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■ Introduction

In 1974, I visited the mining area of South Wales to make a short educational radio programme about the nationalization of the mines, which took place under the Labour government of 1945–50. One miner and political activist, Chris Evans, gave me a long interview ranging across the history of locality, mining, work, and his hopes for a socialist future. In describing the nature of life and work, he moved into recitation mode and said:

I go to work,
to earn money
to buy bread
to build up my strength,
to go to work
to earn money
to buy bread
to build up my strength
to go to work ...

We laughed wryly. I enjoyed the way in which he had reduced the whole cycle of life and work into one rhythmic account. In literary terms, it turns the intricate interactions of existence into emblems, single vignettes that flow one to the other, contrasting with each other. It is, then, a particular kind of storytelling used with the intent of revealing or alerting a reader or listener to what the speaker thinks is an unsatisfactory state of affairs. The fact that the story doesn't end with a conclusion hits the button because through its never-ending form (rather than through words themselves) it reveals the folly, drudgery, and wrongness of what is being critiqued.

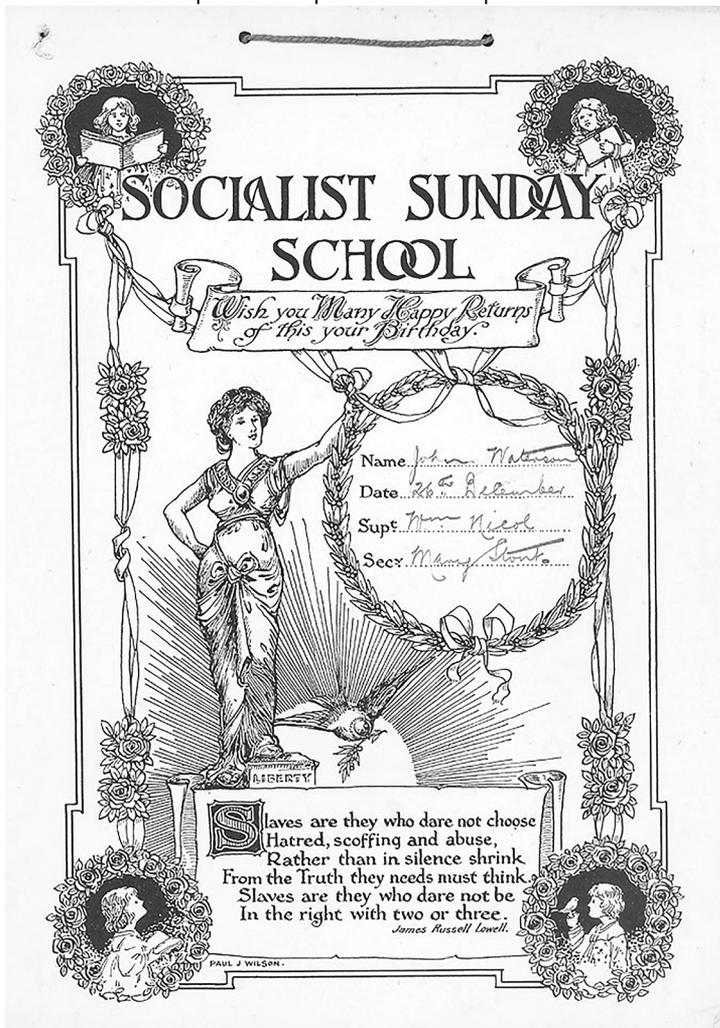


Fig. 1. A child's birthday card from a Socialist Sunday School.

Since that encounter, I've often also thought about that word 'bread' and how it sits in what was a piece of late twentieth-century political talk. It is of course symbolic and carries with it the reference to the Lord's Prayer, 'give us this day our daily bread', in which 'bread' represents all food, all sustenance. Yet, that image was on its last legs: in British schools, daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer was coming to an end, and a more religiously diverse society was taking shape. Whoever it was who coined Chris Evans's homily knew that they could draw on the prior knowledge of a particular religious image.

This symbolic, emblematic, rhetorical way of speaking, drawing on shared images, can be found again and again in the stories in this collection. They were written by people who were part of a project—socialism—that they hoped would transform society. Though this can be described in economic terms, it is a mistake to imagine that this was purely a matter of, say, changing the ownership of the coal mines, or even a revolutionary change in the ownership of all the 'means of production', as Karl Marx put it.

William Morris, the great artist, designer, and socialist activist, and author of socialist-fantasy novels such as *A Dream of John Ball* (1888) and *News from Nowhere* (1890), wrote:

Whatever system of production and exchange we may come to, however justly we may arrange the relations of men to one another we shall not be happy unless we live like good animals, unless we enjoy the exercise of the ordinary functions of life: eating sleeping loving walking running swimming riding sailing we must be free to enjoy all these exercises of the body without any sense of shame.¹

As he said in many different ways, 'I do not want art for a few, any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few'²—and, 'Nothing should be made by man's labour which is not worth making; or which must be made by labour degrading to the makers.'³

The language of necessity and desire that Morris used here—we shall not be happy unless ...; we must be ...; nothing should be ...—indicates the level of emotion, commitment, and urgency that many socialists of the time poured into their writing, speaking, and activity.

British socialists in the period 1880–1920 produced millions of words in print. A good deal of this is what we might call political rhetoric. One part, though, consisted of various kinds of nonrealist tales. The main body of these involved a recycling of the traditional literary forms like the fairy tale, the fable, the parable, the allegory, and the moral tale. Along with these, we find a few examples of the mystery tale. The home for most of this output was in the newspapers, magazines, and journals of socialist groups and parties. These mostly appeared as weeklies, which, as can be seen from the notes at the rear of this book, blossomed, were reinvented, or died out at quite a rate. The tradition of socialist journals is that the publication in question could represent a sectional interest, as with, say, the *Miner*, or a 'tendency' within socialist thought, as with William Morris's *Commonweal*.

This tradition of journalism was not simply a matter of an exchange of opinions, because the ideas were intertwined with crucial but much-disputed questions of action (When? How?) and organisation (Group? Movement? Trade union? Party?). Behind every strike, demonstration, petition, or movement activity lay questions of whether the action would or would not achieve its objec-

tives, or do anything greater than itself in terms of consciousness and political power. Then, as now, differences found shape within journals that could easily grow into antagonisms, rivalries, and splits, though the particular moment of these tales is marked by an extraordinary act of unity: the founding of the Labour Party in 1900, an organisation that has overcome many divisions and splits and thrives today. The ideas fought over in the period covered by this book live on both in the Labour Party and outside, and much of the landscape of present-day groups, ideas, and actions was laid out in that time. With specific reference to the tales here, any of us who listens to speeches or reads articles circulating today can call to mind socialists who've used some of the literary tropes and genres in this book.

The leading figure in one of the socialist groupings in Britain, for example, used to regularly tell an old joke-fable about a rabbi and a goat, in which a poor man goes to the rabbi to tell him how terrible life is, what with the little home being so overcrowded. The rabbi tells the man to put his goat in the house. A few days later, the man goes back to the rabbi and tells him life is worse, the goat has made it even more overcrowded, and it's eating all the food and leaving its droppings everywhere. The rabbi tells the man to sell the goat. A few days later, the man returns and thanks the rabbi profusely: life is so much better, there's more room, and everyone's happy! It's a little morality tale about how easy it is for people (politicians?) to look as if they are changing something when in fact it stays the same. Other left-wing speakers have, for example, cited 'two bald men fighting over a comb' (pointless war) or 'one of two cheeks on the same arse' (seemingly different views that are in reality the same). My great-grandfather, born around 1860, used to

explain to my father what a trade union is: 'Like a box of matches. One match, you can break. Two matches you can break. Three matches also. But a whole box, you can't break. That's a union.'

There are no simple explanations for why the political activists responsible for the tales in this book thought that such stories were an appropriate way to talk about and reflect on politics, to win sympathy for socialist ideas, or to sustain the allegiance of those already committed. Some, but by no means all, of the output was directed specifically toward children, just as the Socialist Sunday Schools movement had adopted and adapted the form of the Christian Sunday School for socialist purposes. In the 1830s, people like the utopian socialist Robert Owen (1771–1858) established some Sunday training schools for children. These died out, but such secular, socialist schools for children started to reappear in the 1880s, and by 1909 the National Council of British Socialist Sunday Schools Union was set up to bring together the 120 schools that had developed all over the country. The implication behind socialist tales for children and adults was that just as Bible stories were thought to make Christianity comprehensible and appealing, so socialist stories would do for socialism. In its own way, behind this lies a literary theory: that literature (narrative and story) transmits ideas through its 'figures' (its representational devices, motifs, scenes, interchanges between protagonists, and outcomes), as these have the power to engage a reader's empathy.

The writers of these stories would almost certainly have all attended schools, chapels, churches, or synagogues where stories were told to illustrate and exemplify ideas for children and adults by way of winning people to a cause, or set of beliefs, and some parts of the British socialist movement embraced a religious aspect, ex-

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emplified by the name of one influential organisation, the Labour Church, founded in 1890 by a Unitarian preacher, John Trevor, who also edited its journal, *Labour Prophet*. This is not a change or aberration but a continuation of the strand of Christian communalistic and egalitarian thinking found amongst the Levellers and Diggers in the radical parts of the parliamentary side in the English Civil War (1642–51), in the poetry of William Blake (1757–1827), and in Methodism, with its overly populist message of salvation for the most lowly, an ideology that informed the Tolpuddle Martyrs, a group of men transported to Australia in 1834 for trying to organise an early form of a trade union.

In the period of this book socialists were setting up organizations: political parties, ‘leagues’, trade unions, and agitational movements and groups (like the suffragettes) in addition to the ‘Mechanics’ Institutes’ and the social organizations that came under the wing of *Clarion* (see below), where ideas from literature, religion, politics, science, and philosophy circulated in the form of talks, discussions, pamphlets, newspapers, and books.

The urgency for this output came from the historical context: Britain at this time was in a country made up of England, Scotland, Wales, and, importantly, the whole of Ireland, with the issue of Irish independence being a intermittently a matter of fierce struggle and war. This national entity had an international component: varying degrees of control over a majority of the world’s land surface. The material base of Britain, then, was both British and imperial and involved a global interchange of finance, raw materials, and finished goods, with enormous benefits primarily for the wealthy of Britain but also for colonial ruling groups. Within Britain, both the industrial and rural working classes were largely poverty-stricken, though this period also saw the growth of a white-collar working

class; a supervisory, managerial caste; an expanding layer of retail tradesmen; and professional classes such as teachers and industrial designers along with 'tradesmen' servicing this growing middle class.

Over this period, suffrage widened, but universal suffrage for all twenty-one-year-olds was not reached until 1928; so government was, for many, still something that was done to them, not by them. (The facts are these: The Second Reform Act [1867] extended the vote to the skilled urban male working class; the electorate increased to one in three men. The Third Reform Act [1884] extended the vote to working-class men in the countryside; the electorate rose to two out of three men. The Representation of the People Act [1918] gave the vote to almost all men over twenty-one years old, and women over thirty years old. With the passage of the Representation of the People [Equal Franchise] Act in 1928, effectively all women and men over twenty-one had the vote.)

Christianity was the dominant belief and practice for most people in Britain, but class, culture, nation, and history manifested themselves separately, sometimes antagonistically, in the various Christian sects. Given that Christianity was the official religion of the state, it could be used to justify the ruling order in Britain along with an order over many other peoples of the world, yet at the same time—and of great importance, in relation to the tales in this book—the same sacred texts could be used to justify revolt, reform, millenarianism, equality, and communitarianism.

Official education was delivered in differing quantities according to class, with the wealthy able to acquire the most, the poorest the least. Through this period, however, state education for all was on the march, so that by its end there was universal, free education for children between the ages of five and fourteen, along with

selected access to more education for a minority. This was not the only vehicle for literacy, numeracy, and taught skills: a popular literature of newspapers and magazines, of which the socialist newspapers and magazines were one part, took over from the street literature of the previous era. Working-class associations such as the ‘institutes’, trade unions, and sporting clubs were important and influential ways in which people began or widened their literacy. An elaborate system of guilds and apprenticeships taught high-skill trades that also involved forms of literacy. This too was ‘education’.

The period was marked by a series of colonial wars in Africa and the Middle East involving, in total, hundreds of thousands of men on all sides and, toward the end of this period, the cataclysm of the First World War. Millions of British people at this time—including thousands of socialists—were recruited into a powerful allegiance to nation, empire, and racial hierarchies. The issue of whether British socialists should or should not welcome this allegiance led to division then and has done ever since.

Almost all care of children was carried out by women, whether in the home or in schools. Working-class mothers, grandmothers, or sisters not only were the sole caretakers for their own children but often cared for the children of middle- and upper-class women too. The working-class child was becoming ‘noticed’ in the sense that key figures such as Margaret McMillan (1860–1931) began to think of more enlightened ways of creating interesting, pleasant, and kindly places for young poor children to learn and play. Large numbers of older poor children were educated or punished in militarized institutions such as ‘naval colleges’ or ‘reformatories’. Key changes were taking place in middle-class women’s education, particularly as employment for women was expanding into retail,

education, and ‘clerking’. Places for women in teacher-training colleges and nursing courses, and in a very small way at universities, were expanding throughout this time.

Alongside the growth of popular newspapers and magazines came lending libraries and an explosion in the sale of sheet music and song. There was a vibrant music hall culture supporting and supported by the sheet music trade, while older ‘folk’ forms thrived in pubs and clubs and on festive occasions. ‘Literature’ was stratified in ways that are familiar to us now, read and consumed, if not directly along class lines, then along the lines prescribed by a class-determined education. Categories such as ‘children’s literature’ often disguise these divisions, but it’s worth remembering that authors like Lewis Carroll or Frances Hodgson Burnett were read in their original editions almost entirely by middle-class children during this time, though popular editions, sometimes abridged, appeared soon after. An avant-garde created a private coterie for the circulation of sexually explicit and/or foreign literature. At times, the personnel within the socialist movements included people who frequented this avant-garde, such as Edward Carpenter (1844–1929), a socialist, poet, and early activist for gay rights; see Sheila Rowbotham’s *Edward Carpenter: A Life of Liberty and Love* (2008) and Stephen Marcus’s *The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-nineteenth Century England* (1974).

In Britain, the ideas of socialism embodied many strands of intertwined thought and activity, owing their thought to very different—sometimes contradictory—traditions, which ebb and flow throughout this period, including dissenting, nonhierarchical Christianity; the Christian socialism of clerics within the Church of England; universalistic ideals expressed in the founding documents of the

American and French revolutions; utopian notions of what an ideal society could look like; the actions of organized groups of working people; agitation for the rights of nations to be free of being dominated by another; pacifism; antislavery and anticolonialism; the theories of Marx and Engels—including total revolution; the birth control and eugenics movement; agitation for universal suffrage; a belief that the move toward a better society could come only through gradual reform; secularism; the cooperative and ‘guild’ movements; one particular branch of the arts and crafts movement; the antiracist ideas pioneered by Émile Zola, passed into the French socialist movement and then to Britain; the working-class education movement; sexual liberation; feminism; pastoralism (‘back to nature’); the temperance movement; scientism—a belief that the use of science and technology would lead to social progress; and Fabianism, syndicalism, and anarchism. One central conflict between these ideas was over whether socialism was something that could be brought about by the activity of working people or whether it would be ushered in by the actions of enlightened leaders.

It is from within all these contexts, material and ideological, that the socialist fairy tale, allegory, fable, moral tale, and mystery tale were written and read. Incorporating the wide variety of ideas that the socialist movement had gathered up, the tales looked to critique the world and agitate for a better one. Each of the first four literary forms mentioned had precedents stretching back thousands of years. The fable owed a good deal of its popularity to the nebulous figure of Aesop; the allegory to Greek philosophy; the fairy tale to the Renaissance literature of Italy; and the moral tale to the exempla of sermons. Fables and allegory had always held

within them the potential of being overtly political, the fairy tale showing its politics less overtly, often as personified social conflict. Editions and revisions of Aesop were always in print; two great allegorical texts, *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Gulliver's Travels*, had immense popularity preceding and throughout this period; and the fairy tale had developed out of Italy, moved out of the salons of French upper-class women, and combined with the folk tales of the largely rural classes of Europe. In written form, its most popular appearances at this time were in the collections of the Brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Andersen, and Andrew Lang, and in the brand new, and specifically national, collections of Joseph Jacobs. Indeed, Jacobs produced two collections of what he called 'English Fairy Tales' in this particular period (1890, 1894), which lay down a canon of tales—not all of them English and not all of them 'fairy tales', but which were distinct from Perrault and Grimm. Though most of the tales had appeared before, Jacobs created what came to be seen as definitive versions, and these have remained key features on the British child's cultural landscape ever since. Several, such as 'Jack and the Beanstalk' (1890) and 'Tom Hickathrift' (1894) (the latter is included in this collection), though not specifically 'socialist', do represent the kind of tale that symbolically enacts an element of the class system in a wish-fulfilling way—the poor little person who gets the better of the gigantic wealthy one. The Jacobs version of "The Three Little Pigs' story ("The History of the Three Little Pigs', 1890) sees the two improvident pigs perishing at the hands of the wolf, before the third gets revenge and finishes him off. On offer here was a warning about what to do if you're weak in the face of danger or annihilation: be well prepared and cunning. Perhaps it's no coincidence that Jacobs was someone who was active in several of the issues and campaigns in which socialists were

active too: women's rights, and the conditions of the poor—in particular, in his case, the plight of the persecuted, indigent Jews of Eastern Europe.

Another genre had prevailed throughout the nineteenth century: the moral tale. Overlapping with the fable, its origins lie in the parables of the Pharisees of the Middle East (who were in reality street preachers rather than the high priests of the New Testament), reaching the world through Jesus's parables, while the tales of Petrus Alphonsus's 'Disciplina Clericalis' (c. AD 1100), itself a borrowing from the Middle East, furnished preachers across Europe with yet more fables and moral 'exempla'. The use and popularity of the moral tale was given a twist and a huge boost by the Religious Tract Society (est. 1799), which explicitly created a vast literature of such tales. The Religious Tract Society was designed to compete with what it saw as the amoral 'low' literatures of the street, with their motifs of giant killing, wild women, miniature men, and the like. Just as socialist and agitprop songs of the period of this book drew on the shared repertoire of hymns and carols, so this moral literature offered pre-texts to socialist writers alongside the fairy tale, allegory, and fable.

In addition, several writers experimented with the mystery tale. The most widely known, but by no means the only, exponent of these prior to this period was E.T.A. Hoffmann (1776–1822), but Hans Christian Andersen had attempted writing a handful of them too (e.g., "The Shadow"). The largely French 'symbolist' movement had continued the tradition in the late nineteenth century. The essence of such tales is that they are unsettling and unresolved. Features of nature in the tales may well have symbolic or, as we might say now, 'expressionist' overtones, and the central protagonist is likely to face an existential dilemma.

A further context for the tales in this book is the strong tradition of morally and socially critical fairy and fantasy tales, as exemplified by John Ruskin's 'King of the Golden River' (1841), Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* (1843), William Makepeace Thackeray's *The Rose and the Ring* (1855), and Oscar Wilde's *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1888). As Jack Zipes points out in *Victorian Fairy Tales: The Revolt of the Fairies* (1987), such literary tales, alongside those of Laurence Housman (1865–1959), George MacDonald (1824–1904), and E. Nesbit (1858–1924), represent a body of literature that critiqued greed, materialistic attitudes, and dominant ideas, often from a 'purer' or 'truer' Christian viewpoint. It's reasonable to speculate that the writers of the tales collected here came across at least some of these literary tales and saw themselves as part of that tradition. In a broad sense, though, the socialist tales in this book swim in all these historical, ideological, and literary contexts and constitute a critical, resistant literature intended to alert, reform, enlighten, provoke, and educate.

Genres, with Examples from the Book

1) TALES THAT USE TRADITIONAL STORIES OR TRADITIONAL STORY FORMS—FAIRY TALE, FOLK TALE, MYTH, AND LEGEND

- i) In 'Little Red Riding Hood' (from the *Labour Leader*, 26 October 1895), C. Allen Clarke relies on his readers to know the story, so that they can enjoy the modern references, asides, and jokes that he has inserted into what appears at first to be nothing more than a slightly verbose retelling of the traditional tale.
- ii) F. J. Gould, in 'The Man without a Heart' (from *Labour Prophet—Cinderella*, October 1893), uses the fairy tale form to construct a story along the lines of Ruskin's 'King of the Golden River' to arrive at a Tolstoyan conclusion in relation to the dignity of labor.

- iii) 'Tom Hickathrift' (from *More English Fairy Tales*, 1894) comes from outside the socialist journals and is included here because of the way in which its author-collector, Joseph Jacobs, makes explicit the socialistic outcome of the hero's exploits: "The ground that the giant kept by force for himself, Tom gave part to the poor for their common land, and part he turned into good wheat-land to keep himself and his old mother, Jane Hickathrift." This illustrates how an egalitarian, communitarian thread was kept alive in fairy tale collections by anthologists, collectors, and retellers of traditional tales.

2) ALLEGORICAL FAIRY TALES AND FABLES

These are the forms that writers of socialist tales most preferred.

- iv) In 'The History of a Giant: Being a Study in Politics for Very Young Boys', by Keir Hardie (published in *Labour Leader*, 8 April 1893), the figure of 'Labour' is analogous to Christian in *The Pilgrim's Progress* (first published in 1678), as he moves historically and geographically through the kingdom discovering and revealing how capitalism and the political system work, and how in the great battle ahead 'Labour' will win, thanks to the "INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY".
- v) No less a figure than William Morris published 'An Old Fable Retold' in *Justice* (19 January 1884). It's a sophisticated retelling of the tale in which protagonists discuss the best way that they will themselves be executed.
- vi) The slightly arch, know-better tone of the allegorical fable emerges in 'Fables for the Times—II: The Political Economist and the Flowers' from *Justice* (18 October 1884), which strikes at the heart of the nature-nurture debate that followed the appearance of *On the Origin of Species* (1859).
- vii) 'A Dream of Queer Fishes (A Modern Prose Idyll)' (*Commonweal*, 19 November 1887) by H.S.S. is a warning tale about deceit over home rule for Ireland, which involves the Old Man of the Sea and a shoal of mid-Atlantic fish!

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- viii) Dan Baxter in 'The New Shilling' (*Justice*, 23 March 1895) uses the fable form to reach forward to a utopian money-less future, a theme to be found in a good deal of utopian thought and revived by some reflections on Marx and his famous citation from *Timon of Athens* about gold.
- ix) Joseph Grose in 'The Golden Egg' (*Justice*, 13 July 1901) revives the classical and Renaissance 'dialogus' (dialogue) or even perhaps the 'disputatio' (dispute) in which 'The Cynic' and 'The Person of Good Intentions' debate the economic system.
- x) Frank Starr in 'The Doll Shop' (*Labour Leader*, 15 August 1903) uses the metaphor of shopping for dolls to dissect class and certain types of 'Man' whilst finding room at the end to take swipes at fellow socialists who had been unsuccessful in convincing the masses.
- xi) R. B. Suthers, in 'The Peasants and the Parasites' (*Clarion*, 24 January 1908), is more direct than Keir Hardie with his *Pilgrim's Progress* approach to the travails of the class system, naming his types according to their social position.
- xii) "'Happy Valley.' A Fairy Tale' (*Justice*, 20 July 1907) (anon.) leans heavily on pastoralism as a way of critiquing the system, whilst naming characters as 'Monopoly' or 'Fairplay'.
- xiii) W. Anderson, in 'The Fool and the Wise Man' (*Justice*, 13 August 1910), returns to the dialogue form in order to unlock the absurdity, contradiction, and unfairness in the class enemy's position.
- xiv) The most elaborate of the tales of this type, 'Jack Clearhead,' "by Keir Hardie, M.P," appeared in the *Labour Leader* weekly from 1 September until 27 October 1894. This is a thirteen-chapter Swifitian allegory with 'Dullards' and 'Plumheads' and the like.

3) MORAL TALES

- xv) Socialist writers and editors attempted the moral tale with stories such as 'Elfhome (Charlie's Garden)' (from the *Labour Prophet*, April 1897) but really didn't achieve anything more socialistic than a homiletic about making things nice!

'The Man without a Heart' (discussed above) is also in its own way a moral tale.

4) MYSTERY TALES

In this section, we can place, for example:

- xvi) H. Bellingham's 'Chips' ('*To-Day*', September 1888), in which a conversation between Chips and a numinous frog (!) undercuts the figure of God as nothing more nor less than 'Love', which itself is belied by the existence of poverty.
- xvii) M. Winchevsky—a notable Yiddish poet—produced 'He, She, and It' for *Social Democrat* (April 1906). Set in London, social realism sits alongside a kind of magical realism analogous to Oscar Wilde's fairy tales. Here an apple tree and a streetlamp have thoughts, while 'the scavenger' sweeps the leaves and leans on the apple tree.
- xviii) 'The Scarlet Shoes. (The Story of a Serio-comic Walking Tour and its Tragic End.)' by Harford Willson (*Teddy Ashton's Northern Weekly*, 3 March 1906) appears at first to be simply an odd story, but it draws on references to Grimm and H. C. Andersen and symbolically enacts in an unsettling way societal attitudes to eccentricity.
- xix) In 'Nightmare Bridge' by Glanville Maidstone (*Clarion*, 15 July 1910), our route into an urban hell is along a road and over a bridge that present themselves in a dream. The hell is, of course, London, a subject and theme that obsessed reformers, nonfiction writers, and journalists of the era, puzzled and appalled as to how at the heart of Britain's huge empire so much poverty, disease, and crime could exist just down the road from the City of London's financial institutions.
- xx) Schalom Asch looks back to E.T.A. Hoffmann and prefigures Kafka's 'In the Penal Colony' with 'Behind the Wall' (*British Socialist*, 15 December 1913). People are in prison, but imprisonment is more a state of being than a punishment or an act of justice.

In trying to assess how effective these stories were, I would suggest that for many of them, it's pointless trying to use narrowly literary criteria, any more than one would for the 'Good Samaritan'. The question we can ask is, were such stories convincing to people

at that time? Evidence for that is scant, but Carolyn Sumpter, in *The Victorian Press and the Fairy Tale* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 121), cites enthusiastic young readers of Keir Hardie's tales, writing in 1894 to tell him that they were 'very highly appreciated by the mothers and fathers' as well as the by the youngsters, and this enthusiasm impelled him to write more. It is interesting to note that part of the currency of political speeches by socialist leaders since that time is the biblical allusion, the joke-fable, and the apocryphal tale, and one might say that even if we have no way of saying whether any individual tale 'convinced,' there is a more general way in which they contribute to a long-standing and international rhetoric.

Taken as a body of fiction, the stories reveal the fault lines and viewpoints that ran through the world of socialists then, but which persist today. It's not as if inequality, injustice, exploitation, poverty, and war have been abolished—nor indeed have the hugely powerful agencies for sustaining this state of affairs. These tales sought to describe, critique, and agitate against this. I think they show signs of being 'green': that is, part of a young movement, confident in the certainty that the end point can be achieved, often using stories to make things seem self-evidently necessary. This is socialism at its most hopeful, perhaps at its most innocent, untouched by world war, Stalinism, or the Holocaust. That innocence is hard to recycle, and it may be unwise to try, but I think there is another way in which these works have contemporary potential: in their apparent desire to lay bare the processes that make the majority of people's lives such a struggle. We can read in the stories the idea that the display of these processes would educate and motivate readers to join movements and work toward making a fairer, more just world.

A Note on the Illustrations

Along with the rise of socialism and explicit socialist stories for young people at the end of the nineteenth century came a wave of socialist art and visual reinterpretations of classical folk and fairy tales. Most of the tales in this volume were not illustrated, yet many referred to well-known fairy tale books and plays. This book includes a sampling of fairy tale illustrations and political images of the era by such artists as William Morris, Walter Crane, Charles Folkard, and Laurence Housman.