

will. Then, when men are leisured, unoppressed by anxiety for the morrow's food, or fear of what the week may bring, it will be possible to train men as never heretofore, and Education will at length have opportunity to show what it can do for man.

H. HALLIDAY SPARLING.

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 lofty ridge, affording beautiful prospects 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-rutted cart-road skirting a sluggish duck-pond. Indeed the desolation seemed almost oppressive; and I felt vaguely 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 turn for arithmetic: 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 persuades 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 leafy precipice, from whose sides innumerable springs trickle 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 Glyde." And now in the fading light 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 the 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 disposed to repine, I should have felt ashamed of it when two or three labouring fellows entered the darkening room and began to talk. The poor widow who kept the house had enough to do to live, they said; and in that little village alone there were twenty men born in those parts then without work. This may seem 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 needed no 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 at the bottom of it; and I fear that when I spoke of France and America I only helped to destroy the hope he had. Indeed I felt shamed into silence in the presence of these slow-witted peasants, who live and labour and suffer on the land. There was little said; and I looked out of the darkness into the glimmering landscape with a mind full of pity and misgiving.

That morning I had been in London, with all its crowds and noise: now I was in the heart of a beautiful country. With what result? 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 hells of life and death, and the country an abomination of desolation and cold isolated poverty.

Sentimentalists and lovers of the picturesque should journey on foot among the lovely country districts, using their eyes and ears. It 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 whole people a chance of enjoying it, together with *real* social life.

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 birds and the morning light.

REGINALD A. BECKETT.

Some villagers in Egypt have been flogged and their sheik imprisoned for six months *because* a party of British officers first wounded a villager and then on a disturbance arising shot another dead. Justice can scarcely go further than this; even flogging the whole 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 for the Arabs to avoid being shot by British officers, lest their recklessness should involve the whole of their village in a flogging. Bah! the man of modern civilisation is a sickening animal on a silver plate.

NORTHUMBRIAN NOTES.

No alteration has yet taken place in the situation. The mine-owners have been dumb, except that one of them threatens to close his pits unless the men surrender in a fortnight. But this is an old dodge, and the miners know the value of the threat. To have read the Newcastle papers a week ago one would have thought that the miners were just about to give up the fight. But on going amongst the men one finds something quite different. I put this to the test last week. The sensational articles on the distress were then appearing, expectations of the miners' surrender were rife, letters from anonymous wiseacres counselled them to fling up the sponge, impudent editorials and fussy relief-committee memorials demanded the immediate capitulation of the strikers. During three days I went to six or seven different parts of Northumberland and questioned scores of men. They all admitted the distress; some of them were very bitter at the thought of the suffering inflicted on their wives and children by the capitalist power, but *none* of them spoke of giving in.

I cannot say that the miners have much hope of preventing the reduction. It is a dreary fight for them. Victory not very likely, or barren if they gain it. They will have used up nearly all their resources in the endeavour to keep their position, and if the masters try again they will be much surer of success. Again, if the miners do lose, they will be getting less than enough to feed themselves. "Give up the strike," cry the relief committees; "take the masters' terms, we can't keep the soup-kitchens open any longer." But if the men take 12½ per cent. less than they have been getting, the soup-kitchen will have to be made a permanent institution.

The general feeling is that the miners will be beaten, though I think that with better tactics, and the help which they should, but do not, get, a victory might have been secured. But the capitalists will not get an easy victory. There is a dogged determination about the men which bodes no good to their masters. Already the loss of confidence in the ordinary useless labour leaders is very widespread; and it will be lack of ability or industry on the part of the Socialists only that will prevent the general acceptance of Socialism amongst the miners.

The miners have now made advances to the masters to end the dispute by referring it to arbitration. It is not very clear what the result will be, but it looks like the miners losing. However, it may be best for the strike to end. This at all events is clear. The miners have suffered keenly, and their bitterness against the wrongs inflicted on them is greater now than ever before. The mineowners have greatly hastened the spread of Socialism by their inhuman attempts to grind the men lower than they are. The miners feel, too, that it is time they went in for more thorough-going action than hitherto they have done.

The Socialist propaganda has gone on better than ever. Two meetings every day, and all the halls crowded with people. We now find organised opposition and this proves the efficacy of the work done. The opposition is bitter but not formidable and helps to give a zest to the proceedings. I shall send a fuller report next week. The matter of organisation has again been postponed for a fortnight.

Newcastle, April 5.

J. L. MAHON.

BREAKERS AHEAD!

THE present time is a favourable one in which to watch the governments of Europe tremblingly steering their course between their twin great dangers—the Scylla of foreign war and the Charybdis of internal revolution.

Watching one another and "their" peoples the "armed strong men" sit and none can tell what a day or week may bring.

The one thing certain in the uncertain business is that war and rapine—one almost might say also pestilence and famine—depend upon the great financiers, who at a nod can shake Europe.

Peace and war depend upon which the Moneybags can make most out of, by which particular method the blood of the peoples can most conveniently be transformed into the fortunes of financiers.

The *Spectator* says: "If we look below the surface, it is almost everywhere the governing classes who are heartily loyal, but the machine nevertheless rolls on." It explains the secret by the division among the governed peoples as well as the jealousy of nations.

The people are becoming more solidary every day, and day by day the distrust and hatred of "foreigners" decreases. How then for "the machine"?

In another place the same journal admits that "the strife between capital and labour rises black and menacing above the near horizon." How then for "the machine"?

H. H. S.

THE ITALIAN ELECTIONS.—At Ravenna Cipriani has again been elected. This time the Socialist convict has been returned.