

ployer would not offer any objections to your being a teetotaller, vegetarian, chapel-goer, belonging to the Salvation Army, or wearing a tiny blue ribbon in your button-hole, he would most likely strongly object to employ a "dynamiter" in his shop.

In speaking of the spread of Socialism we can, of course, only judge by the increase of our numbers, which is, I am sorry to state, not very rapid. Still we are not disheartened at this, as we feel sure that the principles we try our best to spread, take up roots amongst the workers, and must continue to do so in spite of opposition, and whether our actual members increase rapidly or not. Perseverance should be the great watchword, the device of our comrades, without it there is no success, without it no victory.

In speaking of our propaganda during the winter months, it is my duty to report, as the first effort of this season, the lecture which was delivered by Mrs. Annie Besant on behalf of our Branch. This lady had kindly consented to lecture for the Branch on the occasion of her present visit to Bradford, where she lectured on Sunday, Nov. 21st, under the auspices of the Bradford Branch of the Secular Society. We had made arrangements for the lecture to be delivered on Saturday evening, Nov. 20th, at the Co-operative Hall, Shipley. Mrs. Besant had chosen for a subject: "Why Workers should be Socialists." There were about 250 persons present. Our comrade Gaskell occupied the chair. Mrs. Besant delivered her lecture with that clearness of expression which could not fail to bring home to the most simple-minded listener the truth, fullness, and justness of the Socialist's principles. I need not go into details over the lecture, as I have already occupied too much space of the *Commonweal*; besides, I believe the lecturer's ideas to be well known among our readers, and, therefore, do not require repetition here. The discussion which followed was lively, and the prompt answers were well taken up. I think we have gained ground in this particular district, bearing in mind the peculiar nature of its Radical population.

In conclusion, let me mention Mrs. Besant's Sunday evening lecture in Bradford on "Radicals and Socialists," which was both an attempt at pointing out the Socialist tendency of Radical legislation and an appeal to earnest Radicals to work hand in hand with Socialists. The very numerous audience showed much appreciation and a good understanding of what the lecturer said. It is to be hoped that both her lectures, at Shipley and Bradford, will have stimulated at least some of our intelligent workers to think and study for themselves in the direction pointed out to them. However much we may differ in minor points, as to tactics or organisation of the future free Society, one point is important above all—the *Education of the Masses*. True liberty, true equality, and true justice will never be firmly established by an ignorant and superstitious people; but, free from those curses of mankind, the workers will be able to lay the foundation of a better and a happier life for themselves and future generations. Let us try, therefore, to double our efforts to spread the light amongst the miserable and down-trodden fellow-slaves of to-day. We may not see immediate success, but success there will and must be nevertheless. We have a mighty help-mate, *Necessity*, which will force at last people to accept what otherwise they would refuse.

C. HENZE.

A DREAM OF JOHN BALL.

Continued from p. 283.)

Our men had got into their places leisurely and coolly enough, and with no lack of jesting and laughter. As we went along the hedge by the road, the leaders tore off leafy twigs from the low oak bushes therein, and set them for a rallying sign in their hats and head-pieces, and two or three of them had horns.

Will Green, when he got into his place, which was some fifty yards from where Jack Straw and the billmen were in the corner of the two hedges, looked to right and left of him a moment, then turned to the man on the left and said:

"Look you, mate, when you hear our horns blow ask no more questions, but shoot straight and strong at whatso cometh towards us, till ye hear more tidings from Jack Straw or from me. Pass that word onward."

Then he looked at me, and said:

"Now lad from Essex, thou hadst best sit down out of the way at once: forsooth I wot not why I brought thee hither. Wilt thou not back to the cross, for thou art little of a fighting-man?"

"Nay," said I, "I would see the play. What shall come of it?"

"Little," said he; "we shall slay a horse or twain maybe. I will tell thee, since thou hast not seen a fight belike, as I have seen some, that these men-at-arms cannot run fast either to the play or from it, if they be a-foot; and if they come on a horseback, what shall hinder me to put a shaft into the poor beast? But down with thee on the daisies, for some shot there will be first."

As he spoke he was pulling off his belts and other gear, and his coat, which done, he laid his quiver on the ground, girt him again, and hung his axe and buckler to his girdle, and hung up his other attire on the nearest tree behind us. Then he opened his quiver and took out of it some dozen of arrows, which he stuck in the ground beside him ready to his hand. Most of the bowmen within sight were doing the like.

As I glanced toward the houses I saw three or four bright figures moving through the orchards, and presently saw that they were women, all clad more or less like the girl in the Rose, except that two of them wore white coifs on their heads. Their errand there was clear, for each carried a bundle of arrows under her arm.

One of them came straight up to Will Green, and I could see at once that she was his daughter. She was tall and strongly made, with black hair like her father, somewhat comely though no great beauty; but as they met her eyes smiled even more than her mouth, and made her face look very sweet and kind, and the smile was answered back in a way so quaintly alike by her father's face, that I too smiled for goodwill and pleasure.

"Well, well, lass," said he, "dost thou think that here is Crecy field toward; that ye bring all this artillery? Turn back, my girl, and set the pot on the fire; for that shall we need when we come home, I and this ballad-maker here."

"Nay," she said, nodding kindly at me, "if this is to be no Crecy, then may I stop to see, as well as the ballad-maker, since he hath neither sword nor staff."

"Sweetling," he said, "get thou home in haste. This play is but little, yet mightst thou be hurt in it; and trust me the time may come, sweetheart, when even thou and such as thou shall hold a sword or a staff. Ere the moon throws a shadow we shall be back."

She turned away lingering, not without tears on her face, laid the sheaf of arrows at the foot of the tree, and hastened off through the orchard. I was going to say something, when Will Green held up his hand as who would bid us hearken. The noise of the horse hoofs, after growing nearer and nearer, had ceased suddenly, and a confused murmur of voices had taken the place of it.

"Get thee behind me, and take cover, old lad," said Will Green, "the dance will soon begin, and ye shall hear the music presently."

Sure enough as I turned from the hedge close to which I had been standing, I heard the harsh twang of the bowstrings, one, two, three, almost together, from the road, and even the whew of the shafts, though that was drowned in a moment by a confused but loud and threatening shout from the other side, and again the bowstrings twanged, and this time a far-off clash of arms followed, and therewithal that cry of a strong man that comes without his will, and is so different from his wonted voice, that one has a guess thereby of the change that death is. Then for a while was almost silence; nor did our horns blow up, though some half-dozen of the bill-men had leapt into the road when the bows first shot. But presently came a great blare of trumpets and horns from the other side, and therewith as it were a river of steel and bright coats poured into the field before us, and still their horns blew as they spread out toward the left of our line; the cattle in the pasture field, heretofore feeding quietly, seemed frightened silly by the sudden noise, and ran about tail in air and lowing loudly; the old bull with his head a little lowered, and his stubborn legs planted firmly, growling threateningly; while the geese about the brook waddled away gobbling and squeaking, all which seemed so strange to us along with the threat of sudden death that rang out from the bright array over against us, that we laughed outright, the most of us, and Will Green put down his head in mockery of the bull and grunted like him, whereat we laughed yet more. He turned round to me as he nocked his arrow, and said:

"I would they were just fifty paces nigher, and they move not. Ho! Jack Straw, shall we shoot?"

For the latter-named was nigh us now; he shook his head and said nothing as he stood looking at the enemy's line.

"Fear not but they are the right folk, Jack," quoth Will Green.

"Yea, yea," said he, "but abide awhile; they could make nought of the highway, and two of their sergeants had a message from the grey goose feather. Abide, for they have not crossed the road to our right hand, and belike have not seen our fellows on the other side, who are now for a bushment to them."

I looked hard at the man. He was a tall, wiry, and broad shouldered fellow, clad in a handsome armour of bright steel that certainly had not been made for a yeoman, but over it he had a common linen smock-frock or gabardine, like our field workmen wear now or used to wear, and in his helmet he carried instead of a feather a wisp of wheaten straw. He bore a heavy axe in his hand besides the sword he was girt with, and round his neck hung a great horn for blowing. I should say that I knew that there were at least three "Jack Straws" among the fellowship of the discontented, one of whom was over in Essex.

As we waited there, every Bowman with his shaft nocked on the string, there was a movement in the line opposite, and presently came from it a little knot of three men, the middle one on horseback, the other two armed with long-handled glaives; all three well muffled up in armour. As they came nearer I could see that the horseman had a tabard over his armour, gaily embroidered with a green tree on a gold ground, and in his hand a trumpet.

"They are come to summon us. Wilt thou that he speak, Jack?" said Will Green.

"Nay," said the other; "yet shall he have warning first. Shoot when my horn blows!"

And therewith he came up to the hedge, climbed over slowly because of his armour, and stood some dozen yards out in the field. The man on horseback put his trumpet to his mouth and blew a long blast, and then took a scroll into his hand and made as if he were going to read; but Jack Straw lifted up his voice and cried out:

"Do it not, or thou art but dead! We will have no accursed lawyers and their sheep-skins here! Go back to those that sent thee——"

But the man broke in in a loud harsh voice:

"Ho! YE PEOPLE! what will ye gathering in arms?"

Then cried Jack Straw:

"Sir Fool, hold your peace till ye have heard me, or else we shoot at once. Go back to those that sent thee, and tell them that we free

men of Kent are on the way to London to speak with King Richard, and to tell him that which he wots not; to wit, that there is a certain sort of fools and traitors to the realm who would put collars on our necks and make beasts of us, and that it is his right and his devoir to do as he swore when he was crowned and anointed at Westminster on the Stone of Doom, and gainsay these thieves and traitors; and if he be too weak then shall we help him; and if he will not be king then shall we have one who shall be, and that is the King's Son of Heaven. Now, therefore, if any withstand us on our lawful errand as we go to speak with our own king and lord, let him look to it. Bear back this word to them that sent thee. But for thee, hearken thou bastard of an inky sheepskin, get thee gone and tarry not; three times shall I lift up my hand, and the third time look to thyself, for then shalt thou hear the loose of our bow-strings, and after that nought else till thou hearest the devil bidding thee welcome to hell!"

Our fellows shouted, but the summoner began again, yet in a quavering voice:

"HO! YE PEOPLE! What will ye gathering in arms? Wot ye not that ye are doing or shall do great harm, loss and hurt to the king's lieges—"

He stopped; Jack Straw's hand was lowered for the second time. He looked to his men right and left, and then turned rein and turned tail, and scuttled back to the main body at his swiftest. Huge laughter rattled out all along our line as Jack Straw climbed back into our orchard grinning also.

Then we noted more movement in the enemy's line. They were spreading the archers and arbalestiers to our left, and the men-at-arms and others also spread somewhat under the three penons of which Long Gregory had told us, and which were plain enough to us in the clear evening. Presently the moving line faced us, and the archers set off at a smart pace toward us, the men-at-arms holding back a little behind them. I knew now that they had been within bow-shot all along, but our men were loth to shoot before their first shots would tell, like those half-dozen in the road when, as they told me afterwards, a plump of their men-at-arms had made a show of falling on.

But now as soon as those men began to move on us directly in face, Jack Straw put his horn to his lips and blew a loud rough blast that was echoed by five or six others along the orchard hedge. Every man had his shaft nocked on the string; I watched them, and Will Green specially; he and his bow and its string seemed all of a piece, so easily by seeming did he draw the nock of the arrow to his ear. A moment, as he took his aim, and then—O then I understand the meaning of the awe with which the ancient poet speaks of loose of the god Apollo's bow, for terrible indeed was the mingled sound of the twanging bow-string and the whirring shaft so close to me. I was now on my knees right in front of Will and saw all clearly; the arbalestiers (for no long-bow men were over against our stead) had all of them bright head-pieces, and stout body-armor of boiled leather with metal studs, and as they came towards us, I could see over their shoulders great wooden shields hanging at their backs. Further to our left their long-bow-men had shot almost as soon as ours, and I heard or seemed to hear the rush of the arrows through the apple-boughs and a man's cry therewith; but with us the long-bow had been before the cross-bow; one of the arbalestiers fell outright, his great shield clattering down on him, and moved no more; while three others were hit and were crawling to the rear. The rest had shouldered their bows and were aiming, but I thought unsteadily; and before the triggers were drawn again Will Green had nocked and loosed, and not a few others of our folk; then came the wooden hail of the bolts rattling through the boughs, but all overhead and no one hit.

The next time Will Green nocked his arrow he drew with a great shout, which all our fellows took up; for the arbalestiers instead of turning about in their places covered by their great shields and winding up their crossbows for a second shot, as is the custom of such soldiers, ran huddling together toward their men-at-arms, our arrows driving thump-thump into their shields as they ran: I saw four lying on the field dead or sore wounded.

But our archers shouted again, and kept on each plucking the arrows from the ground, and nocking and loosing swiftly but deliberately at the line before them; indeed now was the time for these terrible bow-men, for as Will Green told me afterwards they always reckoned to kill through cloth or leather at five hundred yards, and they had let the cross-bow-men come nearly within three hundred, and these were now all mingled and muddled up with the men-at-arms at scant five hundred yards distance; and belike, too, the latter were not treating them too well, but seemed to be belabouring them with their spear staves in their anger at the poorness of the play; so that as Will Green said it was like shooting at hay-ricks.

All this you must understand lasted but a few minutes, and when our men had been shooting quite coolly, like good workmen at peaceful work, for a few minutes more, the enemy's line seemed to clear somewhat; the penon with the three red kine showed in front and three men armed from head to foot in bright steel except for their short coats bright with heraldry, were with it. One of them (and he bore the three kine on his coat) turned round and gave some word of command, and an angry shout went up from them, and they came on steadily towards us, the man with the red kine on his coat leading them, a great naked sword in his hand: you must note that they were all on foot; but as they drew nearer I saw their horses led by grooms and pages coming on slowly behind them.

Sooth said Will Green that the men-at-arms run not fast either to or fro the fray; they came on no faster than a hasty walk, their arms clashing about them and the twang of the bows and whistle of the

arrows never failing all the while, but going on like the push of the westerly gale, and from time to time the men-at-arms shouted, "Ha! ha! out! out! Kentish thieves!"

But when they began to fall on, Jack Straw shouted out, "Bills to the field! bills to the field!"

Then all our bill-men ran up and leapt over the hedge into the meadow and stood stoutly along the ditch under our bows, Jack Straw in the forefront handling his great axe. Then he cast it into his left hand, caught up his horn and winded it loudly; the men-at-arms drew near steadily, some fell under the arrow-storm, but not a many; for though the target was big it was hard, since not even the cloth-yard shaft could pierce well-wrought armour of plate, and there was much armour among them. Withal the arbalestiers were shooting again, but high and at a venture, so they did us no hurt.

But as these soldiers made wise by the French war were now drawing near, and our bowmen were casting down their bows and drawing their short swords, or handling their axes, as did Will Green, muttering, "Now must Hob Wright's gear end this play"—while this was a-doing, lo, on a sudden a flight of arrows from our right on the flank of the sergeants' array, which stayed them somewhat; not because it slew many men, but because they began to bethink them that their foes were many and all around them; then the road-hedge on the right seemed alive with armed men, for whatever could hold sword or staff amongst us was there; every bowman also leapt our orchard hedge sword or axe in hand, and with a great shout, billmen, archers, and all, ran in on them; half-armed, yea, and half-naked some of them; strong and stout and lithe and light withal, the wrath of battle and the hope of better times lifting up their hearts till nothing could withstand them. So was all mingled together, and for a minute or two was a confused clamour over which rose a clatter like the rivetting of iron plates, or the noise of the street of the coppersmiths at Florence; then the throng burst open and the steel-clad sergeants and squires and knights ran huddling and shuffling towards their horses; but some cast down their weapons and threw up their hands and cried for peace and ransom; and some stood and fought desperately and slew some till they were hammered down by many strokes, and of these were the bailiffs and tipstaves and the lawyers and their men, who could not run and hoped for no mercy.

I looked as on a picture and wondered and my mind was at strain to remember something forgotten, which yet had left its mark on it. I heard the noise of the horse hoofs of the fleeing men-at-arms (the archers and arbalestiers had scattered before the last minutes of the play), I heard the confused sound of laughter and rejoicing down in the meadow, and close by me the evening wind lifting the lighter twigs of the trees, and far away the many noises of the quiet country, till light and sound both began to fade from me and I saw and heard nothing.

I leapt up to my feet presently and there was Will Green before me as I had first seen him in the street with coat and hood and the gear at his girdle and his unstrung bow in his hand; his face smiling and kind again, but maybe a thought sad.

"Well," quoth I, "What is the tale for the ballad maker?"

"As Jack Straw said it would be," said he, "the end of the day and the end of the fray;" and he pointed to the brave show of the sky over the sunken sun; "the knights fled and the sheriff dead: two of the lawyer kind slain afield, and one hanged, and cruel was he to make them cruel: and three bailiffs knocked on the head—stout men, and so witless, that none found their brains in their skulls; and five arbalestiers and one archer slain, and a score and a half of others, mostly men come back from the French wars, men of the Companions there, knowing no other craft than fighting for gold; and this is the end they are paid for. Well, brother, saving the lawyers who belike had no souls, but only parchment deeds and libels of the same, God rest their souls!"

He fell a-musing; but I said, "And of our fellowship were any slain?"

"Two good men of the township," he said, "Hob Horner and Antony Webber, were slain outright, Hob with a shaft and Antony in the hand-play, and John Pargetter hurt very sore on the shoulder with a glaive; and five more men of the fellowship slain in the hand-play, and some few hurt, but not sorely. And as to those slain if God give their souls rest it is well; for little rest they had on the earth belike; but for me I desire rest no more."

I looked at him and our eyes met with no little love; and I wondered to see how wrath and grief within him were contending with the kindness of the man, and how clear the tokens of it were in his face.

"Come now, old lad," said he, "for I deem that John Ball and Jack Straw have a word to say to us at the cross yet, since these men broke off his telling; there shall we know what we are to take in hand to-morrow. And afterwards thou shalt eat and drink in my house this once if never again."

So we went through the orchard closes again; and others were about and anigh us, all turned toward the cross, as we went over the dewy grass whereon the moon was just beginning to throw shadows.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

(To be continued.)

At the School Board election at Nottingham on Nov. 29, John Peacock, the Socialist candidate, polled 22,659 votes—more than double the number given to the lowest on the list of those elected, and nearly 8000 more than the next highest on the list. The conservative clericals were at the bottom of the poll.