

wealthier classes have served to reconcile them to a Government whose fiscal policy has filled the streets with armies of the homeless and unfed. There is little doubt that the next general election will see the return to power of a party pledged to reform in this respect.

building trade is virtually over, yet so much work has gone elsewhere in consequence of the dispute that it is doubtful if the trade lost will ever be recovered. Meanwhile, in all the great cities processions of tens of thousands of unemployed parade the streets, and the Socialists openly preach revolution.

# Musings Meditations

By Dog Toby

## SOCIALISM.

The full text of the Lambeth Encyclical Letter is now to hand, and will cause disappointment to many who looked for a more definite pronouncement on some of the controverted questions of the day. The document is bulky enough, there being over 10,000 words, but it contains little of a practical nature. The bishops affirm their faith in the historic facts stated in the creeds. That was only to be expected. But men want guidance on such subjects as the nature of inspiration, the relation of Christianity to other religions, the meaning of the Fall and the Atonement, and many other difficulties that present themselves to thoughtful laymen. Members of the Church are also urged to recognise the moral responsibility involved in their investments as regards the social effect of any enterprise, and the treatment of persons employed. But how is this to be done? A broker buys for his client, say, Anglo-Argentine tram debentures. How can the client know whether all the people employed are properly treated? Of course it is the duty of all right-minded men to see that they do not invest in any business that exists by sweating, but it is scarcely possible to personally examine the working of all companies in which one invests. That being so, the advice savours of platitudes.

The great difficulty lies in the fact that the worker does not realise that the most important thing for labour is to secure good markets for that which labour produces. At present the manufacturers are overstocked, and could not employ more hands if they wanted to. The private employer has every bit as much interest as any State could have in extending his business and opening up new markets. Every corner of the globe is ransacked by keen, pushing commercials in search of customers. The heads of large firms are perpetually engaged in finding a sale for the goods which their workpeople produce. If the supply is greater than the demand it is certainly not through any fault of the employer in neglecting to push his business. Therefore, State control of all industries would not touch the root of industrial trouble. To produce a piece of work is one thing, to sell it is another; and the State would find it no easier than the private person to secure a permanent market. Industrial disputes and strikes intensify the evil by driving trade out of the country. Neither Socialism nor State doles would be of the slightest use in solving the problem of the unemployed. They are unemployed because there is no market for their productions. Mr. Asquith promises early legislation on the subject. The only legislation that would do any real good would be a reform in the tariff in the direction of granting protection to British workers and British goods. But we fear the English Premier does not contemplate making any move in this direction.

**S**OCCIALISM is a perfect boon to people who are at a loss for conversation. It is far better than the weather, it is more perennial than prohibition. It is so vague that you can drag in any other subject under the sun as a side-issue. The only definition of Socialism that fits every case is that whatever you think, it is, it isn't that. If you say it means nationalisation of the land, you will be told it means equality of opportunity. If you say it implies the loss of faith, you will be met with the statement that Christ was the first great socialist. If you argue that Socialism is Christianity, you will be surprised to read that religion is the great bar to the spreading of its principles. All this is very illuminating, and makes you feel you know all about it. You can't argue against it, because whatever you believe it to be you will always be told it is something quite different. You will find, if you study the subject long enough, and widely enough, that a vague something called the state is going in some wonderful way to redress all the wrongs from which an equally vague something called the people suffers. The people are sometimes called the workers, sometimes the wage-earners, sometimes the toiling, teeming millions of our land. The people do not include any wicked persons, such as bankers, merchants, judges, dukes, farmers, bishops, shopkeepers, shift bosses, bank clerks, and similar monsters. These are the enemies of the people. A farmer is not a worker, however hard his may work. A worker is anyone who is not content with his wages. To be content with your lot argues that you are a slave. So much is tolerably clear. The rest is equally simple when you once grasp it.

tion that exists at present amongst men employed in the railway and postal services is a striking proof of the blessings of Government employ. Whoever heard of a railway shunter or telegraph boy who was not perfectly contented with his lot? Is there a single case on record of a man leaving Government employment to either go on his own or to work for a private firm?

But in regard to divorce, the Letter is even more unsatisfactory. By 87 to 84 the bishops decided that the innocent party to a divorce may not be remarried by the Church. This runs counter to all popular feeling on the subject, and it is also opposed to the declared opinion of many leading divines. The narrow margin by which the resolution was carried shows how much ecclesiastics themselves are divided on the matter. As regards marriages with deceased wives' sisters, the bishops gave no definite guidance. This is especially to be regretted. It was more than anything else the one subject on which we looked for a plain statement. They are sorry, but, to use their own words, "they have left without an adequate or general declaration of judgment the difficulty which has been constituted for the Church of England by recent legislation concerning marriage with a deceased wife's sister."

It is not easy for us, living amid so much prosperity and in a land where the general standard of comfort is so high, to realise the amount of poverty and distress at present existing at Home. Where the first application forms for the old age pension were issued, over 50,000 people applied from the East End of London alone, and most pathetic scenes were witnessed. It is estimated that even on the coldest nights the only sleeping place for more than 10,000 of London's poor is under the seats and arches of her bridges and other public places. Colonel Seely, when the first application forms for the Colonies, admits that nearly 9 per cent. of the total working population are at present unemployed, and the police have had to use their batons to disperse crowds who have been made reckless by hunger and want. The depression in trade is more widespread than has been the case for many years past. Hands are being turned off daily by the big manufacturing firms, and there has been an all-round reduction of wages. Those who are in a position to judge predict that this depression will not be confined to the United Kingdom, but will spread to the other parts of the Empire. Seeing that England is the main purchaser of our produce, financial stringency at Home is bound to make itself felt here to some extent. It is well that we should remember this, and see to it that we do not let any unwise demand for excessive wages jeopardise the stability and expansion of our industries. Not a little of the present stagnation of British commerce is due to the strikes and labour disputes, which have driven trade away to other countries and thrown thousands of men idle on the streets. Economic law can be as ruthless and pitiless as Nature's laws when it is disregarded, and not a few have found that in forcing wages up beyond their rightful level they have killed the industry itself and so lost their all.

All the land belongeth to the people; not the people who bought it, or fought for it, or worked for it, or tilled it, or made it. These are the last persons on earth who have any claim to it. They have stolen it from the masses, and the masses are going to take it back again. The State is going to own it all. The State has sold a good bit of it in times past, and having spent the money, it now finds out that it has been robbed. When it sold the land, most of it was in the rough, and the State did not realise how much it was worth, therefore, it is only right that the poor deluded State should be allowed to take it back again, now that the wicked farmers have cleared it, and cultivated it, and made it valuable. The land is not to be paid for, why should it? A graduated tax is to be imposed by means of which the robbers who bought it from the guileless State in times past will be compelled to disgorge their ill-gotten gains. It is hoped that the present owners will see things in a proper light, and hand over their stolen property without making any fuss about it. If they show any reluctance, they will be persuaded till they don't need persuading any more. Everybody will have an equality of opportunity for doing something, or being something, not further defined. We suppose for being a mere cipher in the State. This in itself is a dazzling prospect. The greatest opportunity in life is the opportunity of being born of the most gifted and the best parents. The State will give us all an equal opportunity in this respect. How it is going to do it is its own secret. Perhaps it morely means that by discouraging all competition we shall all have an equal opportunity of rapidly degenerating into incompetence. We shall merely be asked to join the great majority. The State will consist only of pure, high-minded incorruptible men, who will employ all their fellow-men at a big wage, and there will be no discontent, chiefly because there will be no other boss to go to if you don't like the State as boss. The great satisfac-

There will be no wicked newspapers to criticise the Government, because the State will own them all. There will be none of the pestilence of free speech. Everybody will be afraid to speak his mind for fear of losing his billet. Thus we shall have a beautiful harmony and unanimity of mind. The following may be taken as axioms. The worker creates all wealth; therefore, the settler who slaves from morn to eve to make his place pay is not a worker. Competition is fatal to progress; that is why the privately owned railways in England are so immeasurably inferior to our own. The shorter the hours of labour the more wealth is produced; that is why people who stick to their work are invariably poor. All men are equal; Socialists never disagree; State officers are never corrupt; Ministers always give the best posts to the best men, and never consider private claims; the land belongs to everyone except the man who has paid for it. If you say that Socialism means confiscation of land and wealth, then it doesn't mean it, and you don't understand the rudiments of the game. And if you say it doesn't mean these things, then it does mean these things, and you are equally ignorant. But one good thing Socialism does do. As no one has the foggiest idea what Socialism really is, and as everybody is firmly convinced that he alone has grasped the true idea in all its sweet simplicity, it is an admirable subject for newspaper correspondence. It isn't what you think it is, it is only what the other fellow thinks it is. But it is a grand thing all the same, and is going to make us all happy, and equal, and free, and good, and clever all of a sudden. The State is a true conjurer, and, like all masters of that craft, it keeps the methods by which it proposes to draw half-crowns and live rabbits and gold watches out of an empty hat, a dead secret locked up in its own bosom. It is likely to remain there.

On the all important point of Christian re-union, the Conference is singularly reticent. Re-union with the Greek Church is dealt with, but that is not a very practical matter. What we want to see is some working basis by which all the great evangelical churches can be brought together. The national church should be the church of the nation, and strength can only lie in union. The present state of things leads to loss of power, and to an immense waste of both money and energy. Four separate buildings are often erected in small places, each attended by only a handful of worshippers, and ministered to by four half-starved persons who ride up on four half-starved ponies. And all for what? That each community may keep its own shibboleth while the cause of real religion is left to perish. We want the widest possible basis, the widest possible latitude for differences of opinion. What better basis could we have than that for which we pray when we say: "And grant that all they that do confess thy holy Name may agree in the truth of thy holy Word, and live in unity, and godly love."

The labour troubles at Home seem to be as acute as ever. The truth is that work is slack, stocks have accumulated far in excess of requirements, and owing to trade disputes many large orders have been placed abroad. Not a few employers would welcome a strike, as they could then get rid of their over-accumulation of stock, and many firms are conducting operations at a loss. The Furness-Witly Engineering Co. threatens to close its shipbuilding branch at Hartlepool; most of the big cotton mills are anxious to close for a time in order to reduce their stocks, and though the strike of engineers engaged in the ship-

### THE GUINEA POEM.

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