

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. HENZL.

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:

secure for me, standing on the ground, when I saw the moon, as you say, 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 wheat 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 fallowship of the discontented, one of whom was over in Essex.

As we waited there, every bowman with his shaft nocked on the

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 arbalesters 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 hedges. 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 arbalesters (for no long-bow men were over against our stand) had all of them bright head-pieces, and stout body-armour 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 arbalesters 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 arbalesters 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 bowmen, 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

to, on a sudden a light of arrows from our right on the flank or 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 arbalesters 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 arbalesters 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 be like 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 Fargetter 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."