Topsy said she was not born, but just growed, she did not know that a scientist was to come along and say that it was possible to grow without being born. We have heard an enthusiastic breeder discussing aloud, on the other side of a hedge, and all alone, how, by selection, he could produce something that would carry everything before it in the showyard, beating all he had done before by the same means. To leave it all to 'mutations' would, no doubt, have been easier.

Faith-Healing.

Mrs. Kingsley's view makes short work of all the sciences, including that of healing. She cites from Myers and Richet the case of a rich Belgian workman who had both legs broken. There was:

'suppuration and no disposition of the bones to unite; the lower part of the leg could be moved in all directions. He refused to have it amputated, and had been on crutches for eight years, when one day, while at prayer at a shrine, he felt himself cured, stood up, put his feet to the ground, and walked without assistance.'

The suppuration, it seems, stopped, the accretions cleared away, the disjointed bones set painlessly and without manipulative pressure! Does Mrs Kingsley, one wonders, have her meals cooked without fire, without cutting vegetables, without any of the adaptation of means to ends that all processes have heretofore been supposed to require?

When we cannot induce the majority to do the easy and obvious, the thing of proved adequacy, it may be right to suggest something unheard of and unlikely. But as it is, we put on poultices to extract a virus, we reduce inflammations and fevers by ointments, fomentations, quinine and other febrifuges. In politics, when private enterprise breaks down, public effort comes to the rescue, as with housing. Is all this kind of thing a mere tinkering with evils that can be met with a general *fiat lux* and effort of faith?

This is transcendentalism with a vengeance. Unfortunately it leaves us all awash. Nothing is as it seems. All our knowledge simply misleads us. The only people who do not know about things are the people who have given a lifetime's study to them. The Belgian workman who would not have his gangrened leg amputated was right, and the doctors were wrong. When your waterpipes burst call in the tailor. When your coat is torn take it to the plumber. Science, like Love, 'smiles but to deceive.'

There are of course, cases where the scientist and the politicians are wrong. By citing instances here and there you may make all the experts look foolish in turn. But argument based upon exceptions is special pleading. Mrs Kingsley spoils her case against Materialism-ridden-to-death by setting up the Supernatural against it. And that is not only unnecessary, but mischievous.

Definitions.

But I have got ahead unduly, thinking of the treatise as a whole. Let me begin more or less at the beginning, only remarking incidentally that it is 'significant of much' that Mrs. Kingsley belonged to the Communist Party, and has apparently been expelled for heresy!

Our authoress accepts the dictionary definitions of Materialism:

1. *Materialism – The denial of the existence in man of an immaterial substance which alone is conscious, distinct, and separable from the body. The reduction of psychical processes to physical is the special thesis of Materialism.*

2. *Materialism – He who denies spirit in man or in the universe. In the domain of ethics and practical life, Materialism is a term used to denote the temper of mind which sees in the acquisition of wealth, material comfort, and sensuous pleasure the only reasonable objects of human endeavour.*

As the antithesis of this the following definition is given –

*Idealism – Any theory which maintains the universe to be throughout the work or the embodiment of reason or mind. Any theory which seeks the explanation or ultimate *raison d'être* of the cosmic evolution in the realisation of reason, self-consciousness, or spirit.*

I have one or two objections to make to these definitions. The reference to an 'immaterial substance' is an obvious contradiction in terms. If there is one thing that 'substance' cannot be it is 'immaterial.' Substance must be substantial in greater or lesser degree. Water is less substantial than wood, and wood than iron; but all three are substances. An *immaterial materiality* is naturally repudiated by Materialists or anyone who wishes to use language with any degree of accuracy.

The Materialist does *not* deny 'spirit in man.' He does not deny spirit even in horses and dogs. He only denies that spirit is 'distinct and separable from the body.' He does not deny music; he only denies that music can be produced without physical means – voice, violin, or organ – while at the same time he denies that the music itself is physical. In the *Phaedo* Plato gives Socrates most of the talk (in a dialogue at which Plato himself was confessedly not present); but he gives Simmias the best of the argument in the following passage:

Anyone might use the same argument with respect to harmony, and a lyre and its chords – that harmony is something invisible and incorporeal, very beautiful and divine in a well modulated lyre; but the lyre and its chords are bodies and of corporeal form, compounded and earthly, and akin to that which is mortal. When anyone, then, has broken or burst the chords, he might maintain, from the same reasoning as yours, that it is necessary that harmony should still exist and not be destroyed. .. Our body being compacted and held together by heat and cold, dryness and moisture, and other such qualities, our soul is the fusion and harmony of these when they are well and duly combined with each other. If, then, the soul is a kind of harmony, it is evident that when our body is unduly relaxed or strained through diseases or other maladies the soul must of necessity immediately perish, although it is most divine, just as other harmonies which subsist in sounds or in the various works of artizans, but that the remains of the body of each person last a long time till they are without being or decayed. Consider, then, what we shall say... if anyone

should maintain that the soul, being a fusion of the several qualities in the body, perishes first in that which is called death.'

After this we read (*Phaedo*, sec 80) that Socrates, awaiting death, looked 'steadfastly at us,' and, smiling said, 'Simmias indeed speaks justly.'

Those who, like the Swedenborgians and the Spiritualists, conceive of spirit as something which can put on clothes, or be hit with a stick, are more materialistic than the Materialists. The Materialist believes that the spirit is spiritual. The Spiritualist believes it is material, and does not laugh when he sees an imposter or impostress walking about performing senseless tricks while professing to be a spirit. to the Materialist, spirit is mettle, vital force, which he derives from his body nourished with food, air, and sleep. When the Materialist speaks of a person having 'a poor spirit' he means simply that the person makes a poor show in energy, hopefulness, courage, or initiative. The dependence of spirit on the material body is shown by the fact that poor health means poor spirits. The same dependence is shown by the fact that the same individual is one person when hungry and a very different person when rested. When the Materialist speaks of a 'spirited' horse he means a horse that has plenty of energy and action.

An Unbridged Gulf.

Let us be quite frank and say that there is no explanation of how matter thinks. We know what neurosis is, but we do not know how it becomes psychosis. We touch hot iron and instantaneously the contact is telegraphed along the nerves to the brain. But how that neurotic process, which is physical, should become a psychological experience, we do not know. Consciousness has yet to find its Newton. All that we know is that spirit has an 'invariable and concomitant' relationship with matter, the matter being first as the basis of spirit. There is no thought without a material thinker. And, testing the relationship, there may be a dead thinker without thought. The young thinker has youthful thoughts, indicating a soul no older than his body. The dependence thus meets the test by being exclusive, inclusive, and conditional. A live brain thinks, a dead body does not think, a youthful body thinks youthfully in accordance with lack of long training and experience. The Pythagoreans believed in the transmigration of souls. In their view the ego of Shakespeare existed before his body was born and still exists in some lowlier incarnation. This seems wildly unthinkable; but granted the independent, separable, eternal life of the soul, what more feasible, if the soul must function through a body? Spiritualism seeks to dispose of the necessity for transmigration by asserting the existence of an astral body for us all. There is no evidence of the existence of anything so unlikely, and there would need to be the best. Attendance at séances is the best way of finding out how little is to be seen, and how trivial and inept is all that is to be heard.

I have no pleasure in discussing the obvious; but one further remark on these definitions may be made.

Spirit in the Universe.

Of 'spirit in the universe' we have no knowledge. All talk of final causes is jargon. If every effect can be related to its natural antecedent causes, does it not seem obscurantism to posit a final cause behind the natural, obvious antecedents pursued as far back as science, assisted by telescope and microscope, can go? It is a law of the mind, the basis of all reasoning whatever, that there must be an Absolute, independent of time and destruction, and comprehending, rather than existing throughout, infinite space. Why object to regard the Universe itself as this Absolute? Is it not big enough, grand, varied, beautiful, majestic, powerful enough? The teleological craving is so strong with some, and especially with people who are not busy with any kind of finite work, that if by searching they *could* find out god, they would want to question him as to *his* antecedents, and would probably, if put off, wax scornful over the idea that he should not have an origin like everything else. Logic is satisfied with one infinity and incapable of conceiving two - an infinite God and an infinite Universe as well. There must be one sole entity that, unlike all finite things, had no origin. A Roman Catholic casuist said 'God and the Universe are co-existent eternities.' That is as good a theory as any other theological doctrine. We would not expect a theologian to explain how the creation was as old as its creator. Theology is essentially concerned with a mystery; though, happily, religion itself is plain and simple and entirely concerned with the known and the knowable - with love and kindness and fair dealing between man and man.

The attitude if not the expressed question, of the wise workaday man will be: Why drag in God? The Cosmos is equal to all its work. One thinks of it as the only system of perpetual motion, self-sufficing, kept going by its own momentum, with a complete circle of conservation in all its forces and elements, the only system that repairs its own waste in one part by building up another, that has had no conceivable beginning and can have no conceivable end. To posit intelligence behind it - the old exploded Design Argument of Paley - is a poor finite craving born of incapacity to apprehend the infinite. This persistent discounting of the Universe is not so much ungrateful blasphemy as just the cry of a distressed child for its mother even when it knows that Mother is not there. For the sake of truth and humanity, let jus recognise that after Nature has done her best, man takes up the tale, and, acting as his own Adjunct Providence, makes good her absence of design, correcting her extremes of cold and heat, her crudeness, the unintentional cruelty of the machine, the imperfections of structural forms - as in eye, ear, throat, stomach and teeth - the disabilities of rudimentary organs and vestigial remains, the perverse distribution of plant life which placed the medicinal cinchona on the inaccessible heights of the Andes, though it has been found to thrive on the low grounds where it is wanted, and the maleficent palmella or ague plant where it could communicate the maximum of contagion; and lastly to correct the wildness and awkwardness of the natural man himself.

The Materialist Conception of History.

It is because I think that Mrs Kingsley has a good case against the Materialist Conception of History that I regret she should fall back upon Spiritism, which at best is occult, to justify beliefs which may be demonstrated by simple proofs of every day. What, for example, could be less materialistic than the love of a mother for a child? An infant is a cause of expense and trouble in the present and of anxiety for its future. The lucky parent may rejoice in the credit that a clever or prosperous son or daughter may bring, and there are parents who batten on their children; but as a rule the most that a good parent can hope for is that the boy or girl will do well and not be either a burden or a heartbreak in after life. Or what could be more disintegrated, what could be less materialistic, than the love of a wife for an ailing and slowly dying husband whom perhaps she may have to work to maintain?

I shall not traverse ground I have covered in these pages on previous occasions to point out the disinterestedness of patriotic surrender of life, martyrdom for a cause, the zeal of crusaders, Mahometan and Pagan as well as Christian, the love of country which induces men not only to die for it, but to go on living in it in spite of disastrous earthquakes as in Japan, or volcanic devastation as in Italy. Nay, the falsity of the materialistic conception is shown even by the persecuting sovereigns who by Bartholomew massacres and Jewish pogroms have decimated their own subjects and cess-payers in their zeal for what they regarded as religion. If vulgar materialism moves men to set store chiefly by whatever increases their wealth and comfort, who could be less materialistic than a doctor who poisoned his paying patients, or a merchant who murdered his customers? Yet Charles IX of France and the last Nicholas of Russia did the like in their zeal for a form of theology.

Marx Primarily a Moralist.

Mrs Kingsley is very right and says what needed to be said when she points out that Marx was stating 'a moral ideal' when he claimed that 'the value of the commodities produced by labour is equal to the quantity of labour socially necessary to produce them.' The same idea was promulgated by Adam Smith in 1775 as an application of his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. He wrote (Ch v of *The Wealth of Nations*)

Labour is the real measure of the exchangeable value of all commodities. The real price of everything... is the toil and trouble of acquiring it, Labour... is the only universal as well as the only accurate measure of value, or the only standard by which we can compare the values of different commodities at all times and at all places

In Chapter VI he re-states with interesting variants: -

In that early and rude state of society which precedes both the accumulation of stock and the appropriation of land, the proportion between the quantities of labour necessary for acquiring different objects seems to be the only circumstance which can afford any rule for exchanging them one for another... In this state of

things the whole produce of labour belongs to the labourer; and the quantity of labour commonly employed in acquiring or producing any commodity is the only circumstance which can regulate the quantity of labour which it ought commonly to purchase, command, and exchange for.

Adam Smith was professor of Moral Philosophy in Glasgow University, and it was a part of his duties that he expounded in extempore lectures the views afterwards written down for the 'Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations.' The idea of labour being the basis of wealth is so obvious that one is surprised it should be regarded as in any way notable. That it is an ethical as well as a merely factual claim is equally clear. Why should the work of a man's hands belong to him? Why should it not belong to the idler? Because that is ethically unjust. Rent, profit, and interest, *as taken*, are robbery. Adam Smith (chap vi) says:-

As soon as the land of any country has all become private property, the landlords, like all other men, love to reap where they never sowed, and demand a rent even for its natural produce.

The cool 'like all other men' there embodies the difference between Smith and Marx. It is customary to speak of Marx's science; but Marx was not typically scientific. He was a master of irony and invective, which do not belong to the scientist. Marx, says Mrs Kingsley, was 'a sharply indignant moralist,' and his book is a 'passionate indictment of expropriation.' The 'Capital' is, indeed, not at all 'the Bible of Socialism,' as it has been called.

The Jewish Bible contains the law, the Commandments, and the Beatitudes (The Beatitudes are in the New Testament, but they were spoken by a Jew and the New Testament is itself a Jewish Book); but Marx's book is 'A Criticism of Political Economy' without any pretence of constructive teaching. Laurence Gronlund's 'Co-operative Commonwealth,' which used to be referred to as the New Testament of Socialism, is constructive.

About Marx's moral indignation there can be no question. Among other phrases quoted by Mrs Kingsley are:

The thing that you represent has no heart in its breast (which is certainly not the language of mental science) the capitalist is a national miser.

To Marx the defender-exponents of capitalism are 'fish-blooded doctrinaires.' Capitalism itself is 'as merciless vandalism' and 'comes into the world dripping from head to foot and from every pore with blood and dirt.' The capitalist himself is a 'vampire.'

The Class War in the Bible.

This moral indignation against the taking of surplus value was not a new thing. There is a Chinese proverb, doubtless thousands of years old, that 'If one man lives in laziness another will die of hunger.'

Isaiah said to the rich of his day: 'Ye have eaten up the vineyards; the spoil of the poor is in your houses.' He also said of the exploited class, referring to a golden time still ahead: 'They shall build houses and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat.'

The apostle James wrote: 'Behold the hire of the labourers which ... is of you kept back by fraud.' 'Woe unto you that are rich,' Jesus said. 'It is as easy for a camel to go through the eye of a needle as for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven'; and in the parable of Lazarus there is nothing against the rich man except his riches to warrant him being consigned to the pit.

Paul said: 'Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his hands.' This is a recognition that the only alternative to stealing a livelihood is to work for it. He did not even contemplate the third way, namely begging it. He himself worked at his calling of tent-maker, even when on a mission.

The Fathers Also.

The Fathers of the Church were violently anti-capitalist,

Opulence (says St Jerome) is always the product of theft committed, if not by the actual possessor, then by his ancestors. Some persons imagine that usury obtains only in money, but the Scriptures, foreseeing this, have exploded every increase, so that you cannot receive more than you gave.

And St Ambrose said: -

It is the bread of the hungry thou keepest; it is the clothing of the naked thou lockest up; the money thou buriest is the redemption of the wretched.

St. Basil, St Chrysostom, Origen, Tertullian are all emphatic in condemning the *rentier*, without having anything to suggest an alternative to private-enterprise methods.

John Ball, one of Wickliffe's russet priests, had got his cue from the newly translated Bible when in 1381 he said:

They are clothed in velvet, and warm in their furs and ermine, while we are covered with rags. They have wine and spices and fair bread, and we oatcake and straw, and water to drink. They have leisure and fine houses; we have pain and labour,

the rain and wind in the fields. And yet it is of us and our toil that these men hold their state.

Dr Barrow, the seventeenth century divine, said: -

A noble heart will disdain to subsist like a drone upon other's labours, like a vermin to filch his food out of the public granaries, or like a shark to prey upon the lesser fry.

No Communist ever delivered a more vehement 'class war' diatribe than Lord Chancellor Sir Thomas More, who in the long indignant conclusion of 'Utopia' found the contemporary State just 'a conspiracy of rich men procuring their own commodities under the name and title of the common wealth.'

Marx and Faith.

But the essential difference between Karl Marx and all prophets and the orthodox economists as well, is that he was a Social-Democrat first, and an economist only as a means of making an end of capitalism. The orthodox economists might deprecate the excessive share taken by capital; but they were not concerned with anything beyond the 'moralisation' less or more of a relationship which Marx held to be fundamentally immoral and which could be moralised only by extinction. Marx was so much of a moralist that, unlike the commercial economists, he believed the evil thing could be ended.

The commercial economist, moreover, is usually a man of the study; but Marx was a man of action as well. Hunted out of Germany, hunted out of France, resident for a time in Brussels, but, returning to Germany and expelled once more, finally making London his home; dominating the strongest and inspiring some of the best men with whom he came into contact; leader and teacher of the International; watching events and in touch with revolutionists everywhere; opportunist man of affairs; London correspondent of the New York Tribune (at a guinea a week!); friend of trades unionists and of co-operators, Marx was an insurgent politician working for remote but inevitable ends.

Despite the careful analyses in the first volume of the 'Capital' – analyses which the historical student will best appreciate as marvels of generalization – Marx, with all his deductiveness, was full of preconceived ideas passionately held and promulgated. He had faith that a system motived on reaping without sowing, to which Adam Smith made placid reference, must end. The expropriators would themselves be expropriated. He had faith that the progress made in the class struggles of the past would result in the conquest of the means of life by the proletariat and the ending of classes and class struggles alike. The historical process which had seen the end of chattel slavery and of serfdom, why should it not witness the end of wage servitude, under which the proletarian must 'beg a brother of the earth,' to give him the means of living upon it?

Marx a Politician.

Unlike some of his doctrinaire followers today, he did not wait for the great change to work itself out, looking for 'the inevitable to function inevitably.' He believed that social order could not be secured without social organization by the individual units who desired and required it.

His opportunism was shown by the way in which, in 'Value, Price and Profit,' he downed Weston for attacking trades unionism by maintaining that the policy of strikes was, what we know it to be, a see-saw of prices and wages, wages and prices, a chasing by the dog of its own tail. He may have realised that, even so, trades unionism could not, under capitalism, give up its powers to resist and to attack, just as today we cannot give up the idea of the right to strike even if strikes fail oftener than they succeed, and hit the striker and his dependents first and most heavily. The trade union can standardise conditions and preserve a minimum. In periods of expansion it may advance the standard, and resist retrogression in times of slump. Finally, and most hopeful of all, the trade union is a political force even more potent than the employers' federation, since it controls more votes.

Marx gave the revolt against exploitation a political turn. He said 'Workers of the world, unite! You have a whole world to win and nothing to lose but your chains.' He left no definite scheme whereby the expropriators were to be expropriated, and his early followers in all lands looked to barricades and a cataclysmic revolution. It may come to that as a result of the lack of class-consciousness and of political aptitude on the part of the proletariat. The present attempt to make the House of Lords supreme in Britain is the counterpart of Fascism in Italy and dictatorships in Spain, Portugal, Turkey etc. If the gradual socialization of industry and commerce are to be frustrated by the janissaries of the established order, it is possible that there might be fighting in Britain. A few swashbucklers like Galloper Smith and Birkenhead might easily precipitate civil war.

But it should not be, it need not be, and we hope it will not be. Russia had proved, what never was in doubt, that a change of government is one thing and a change of social structure is something very different and a much more prolonged process. Mrs Kingsley rejects Mr Ramsay MacDonald's theory of gradualism, as based on the slow course of organic transformation. We need not, indeed, make love to gradualism. Quite the reverse. Let us, if anything, make love to speed. But even speed has its laws, and furious driving is apt to end in a smash. In the commandeering of socially-created wealth for public purposes, Britain, with its hundreds of millions of taxation extracted from the rich for education, water-supply, streets and roads, poor relief, unemployment and maternity benefit, art galleries and museums, public libraries, public health, street-lighting, traffic control, and research, is more communistic than Russia is after ten years of Maximalist government. So that gradualism has it as against 'Mutations' so far.

Miracles.

Mrs Kingsley, however, believes in miracles, as we have seen, and she would fain shift the *onus probandi* to those who question the occurrence of miracles. She says it is an 'example of the loose and unscientific statements so often made by rationalists' that 'science on its own data cannot explain miracles, but it does not refute them.' But the onus of proof rests with those who assert that miracles have happened. Science does not need to refute what it does not believe. The proofs of the universal reign of unbroken law form a categorical refutation of miracles. A miracle requires an abrogation of natural law, and Mrs Kingsley, who pins her faith in a general way to the transcendentalism of Emerson, would do well to recall Emerson's dictum that 'Nothing is that errs from law.'

Low Materialism.

I seem to be emphasising my points of difference with Mrs Kingsley more than my points of agreement; but I hope all my denials have really an affirmative upshot. I should not write of her pamphlet if I did not find it, as I have said, arrestive and tending to make us review the grounds of our beliefs. As a Socialist and a public administrator I am at present busy with schemes of housing and of road-making by direct labour because in a small community there is little else that one can do that is anything like so important. These schemes are all of the very essence of gradualism, and when a critic comes along and tells us in effect that all this is neither here nor there, and that the Social Revolution is to be carried by a Mutation, one is naturally pulled up sharp and nettled into meeting views that may very well be held by thousands besides this lady. Her pamphlet abounds in the signs of wide reading and she can state her extraordinary case very pointedly.

The Two Materialisms.

Philosophical materialism we accept. The vulgar materialism of 'wealth, material comfort, and sensuous pleasure' we reject. That is to say, philosophical materialists mostly reject it. And be it said, also, a great many spiritists, including most conventional Christians, are very much fonder of the fleshpots than are the philosophical materialists. No one could be less of a vulgar materialist than was Heinrich Karl Marx, born to middle-class comfort, but choosing the rugged service of the Social Revolution; grinding microscopic lenses and writing to the press for a living; not unfamiliar with the pawnbroker's shop, and losing several of his children by death; consecrating his great powers to the service of an event in any case remote from his time – surely none was ever less of a materialist in the vulgar sense. He is but one in a noble company, living and dead, who have seen man's life conditioned by circumstances over which man himself had potentially real control, with neither gods above nor devils below to prevent his being master of his fate collectively. The one condition was that he should learn the laws of social life, should realise and perform its civic duties, should above all things believe that the strong shall bear rule,

and that the great mass of the exploited were in their numbers and the justice of their cause immensely the strongest and socially most important of all.

Not Enough.

Sir Thomas Harrison, the amiable old-time author of 'Oceana' believed that 'The highest earthly felicity that people can ask or God can give is an equal and well-ordered commonwealth.' But to Mrs Kingsley this does not seem enough. 'No Communist' she says, 'can think that by merely getting enough food and clothes and better houses the workers are going to be happy and virtuous; look at the rich!'

But why 'merely'? Could such a good change come without being accomplished by other good changes? The appeal does not hold. The rich do not work and can have none of the satisfactions discipline, and self-respect of the worker. Those who have no work have no leisure. Robert Burns was a good judge, and he saw the rich as those who 'By evendown want o' wark are curst.' Patmore sang 'Who pleasure follows pleasure slays.' And Matthew Arnold saw the idle rich of decadent Rome sated and disgusted with the hell of a life in which there was nothing to enjoy because there was nothing to do. Look at the rich indeed! With their cars and their tennis racquets, their golf clubs and their jazz, their night clubs and revues and bawdy plays, their Blue Train and their attempts to fly from themselves and the boredom of their empty lives, they are indeed a warning rather than an example.

Mrs Kingsley apparently seeks to make out that even lawful pleasure, comfort, and the highest mundane endeavour are not enough. She cites the longing of Morris's wayfarers for the Earthly Paradise, the Acre of the Undying, and their 'half-shame at having undertaken the quest and their regret that it has been all in vain.' The poet's excuse for their quest is that they 'Had need of Life, to right the blindness and the wrong.' But the blindness and the wrong are not to be righted by quitting the field. That was written before Morris had fully learned the great secret of the happy life, which is to be found in service and the *immortality of fellowship* as pictured by him in the 'Dream of John Bull'

And the deeds that you do upon the earth, it is for fellowship sake that ye do them, and the life that is in it, that shall live on and on for ever, and each one of you a part of it, while many a man's life upon the earth from the earth shall wane.

The Craving for Unending.

When he wrote of the old-time traditional quest of 'a land where death is not' he was still 'the idle singer of an empty day,' content that other people and not he should bear a hand with the slaying of the social monsters. The hatefulness of death as a mere deprivation of life and all its legitimate satisfactions was the most outstanding feature in Morris's reflective life. The intensest pleasure made him in the last resort, 'only the more mindful that the sweet days die.' All this meant that he enjoyed life so much that death would be the greatest imaginable evil. Very evidently it did not

mean that he had any hope of a reincarnation. Perhaps, also, Morris had an idea that he would not live long enough to be *willing* to take the final rest. He was but sixty-two when he was cut off in the full tide of his happy craftsmanship, with the latest of his great experiments, the Kelmscott Press, still in its infancy. In private he dwelt sometimes on the shortness of life and the possibility of lengthening it: but, unlike Shaw, whose thoughts tend the same way, he neither husbanded his great strength nor denied himself 'pig,' latakia, nor many cups of tea. Even so, he lasted longer than his father. We mostly do. Every generation extends the span of life by living less unhygienically.

The remedy for the craving for unending life lies, not alone in the great extension of the life-span, but, above all, in the recognition of the quite plain fact that life is not to be reckoned in terms of the individual. The philosophy of Socialism leads in its ultimate interpretation to the frank recognition that man at his best is only a unit in the social scheme, a link in the endless chain of eternal life, not a complete being with a godlike claim to eternal life himself. In times of national stress this unitary character of man is recognised. Man, the lower animals, even ants, give their lives automatically, under stress of strong social feeling, for the good of the nation, herd, or colony. Humble people of socialised instincts risk their lives any day to save a fellow-creature.

The poet Swinburne prayed that he might be saved 'from too much love of living' and when we hear very ordinary people objecting strenuously to being 'snuffed out' as they indignantly say, and see them holding 'circles' and prying into the possibilities of a continued life for them on another plane, we cannot help regarding it as a greed of life which no achievement of theirs has ever justified in the past or is likely to justify in such a future as they picture. All that we learn from Spiritualists as to life on the astral plane shows it to be such a dull, stagnant, trivial affair that it would add a new terror to death if we believed that a life of *that* kind lay beyond.

At one time I worked as a printer on *The Two Worlds*, the Spiritualist weekly, and saw a good deal of the Spiritualist fraternity at close quarters in that way and otherwise. Of their messages from the other world the general impression is of paltriness, the most outstanding memory being of repeated assurances to 'take care of yourself' and to 'be sure you wear flannels next your skin.'

Carlyle somewhere tells of an old man who spoke to his (Carlyle's) father in rapturous terms of the joys of heaven. And the old Scots mason retorted: 'Who wants a stinking of clog like you in heaven? Don't you think that seventy years of you is enough?' It was brutal; but Carlyle manifestly tells the story with a chuckle as if he agreed with the rough justice of it. What we think about life on an alleged astral plane will not alter the fact whatever the fact may be; but in the absence of adequate proof it seems an overweening claim that the human mite, marvellous as he is, should seek to live for ever, or otherwise viewed, should, like the idiot Struldbrugs of Gulliver, have sentence of eternal life passed upon him.

The good we do lives after us, and if that is sometimes very little, our claim to continued life on another plane is surely all the less, unless, indeed, we are to be taught there to be less self-centred, to have more of the spirit of comradeship and service.

Already we have more pity than is needed for our own sorrows, more laughter than is warranted by our own joys, even when we know nothing of its cause, and we often worry over the troubles of others more than they do themselves. This altruism, which is by no means overdone, cannot but be greatly strengthened in the more socialised life of the future.

'Sanctions.'

In a letter to me Mrs Kingsley says there are no moral sanctions today. She means, I take it, that the law and the commandments have lost their Divine authority and that no authoritative taboos have taken their place. But there are surely more taboos than ever, while law and public opinion are more strongly operative than ever. Morals are always ahead of theology. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not bear false witness – the public opinion behind these existed long before Moses formulated it as Divine law. All these taboos and many others have more force than ever they had; and they are reinforced by a thousand acquired instincts that are more potent than any old priestly taboo. In spite of a very much extended penal code, with vastly more efficient policing, the prison population is less and less.

In spite of the coarsening effects of war, the increased decency of average social feeling is manifested in various ways. The war itself actually helped. Profiteering was never generally condemned till the word was coined for it, and till, with our backs to the wall it was felt to be the dirty game which it is, whether peace or war. The 'slacker' was one who wangled out of his duty as a citizen in time of national danger, but it stands in time of peace, also, for the two million men in Britain who were not ashamed to return themselves to the census-takers as 'of no occupation.'

Homes for heroes, self-determination, direct labour, direct action, camouflage for that which needs to be disguised, C3 as a deplorable category – all are hopeful, illuminating verbal facets augmenting the vocabulary of a more socialised world.

Mrs Kingsley, quoting Bertrand Russel says: 'The whole solidity of matter has gone,' *En avent!* That does but make it the more plastic and potent. The trouble with the grey matter up to now has been stodginess. That its solidity has gone is good news. It is still material despite its fluidity.

By a natural dialectical tendency, I have dwelt upon the controversial aspects of Mrs Kingsley's thesis, passing by much of which it is possible heartily to approve. The production of marvels – such as spirit-writing, 'precipitation' of letters from the ceiling, and 'materialisations' – has been so often shown to be mere trickery that it is depressing to think of fine minds being deflected from open forthright pursuit of the

open forthright business of the world to such jugglery. There is no particular mystery about the things that really matter.

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