

# HOW "THE RAGGED TROUSERED PHILANTHROPISTS" SAW PRINT

## Miss Jessie Pope, Who Edited Book Which Created Sensation, Tells How Manuscript Came to Her Attention

ONE evening a few months ago, a friend told me that her children's nurse had a manuscript in a tin box written by her father, a Socialist house painter, who would be so grateful to learn the author would I look at it? The prospect was anything but alluring. So I did not accept it, neither did I let the literary output of an out at elbows settler, besides my own tragic calling—the search for humor—left me unwilling and pessimistic. But weak minded as I said, I said, "Yes," and I sent the stuff in a lug, lifted the lid, looked up Chapter I, with a yawn that was half a groan, and found I had struck gold!

A master hand drew the curtain aside and there was I in the big delectable house, in company of the plumber, the plasterer, the carpenter, the painter, watching the hasty scamp of the work, listening to their dinner hour talk, the natural, unvarnished conversation of a gang of workmen, unsuspecting of the presence of an eavesdropper. This was the real thing! This was life rough and vivid—and the gold ran right through that unwieldy bulk of manuscript—in streaks certainly—but always there. I said: "It's good. It's a publisher."

The first hesitated, immensely interested but warily doubtful. The matter hung in the balance for a few weeks—the manuscript was impossible as it stood—it wanted editing. What a task! Three hundred thousand words to be cut down by half, and to be cut down with the sympathetic discrimination of an author. Finally the tin box came back and I was tired blank at Mr. Grant Richards. He didn't reel at the blow, in fact he hugged the projectile to his bosom and said: "I'll publish this book. The recoil came with the suggestion that I should be the editor. I quailed, he coaxed, and—weak minded even, I said, "Yes." It took me two solid months. I read the thing through four times, first for a longseye view, then for the scissors, then for the pen, and lastly for the proofs.

"That is the story of Robert Tressall's book, as far as I am concerned."

The book was published in England a few weeks ago under the title of "The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists" and immediately created a sensation. A copy reached the hands of a firm of American publishers, Frederick A. Stokes Company, who at once secured the American rights by cable. They will issue the book next Friday, the 22d inst. Some extracts from Mr. Tressall's work follow:

The house was named "The Cave." It was a large old fashioned three story building, standing in about an acre of ground, a mile outside the town of Mugsborough. It had been unoccupied for many years, and was now being altered and renovated for its new owner by the firm of Rushton & Co., builders and decorators.

Altogether about twenty-five men were working there—carpenters, plumbers, plasterers, bricklayers and painters, besides several unskilled laborers. They were putting new floors where the old ones were decayed, and making two rooms into one by demolishing the partition wall and substituting an iron girder and sawing the framing of trawels, the rattle of pails, the splashing of water brushes and the scraping of the stripping knives. It was also heavily laden with dust and disease germs, powdered mortar, lime, plaster and the dirt that had been accumulating within the old house for years. In brief, those employed there might be said to be living in a "Tuffery form Paradise"—they had plenty of work.

At 12 o'clock Bob Crass, the painter's foreman, blew a prolonged blast upon a whistle and all hands assembled in the kitchen, where Bert, the apprentice, had already prepared the tea in the large galvanized iron pail placed in the middle of the floor. By the side of the table were a number of old jam jars, mugs, dilapidated teacups, and one or two empty condensed milk tins. Each man on the "job" had Bert three pence a week for the tea and sugar—they did not have milk—and although they had tea at breakfast time as well as at dinner, the lad was generally considered to be making a fortune.

Two pairs of steps laid sideways in front of the fire at a distance of about eight feet, with a pair of chairs, several overturned pails, and a tray belonging to the dresser formed the best accommodation. The floor was covered with all manner of debris, dust, dirt, fragments of old mortar and plaster. A sack of cement was leaning against one of the walls, and a bucket containing some stale whitewash stood in one corner.

As each man came in he filled his cup, jam jar or condensed milk tin with tea from the steaming pail before sitting down. Most of them brought their food in little wicker baskets, which they held on their laps or placed on the floor beside them.

At first there was no attempt at conversation and nothing was heard but the sounds of eating and drinking and the frizzling of the toaster which Easton, one of the painters, was coasting on the end of a pointed stick at the fire.

"I don't think much of this bloody tea," suddenly remarked Sawkins, one of the laborers.

"Well, it oughter be all right," retorted Bert. "It's a bit blin' ever since 'arf past 11."

Bert White was a frail looking, weedy, pale faced boy 15 inches of age and about four feet nine inches in height. His trousers were part of a suit that he had once worn for best, but that was so long ago that they had become too small for him, fitting rather tightly and scarcely reaching the top of his patched and broken hobnailed boots. The knees had been patched with square pieces of cloth several shades darker than the original fabric, and these patches were now all in tatters. His coat was several sizes too large for him and hung about him like a dirty ragged sack. He was a pitiable sight as he sat there on an overturned pail, eating his bread and cheese with fingers



Mr. Robert Tressall and daughter.

ling to it, though," observed Payne. "For instance, if a bloke backed a winner and made a pile, 'e might call 'is 'ouse 'Epsom Lodge' or 'Newmarket Villa.'"

"Or sometimes there's a hoak tree or a cherry tree in the garden," said another man, "then they calls it 'Hoak Lodge' or 'Cherry Cottage.'"

"Well, there's a cave up at the end of this garden," said Harlow with a grin, "you know, the cesspool, what the drains of the 'ouse runs into; praps they called it after that."

"Talking about the drains," said old Jack Linden, when the laughter produced by this elegant joke had ceased; "talking about the drains, I wonder what they're going to do about them?"

"There's going to be a new set of drains altogether," replied Crass, "drains right out to the road and connected with the main."

Crass really knew no more about what was going to be done in this matter than did Linden, but he felt certain that this course would be adopted. He never missed an opportunity of enhancing his own prestige with the men by insinuating that he was in the confidence of the firm.

"That's goin' to cost a good bit," said Linden.

"Yes, I suppose it will," replied Crass, "but money ain't no object to old Sweater. 'E's got tons of it; you know 'e's got a large wholesale business in London and shops all over the bloody country, besides the one 'e's got 'ere.'"

Easton was still reading the *Obscure*. He was not able to understand exactly what the compiler of the figures was driving at—probably the latter never intended that any one should understand—but he was conscious of a growing feeling of indignation and hatred against foreigners of every description, who were ruining his country, and he began to think that it was about time we did something to protect ourselves. Still it was a very difficult question; to tell the truth he himself could not make head or tail of it. At length he said aloud, addressing himself to Crass:

"'Wot do you think of this 'ere fiscal policy, Bob?'"

"'Ain't thought much about it,'" replied Crass. "'I don't never worry my 'ed about politics.'"

"'Much better left alone,'" chimed in old Jack Linden sagely, "'argyfin' about politics generally ends up with a bloody raw an' 'oes no good to nobody.'"

At this there was a murmur of approval from several of the others. Most of them were averse to arguing or disputing about politics.

Easton began to regret that he had brought so objectionable a subject when, looking up from his paper, Owen said:

"Does the fact that you never trouble your heads about politics prevent you from voting at election times?"

No one answered, and there ensued a brief silence. Easton, however, in spite of the snub he had received could not refrain from talking.

"Well, I don't go in for politics much either, but if what's in this 'ere paper is true it seems to me as we oughter take some interest in it when the country is being ruined by foreigners."

"If you're goin' to believe all that's in

the bloody rag you'll want some salt," said Harlow.

The *Obscure* was a Tory paper and Harlow was a member of the local Liberal Club.

Harlow's remark roused Crass.

"'Wot's the use of talkin' like that?'" he said. "You know very well that the country is being ruined by foreigners; just go to a shop to buy something; look 'round the place an' you'll see that more than 'arf the damn stuff comes from abroad. They're able to sell their goods 'ere because they don't 'ave to pay no duty; but they takes care to 'em out of their countries—and I say 'is 'about time it was stopped.'"

"'Ear, 'ear!'" said Linden, who always agreed with Crass, because the latter, being in charge of the job, had it in his power to put in a good—or bad—word for a man to the boss. "'Ear, 'ear! Now that's wot I call common sense.'"

Several other men, for the same reason as Linden, echoed Crass's sentiments, but Owen laughed contemptuously.

"Yes, it's quite true that we gets a lot of stuff from foreign countries," said Harlow, "but they buys more from us than we do from them."

"Now you think you know a 'ell of a lot," said Crass; "ow much more did they buy from us last year than we did from them?"

Harlow looked foolish. As a matter of fact, his knowledge of the subject was not much wider than Crass's. He mumbled something about having no 'ed for figures and offered to bring full particulars next day.

"You're wot I call a bloody windbag," continued Crass. "You've got a 'ell of a lot to say, but w'en it comes to the point you don't know nothin'."

"Why, even 'ere in Mugsborough," chimed in Sawkins, who though still lying on the dresser had been awakened by the shouting, "we're overrun with 'em! Nearly all the waiters and the cook at the Grand Hotel, where we was working last month, is foreigners."

"Yes," said old Joe Philpot tragically, "and then there's all them Hiltalian horgan grinders, an' the blokes wot sells chestnuts; an' w'en I was goin' 'ome last night I see a lot of them Frenchies sellin' humions, an' a little wile afterwards I met two more of 'em wot was a-sellin' up the street with a bear."

Notwithstanding the disgusting nature of this intelligence Owen again laughed, much to the indignation of the others, who thought it was a very serious state of affairs and said it was a damn shame that these people were allowed to take the bread out of English people's mouths—they ought to be driven into the bloody sea.

And so the talk continued, principally carried on by Crass and those who agreed with him. None of them really understood the subject—not one of them had ever devoted fifteen consecutive minutes to the earnest investigation of it.

When the storm had in some degree subsided Owen said sneeringly:

"Some of you seem to think that it was a great mistake on God's part to make so many foreigners. You ought to hold a mass meeting about it and pass a resolution something like this:

"This meeting of British Christians here, by indignantly protesting against the action of the Supreme Being in having created so many foreigners, and calls upon Him to rain down fire, brimstone and mighty rocks forthwith upon the heads of all those Philistines, so that they may be utterly exterminated from the face of the earth, which rightly belongs to the British people!"

Crass looked very indignant, but could think of nothing to say in answer to Owen, who continued:

"A little while ago you made the remark that you never trouble yourself about what you call politics and some of the rest agreed with you that to do so is not worth while. Well, since you never 'orry' yourself about these things, it follows that you know nothing about them; yet you do not hesitate to express the most decided opinions concerning matters of which you admittedly know nothing. Presently, when there is an election, you will go and vote in favor of a policy of which you know nothing. I say that, since you never take the trouble to find out which side is right or wrong, you have no right to express any opinion. You are not fit to vote. You should not be allowed to vote."

Crass was by this time very angry.

"I pays my rates and taxes," he shouted, "an' I've got as much right to express an opinion as you 'ave. I votes for who the bloody 'ell I likes. I shan't 'arr you leave no nobody else's! Wot the 'ell's it got to do with you who I votes for?"

"I 'as a great deal to do with me. If you vote for protection you will be helping to bring it about, and if you succeed, and if protection is the evil that some people say it is, I shall be one of those who will suffer. I say you have no right to vote for a policy which may bring suffering upon other people, without taking the trouble to find out whether you are helping to make things better or worse."

Owen had risen from his seat and was walking up and down the room emphasizing his words with excited gestures.

"I never said free trade brought happiness or prosperity," said Owen.

"Well, praps you didn't say exactly the same words, but that's wot it amounts to."

"I've never said anything of the kind. I've had free trade for the last fifty years and to-day most people are living in a condition of more or less abject poverty and thousands are literally starving. When we had protection things were worse still. Other countries have protection and yet many of their people are glad to come here and work for starvation wages. The only difference between free trade and protection is that under certain circumstances one might be a little worse than the other, but as remedies for poverty neither of them is of any real use whatever for the simple reason that they do not deal with the real causes of poverty."

"The greatest cause of poverty is hoover population," remarked Harlow.

"Yes," said old Joe Philpot, "if a boss wants two men, twenty goes after the job; there's too many people and not enough work."

"Overpopulation!" cried Owen, "when

there's thousand of acres of uncultivated land in England without a house or human being to be seen! Is overpopulation the cause of poverty in France? Is overpopulation the cause of poverty in Ireland? Within the last fifty years the population of Ireland has been reduced by more than half. Four millions of people have been exterminated by famine, the rest of 'em by emigration, but they haven't got rid of the poverty. Perhaps you think that half the people in this country ought to be exterminated as well. That's the sort of opinion that philanthropists like you, who spend your lives in slavery for other people, might be expected to hold."

Here Owen was seized with a violent fit of coughing and resumed his seat. When the cough had ceased he sat wiping his mouth with his handkerchief and listening to the talk that ensued.

"Drink is the cause of most of the poverty," said Slyme.

This young man had been through some strange process which he called conversion. He had had a "change of 'arf" and looked down with piety upon those he called "worldly" people. He was not "worldly," he did not smoke or drink, and never went to the theatre. He had an extraordinary notion that total abstinence was one of the fundamental principles of the Christian religion. It never occurred to what he called his mind that this doctrine is an insult to the Founder of Christianity.

"Yes," said Crass, agreeing with Slyme, "an' there's plenty of 'em wot's too lazy to work when they can get it. Some of the swine who go about pleading poverty 'ave never done a fair day's work in all their bloody lives. Then there's all this new fangled machinery, 'e called Crass, "that's wot's ruinin' everything. Even in our trade there's them machines for trimmin' wall paper, an' now they've brought out a paintin' machine. There's a pump an' a 'ose pipe, an' they reckon two men can do as much with this 'ere machine as twenty could without it."

"Another thing is women," said Harlow, "there's thousands of 'em nowadays doin' wot work oughter be done by men."

"In my opinion there's too much of this 'ere education, nowadays," remarked old Linden, "wot the 'ell's the good of education to the likes of us?"

"None whatever," said Crass. "It just puts foolish ideas into people's 'eds and makes 'em too lazy to work."

Owen was listening to this pitiable farrago with feelings of contempt and wonder. Were they all hopelessly stupid? Had their intelligence never developed beyond the stage of childhood? Or was he mad himself?

"Early marriages is another thing," said Slyme. "No man oughtn't to be allowed to get married unless he's in a position to keep a family."

"How can marriage be a cause of poverty?" said Owen, contemptuously.

"A man who is not married is living an unnatural life. Why don't you continue your argument a little further and say that the practice of eating and drinkin' is the cause of poverty, or that if 'e-wot were to go barefoot and naked there would be no poverty? The man who is so poor that he cannot marry is in a condition of poverty already."

"Wot I mean," said Slyme, "is that no man oughtn't to marry till he's saved up enough to 'ave some money in the bank; an' another thing, a man oughtn't to get married till he's got a 'ouse of 'is own. It's easy enough to buy one in a building society if you're in reglar work."

At this there was a general laugh.

"Why, you bloody fool," said Harlow scornfully, "most of us is walkin' about 'arf our time. It's all very well for you to talk; you've got almost a constant job on this firm. If they've got no work at all you're one of the few wot gets a show in. And another thing," he added, with a sneer, "we don't all go to the same chapel as old Misery."

"Old Misery" was Rushton and Company's manager or walking foreman. "Misery" was only one of the nicknames bestowed upon him by the hands; he was also known as "Nimrod" and "Pontius Pilate."

"And wot about drink?" demanded old Joe Philpot suddenly.

"'Ear, 'ear,'" cried Harlow. "That's the bleedin' talk. I wouldn't mind 'avin' 'arf a pint now if somebody else will pay for it."

Joe Philpot—or, as he was usually called, "Old Joe"—was in the habit of indulging rather freely in the cup that intoxicates. He was not very old, being only a little over 50, but he looked much older. He had lost his wife some five years ago and was now alone in the world, for his three children had died in their infancy. Slyme's reference to drink had roused Philpot's indignation; he felt that it was directed against himself. The muddled condition of his brain did not permit him to take up the cudgels in his own behalf, but he knew that, although Owen was a teetotaler himself, he disliked Slyme.

"There's no need for us to talk about drink or laziness," returned Owen, impatiently, "because they have nothing to do with the matter. The question is, what is the cause of the lifelong poverty of the majority of those who are not drunkards and who do work? Why, if you won't miracle, all the drunkards and wot works and unskilled or inefficient workers could be transformed into sober, industrious, and skilled workers to-morrow, it would, under the present conditions, be so much the worse for us, because there isn't enough work for all now, and those people, by increasing the competition for what work there is, would inevitably cause a reduction of wages and a greater scarcity of employment. The theories that drunkenness, laziness, or inefficiency are the causes of poverty are so many devices invented and fostered by those who are selfishly interested in maintaining the present state of affairs, for the purpose of preventing us from discovering the real causes of our present condition."

"Well, if we're all wrong," said Crass with a sneer, "praps you can tell us what the real cause is?"

"An' praps you think you know how it's to be altered," remarked Harlow, winking at the others in the stale whitewash that contained, although the stench which it gave forth was simply appalling.

Consternation reigned. They looked like a gang of malefactors suddenly interrupted in the commission of a crime. It was only Bundy returning from his mission to the bookie.

marked Philpot, whose principal characteristic—apart from thirst—was a desire to see every one comfortable and who hated rows of any kind, "there ain't no use in the likes of us trubblin' our 'eds or quarrellin' about politics. It don't make a damn bit of difference who you votes for or who gets in. They're havin' the same, workin' the horse for their own benefit. You can talk till you're black in the face, but you won't never be able to alter it. It's no use worrying. The sensible thing is to try and make the best of things as we find 'em; enjoy ourselves and do the best we can for each other. Life's too short to quarrel and we'll hall soon be dead!"

At the end of this lengthy speech the philosophic Philpot abstractedly grasped a jam jar and raised it to his lips, but suddenly remembering that it contained stewed tea and not beer, set it down again without drinking.

"Let us begin at the beginning," continued Owen, taking no notice of these interruptions. "First of all, what do you mean by poverty?"

"Why, if you've got no money of course," said Crass impatiently.

The others laughed disdainfully. It seemed to them such a foolish question.

"Well, that's true enough as far as it goes," returned Owen, "that is, as things are arranged in the world at present. But money in itself is not wealth; it's of no use whatever."

At this there was another outburst of jeering laughter.

"Supposing, for example, that you and Harlow were shipwrecked on a desolate island and you had saved nothing from the wreck but a bag containing a thousand sovereigns and he had a tin of biscuits and a bottle of water."

"Make it beer!" cried Harlow appealingly.

"Who would be the richer man, you or Harlow?"

"But then, you see, we ain't shipwrecked on no desolate island at all," sneered Crass. "That's the worst of your arguments, you can't never get very far without supposing some bloody ridiculous thing or other. Never mind about supposing things wot ain't true; let's 'ave facts and common sense."

"'Ear, 'ear,'" said old Linden, "that's wot we want—a little common sense."

"What do you mean by poverty, then?" asked Easton.

"What I call poverty is when people are not able to secure for themselves all the benefits of civilization—the necessities, comforts, pleasures and refinements of life; leisure, books, theatres, pictures, music, holidays, travel, good and beautiful homes, good clothes, good and pleasant food."

Everybody laughed. It was so ridiculous. The idea of the likes of them wanting or having such things! Any doubts that any of them had entertained as to Owen's sanity disappeared.

"If a man is only able to provide himself and his family with the bare necessities of existence, that man's family is living in poverty. Since he cannot enjoy the advantages of civilization he might just as well be savage; better, in fact, for a savage does not know what he is deprived of. What we call civilization—the accumulation of knowledge which has come down to us from our forefathers—is the fruit of thousands of years of human thought and toil. It is not the result of the labor of the ancestors of any separate class of people, who exist to-day, and therefore it is by right the common heritage of all. Every little child that is born into the world, no matter whether he is clever or dull, whether he is physically perfect or lame, or blind, no matter how much he may excel or fall short of his fellows in other respects, in one thing at least he is their equal—he is one of the heirs of all that the world has gone before."

Some of them began to wonder whether Owen was not sane after all. He certainly must be a clever sort of chap to be able to talk like this.

"Why is it?" continued Owen, "that we are not only deprived of our inheritance—we are not only deprived of nearly all the benefits of civilization, but we and our children are also often unable to obtain even the bare necessities of existence?"

No one answered.

"All these things," Owen proceeded, "are produced by those who work. We do our full share of the work; therefore, we should have a full share of the things that are made by work."

The others continued silent. Harlow thought of the overpopulation theory, but decided not to mention it. Crass, who could not have given an intelligent answer to save his life, for once had sufficient sense to remain silent. He did think of calling out the patent paint pumping machine and bringing the hose pipe to bear on the subject, but abandoned the idea; after all, he thought, what was the use of arguing with such a fool as Owen?

Sawkins pretended to be asleep.

Philpot, however, had suddenly grown very serious.

"As things are now," went on Owen, "instead of enjoying the advantages of civilization we are really worse off than slaves, for if we were slaves our owners, in their own interest, would see to it that we always had food and shelter."

"Oh, I don't see that," roughly interrupted old Linden, who had been listening with evident anger and impatience. "You can speak for yourself, but I can tell you I don't put myself down as a slave."

"Nor me neither," said Crass sturdily. "Let them call themselves slaves as wants to."

At this moment a footstep was heard in the passage leading to the kitchen. Old Misery! or perhaps the Bloke himself!

Crass hurriedly pulled out his watch. Linden frantically seized hold of a pair of steps and began wandering about the room with them.

Sawkins scrambled hastily to his feet and, snatching a piece of sandpaper from the pocket of his apron, started furiously rubbing down the scullery door.

Easton threw down the copy of the *Obscure* and scrambled hastily to his feet.

The boy crammed the "Chronicles of Crime" into his trousers pocket. Crass rushed over to the bucket and began stirring up the stale whitewash it contained, although the stench which it gave forth was simply appalling.

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