UNDER AN ELM-TREE; OR,

THOUGHTS IN THE COUNTRY-SIDE.

Midsummer in the country—here you may walk between the fields and hedges as are at one time huge nosegay for you, redolent of bean-flowers and crocus and sweet hay and elder-blossoms. The common gardens are bright with flowers, the cottages themselves mostly models of architecture in their way. Above them towers here and there the architecture proper of days bygone; when every craftsman was an artist and brought definite intelligence to bear upon his work. Man in the past, nature in the present, seem to be bent on pleasing you and making all things delightful to your senses; even the burning dusty road has a look of luxury as you lie on the strip of roadside green, and listen to the blackbirds singing, surely for your benefit, and, I was going to say if they were paid to do it, but I was wrong, for as it is they seem to be doing their best.

And all, or let us say most things, are brilliantly alive. The shadow blank in the river down yonder, which is—ignorant of the fate that Barking Beach is preparing for its waters—sapphire blue under this trailing wind and cloudless sky, and there and there with the nearly white-flowered water-weeds, every yard of its banks a treasure of delicate design, meadowsweet and dewberry and comfrey and bed-straw—from the blank in the river, amongst the laze of the green grasses, to the starlings busy in the new thorn fields, or about the grey ridges of the hay, all is eager, and I think all is happy that is near.

What is that thought that has come into one's head as one turns round in the shadow of the road-side elm? A country-side worth fighting for if there were necessary, worth taking trouble to defend its peace. I raise my head, and but the elm-leaves I see far off a grey buttressed down rising over the sea of green and blue-green meadows and fields and dim on the flank of it over its buttresses can see a quaint figure made by cutting the short turf away from the chalk of the hill-side—a figure which represents a White Horse according to the heraldry of the period, eleven hundred years ago. Hard by that hill-side is a country people who have known peace and loveliness of this very country where I lie, and coming back from their victory scored the image of the White Horse as a token of their valor, and, who knows? perhaps as an example for their descendants to follow.

For a little time it makes the blood stir in me as I think of that, but as I watch the swallows fitting past me betwixt hedge and hedge, or pecking busy at the hedges in any of the open bean-field beyond, another thought comes over me. These five things I have been speaking of, blank and swellows and starlings and blackbirds, are all after their kind beautiful and graceful, not one of them offering anything in the way of grace and beauty which the one made by a hay-field there was an old red-roan cart-horse looking seriously but good-humouredly at me from a gap in the hedge, and I stopped to to his sequence and I am sorry to say that in spite of his obvious merits he was ugly, Roman-nosed, shuffling, ungracefully: yet how useful he had been—for others. Also the same day (but not in the same field) I saw some other animals, male and female, with whom also I made acquaintance, for the male ones at least, were thistle.

And these animals, both male and female, were ungraceful, unbeautiful, as ungraciously as the roan cart-horse; yet they were obviously useful, for they were making hay before my eyes. Then I thought me that as I had seen starlings in Hertfordshire that were of the same race as the Thames side starlings, so I had seen or heard of featherless two-legged animals of the same race as the thistly creatures in the hayfield; they had been sculptured in the frieze that had been painted on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, imagined in literature as the heroes and heroines of romance; nay, when people had created in these aisles a new form of civilization, the progress of humanity the same as was the starlings and the blank, that there was more equally amongst them than we are used to now to show some sense amidst all of that waste of superfluous beauty and pleasure held out to men who cannot take it or use it, unless some chance rich risher may happen to stray that way. My thoughts turn back to the thrifty makerymen and their hope, and I said to a bystander, "Mr. Squand and (the farmer) is late in sending his men into the hay-field."

Quoth he, "Well, sir, we are, sir, Mr. So-and-so is short-handed."

"How's that?" said I, pricking up my Socialist ears.

"Well, sir," said he, "these men are the old men and women bred in the village, and pretty much past work; and the young men with more work in the fields, the way they do, they demand from these men, as against them, and Mr. So-and-so, he won't pay it. So you see, he be short-handed."

As I turned away, thinking over all the untold, unintelligible details of misery that lay within this shabby, sordid story, another one met my ears. A labourer of the village comes to a farmer and says to him that he really can't work for 9s. a week any more, but must have 10s. Says he farmer, "Get your 10s. somewhere else. He doesn't mean to turn away to two month's lack of employment, and then come back begging for his 9s. slavery.

Commonwealth is the era of unsuppressed strikes, you will say. Indeed they are, if not they would be easily remedied; the casual tragedy cut short; the casual wrongdoer branded as a person out of humanity. But since they are so commonplace—

What is that thought that has come into one's head as one turns round in the shadow of the road-side elm, with all this country beauty so tragically incongruous in its richness with the country misery which cannot feel its existence? Say we to the farmer, "Get still be slaves and slaveholders, it will not last long; the Battle of Ashdown will be forgotten for the last commercial crisis; Alfred's heraldry will yield to the lions of the half-crown. The architecture of the crafts-guilds will tumble down, or be restored "for the benefit of the benevolent sky, and there and there with the nearly white-flowered water-weeds, every yard of its banks a treasure of delicate design, meadowsweet and dewberry and comfrey and bed-straw—from the blank in the river, amongst the laze of the green grasses, to the starlings busy in the new thorn fields, or about the grey ridges of the hay, all is eager, and I think all is happy that is near.
The Conference of the Hague resolved:

(1) That the Paris International Congress be held from the 14th to 21st of August, 1899.

(2) That the Congress be open to the workmen and Socialists of all countries on conditions compatible with the political laws in force there.

(3) That the Congress resolve on the verification of credentials and the fixing of the order of the day.

The Conference resolved, provisionally, that the following questions be treated:

(a) International labour legislation; Regulation, by law, of the hours of work and paid holidays, of the workman's wages, of the penalties for the infringement of these regulations, of the rights and conditions of women and children.

(b) Inspection of factories and workshops, as well as of domestic industries.

(c) Ways and means to obtain these demands.

The Belgian delegates were charged with officially communicating to the Possibilists the resolutions of the Hague Congress.

Citizen Valders, having accomplished his mission to the Possibilist Council, came to our committee. He informed us that the Possibilists refused to allow the French Socialists and Social Democrats to participate in the congress of convocation, as well as to recognize the right of the Congress to directly vote on the resolutions.

The National Council of the trades' unions, the executive committee of the Socialist Federation, and the Congress organizing commission unanimously resolved to advise the Possibilists to hold the Congress at Paris at any price.

In presence of this inadmissible determination of the Possibilists and their party, the Socialist Federation decided that the delegates of the congresses of Labour, from the year 1880, were not to be considered. It was resolved to set; leaving to the Possibilists the responsibility of a counter-measure, if that is one that we have not done in our powers in the past, they, jointly with us, issued the convocation already published in Commercenal.

Before the publication of our first circular, a Congress of the Belgian Workmen's Party had been held at Jolimont; the Possibilists lost no time in sending delegates to the same, in the hope of bribing the Hague resolutions, but, despite their efforts, the Jolimont Congress resolved by 39 votes against 20, that a committee be set up, of which 25 votes are against 22 that it be represented at our International Congress.

The Democrat-Socialist Party held a congress, on the 23rd of May, passed the following resolution:—This meeting profoundly deplores the calling of two Workmen's Congresses for Paris, and resolves that the Danish Democrat-Socialist Congresses, which have been convened, long as two Congresses are maintained, but urges the council of the party to bring its influence to bear on the parties in dispute, so as to amalgamate for the benefit of the Congresses.

The Social Democratic Federation of England alone, setting itself against all other Socialist organizations of the International Congress, which the Possibilists cannot, without, it may be presumed, preceding, by its solitary prowess, impress an international character on a Possibilist Congress so important as all the others.

The workers of both hemispheres thus find themselves in possession of a unique Congress having a claim to act as its representative and interpreter, for it alone has been convened by the Socialist parties at large, and it alone will count in its body delegates of that fraction of the world's proletariat which is most in need of its aid, that is, on the ground of common property, the consciousness of labour and humanity.

It is with a view to obviating all misunderstanding, and frustrating all machinations of the Possibilists, that we are prepared, for the benefit of International Socialists, to publish an account of the efforts at conciliation and union that have been made prior to the march of the Congresses.

For the Organising Commission and by order,

DUTCH, Chairman of the Sitting.
BREIT, JACOB, VAILLANC, and LAFAUGUE, Secretaries.