A DAY IN THE COUNTRY.

It was towards the close of a clear bright day in early spring that, leaving the quaint little village of West Wycombe behind, I found myself at the summit of the Chiltern Hills, that intersect the county of Buckingham. For some miles now the road ran along the ridges of the beautiful pastures and meadows of the country on either hand, and only at the rarest intervals varied by a clump of cottages or a solitary farmhouse with its deep-cutted cart-road skirting a sluggish duck pond. Indeed, I was oppressed; I felt that this was a true instinct. Here was proof-positive of the absurdity of "over-population." It is true, indeed, that Malthus dwelt amid the beautiful wilds of Surrey; but then, added to the sophistical training of his order, he had a strong taste for arithmetical; and after all, it is the perplexed dwellers in towns who chiefly support his theory, so true it is that one-half the world does not know how the other half lives. And so commerce desolates the country to crowd the cities, and pernicious its imprisoned victims that they are miserable because there is not room enough. A Malthusian should be dropped in the middle of Salisbury plain.

With such thoughts as these I pursued my way along the lonely heights; and, now that the sun touched the horizon and the air began to grow keen, welcomed the sign-post that showed me the way to the village of Bledlow; and following the winding road deep into the fresh green valley, reached at last the place I sought. I hastened at once to the "Glyde," for which it is celebrated in the guide-books, and found it a sort of a hotel on the sides of a forest of fir trees forming the sign-post with a gentle noise into the pool below, where the cattle are driven down to drink. High above stands the old square-towered church, seemingly in great danger of fulfilling Mother Shipton's ancient prophecy by falling into the Glade; and when, while the fading light of the trees around it seemed to mingle with the glow of the western sky, and nothing but the voices of the birds and the lowing of kine disturbed that stillness of the evening air.

It was twilight when I reached the door of a little alehouse, and stepped, weary and hungry, into the dim parlour. As nothing was to be had but fiery cheese and sour ale, I took them cheerfully; had I been a people a change of heart, I too, would see what the three labouring fellows entering the darkening room and began to talk. The poor widow who kept the house had enough to do to live, they said, in the village, and among the twenty men born in those parts then without work. This may be a slight matter; but if such a thing could be in that little unknown village on the borders of Oxfordshire, what must it be elsewhere? The farmers complained that the land would not "pay" to cultivate. These poor fellows, needy to telling that something was wrong; the question was, what? One of them had a vague but rooted notion that the queen and royal family were coming by the next road; and what was that when I spoke of the trees around it seemed to mingle with the glow of the western sky, and nothing but the voices of the birds and the lowing of kine disturbed that stillness of the evening air.

The next day I had been in London, with all its crowds and noise: now I was in the heart of a beautiful country, and what I saw was misery here, misery there. Commerce has done its work, and brought all to extremes. Just as it has created an unhappy rich class and an unhappy poor class, so it has made the towns fierce gambling halls of life and death, and the country an abomination of desolation and colossal isolated poverty. Sentimentalists and lovers of the picturesque should journey on foot through the lovely counties, and every eye will be strange if they do not come back with the sham sentiment knocked out of them and something more real put in its place. If they really believe in country life, they will do their best to give the white people a chance of life together with their social rights. Perhaps on the whole my tour had not been profitless so far, I thought, as I sat late at night in the chimney-corner of the "Rising Sun" at Prince's Risborough; and that which I had heard and seen was with me as I fell asleep, and came to me again through the open casement with the twitterings of the birds and the morning light.

REGINALD A. BECKETT.

Some villagers in Egypt have been flogged and their sheep imprisoned for six months because a party of British officers first wounded a villager and then on a disturbance arising shot another dead. Justice is further thwarted by the wholesale population; for having the rebellious impudence to exist, though it would be harder on them, would be a trifle more logical. It will now be a sacred social duty to run for the House of Commons; every opposition effort should involve the whole of their village in a flogging. Bah! the man of modern civilization is a sickening animal.