



THE HARVEST MOON.
From a Drawing by P. MACNAB.

WALKS IN THE WHEATFIELDS.

I.

If you will look at a grain of wheat you will see that it seems folded up: it has crossed its arms and rolled itself up in a cloak, a fold of which forms a groove, and so gone to sleep. If you look at it some time, as people in the old enchanted days used to look into a mirror, or the magic ink, until they saw living figures therein, you can almost trace a miniature human being in the oval of the grain. It is narrow at the top, where the head would be, and broad across the shoulders, and narrow again down towards the feet; a tiny man or woman have wrapped themselves round about with a garment and settled to slumber. Up in the far north, where the dead ice reigns, our Arctic explorers used to roll themselves in a sleeping-bag like this, to keep the warmth in their bodies against the chilliness of the night. Down in the south, where the heated sands of Egypt never cool, there in the rock-hewn tombs, lie the mummies wrapped and lapped and wound about with a hundred yards of linen, in the hope, it may be, that spices and balm might

retain within the sarcophagus some small fragment of human organism through endless ages, till at last the gift of life revisited it. Like a grain of wheat the mummy is folded in its cloth. And I do not know really whether I might not say that these little grains of English corn do not hold within them the actual flesh and blood of man. Transubstantiation is a fact there.

Sometimes the grains are dry and shrivelled and hard as shot, sometimes they are large and full and have a juciness about them, sometimes they are a little bit red, others are golden, many white. The sack stands open in the market—you can thrust your arm in it a foot deep, or take up a handful and let it run back like a liquid stream, or hold it in your palm and balance it, feeling the weight. They are not very heavy as they lie in the palm yet these little grains are a ponderous weight that rules man's world. Wherever they are there is empire. Could imperial Rome have only grown sufficient wheat in Italy to have fed her



GLEANERS CUTTING OFF THE EARS.
Engraved by O. LACOUR, from a Drawing by P. MACNAB.

legions Cæsar would still be master of three fourths of the earth. Rome thought more in her latter days of grapes and oysters, and mullets, that change colour as they die, and singing-girls and flute playing, and cynic verse of Horace, anything rather than corn. Rome is no more, and the lords of the world are they who have mastership of wheat. We have the mastership at this hour by dint of our gold and our hundred-ton guns, but they are telling our farmers to cast aside their corn and to grow tobacco and fruit and anything else that can be thought of in preference. The gold is slipping away. These sacks in the market open to all to thrust their hands in are not sacks of corn but of golden sovereigns, half-sovereigns, new George and the Dragon, old George and the dragon, Sydney mint sovereigns, Napoleons, half-Napoleons, Belgian gold, German gold, Italian gold; gold scraped and scratched and gathered together like old rags from door to door. Sacks full of gold, verily I may say that all the gold poured out from the Australian fields, every penny-weight of it, hundreds of tons, all shipped over the sea to India, Australia, South Africa, Egypt, and above all, America, to buy wheat. It was said that Pompey and his sons covered the great earth with their bones, for each one died in a different quarter of the world, but now he would want two more sons for Australia and America, the two new quarters which are now at work ploughing, sowing, reaping, without a month's intermission, growing corn for us. When you buy a bag of flour at the baker's you pay fivepence over the counter, a very simple transaction. Still you do not expect to get even that little bag of flour for nothing, your fivepence goes over the counter into somebody else's till. Consider now the broad ocean as the counter and yourself to represent thirty-five millions of English people buying sixteen, seventeen, or eighteen million quarters of wheat from the nations opposite, and paying for it shiploads of gold.

So that these sacks of corn in the market are truly filled with gold dust, and how strange it seems at first that our farmers, who are for ever dabbling with their hands in these golden sands, should be for ever grumbling at their poverty! "The nearer the church the farther from God," is an old country proverb, the nearer to wheat the farther from Mammon, I may construct as an addendum. Quite lately a gentleman told me that while he grew wheat on his thousand acres he lost just a pound an acre per annum, *i.e.*, a thousand a year out of capital, so that if

he had not happily given up this amusement he would now have been in the workhouse munching the putty there supplied for bread.

The rag and bone men go from door to door filling an old bag with scraps of linen, and so innumerable agents of bankers and financiers, vampires that suck gold, are for ever prowling about collecting every golden coin they can scent out and shipping it over sea. And what does not go abroad is in consequence of this great drain sharply locked up in the London safes as reserves against paper, and cannot be utilised in enterprises or manufacture. Therefore trade stands still, and factories are closed, and shipyards are idle, and beautiful vessels are stored up doing nothing by hundreds in dock; coal mines left to be filled with water, and furnaces blown out. Therefore there is bitter distress and starvation, and cries for relief works, and one meal a day for Board School children, and the red flag of Socialism is unfurled. All because of these little grains of wheat.

They talked of bringing artillery, with fevered lips, to roar forth shrapnel in Trafalgar Square; why not Gatling guns? The artillery did not come, for very shame, but the Guards did, and there were regiments of Infantry in the rear, with glittering bayonets to prod folk into moving on. All about these little grains of wheat.

These thoughts came into my mind in the winter afternoon at the edge of a level corn-field, with the copper-sheathed spire of the village church on my right, the sun going down on the left. The copper did not gleam, it was dull and brown, no better than discoloured wood, patched with pieces of later date and another shade of dulness. I wish they would glitter, some of these steeples or some of our roofs, and so light up the reddish brown of the elms and the grey lichened oaks. The very rooks are black, and the starlings and the wintry fieldfares and redwings have no colour at a distance. They say the metal roofs and domes gleam in Russia, and even in France, and why not in our rare sunshine? Once now and then you see a gilded weathercock shine like a day-star as the sun goes down three miles away, over the dark brown field, where the plough has been going to and fro through the slow hours. I can see the plough and the horses very well at three miles and know what they are doing.

I wish the trees, the elms, would grow tall enough and thick enough to hide the steeples and towers which stand up so stiff and stark, and bare and cold, some of them

blunted and squab, some of them sharp enough to impale, with no more shape than a walking-stick, ferule upwards—every one of them out of proportion and jarring to the eye. If by good fortune you can find a spot where you cannot see a steeple, or a church tower, where you can see only fields and woods, you will find it so much more

country without sticking in one of these repellent structures. The oast-houses, whose red cones are so plentiful in Kent and Sussex, have quite a different effect; they have some colour, and by a curious felicity the builders have hit upon a good proportion, so that the shape is pleasant; these, too, have some use in the world.

Westward the sun was going down over the sea, and a wild west wind, which the glow of the sun as it touched the waves seemed to heat into fury, brought up the distant sound of the billows from the beach. A line of dark Spanish oaks from which the sharp pointed acorns were dropping, darkest green oaks, shut out the shore. A thousand starlings were flung up into the air out of these oaks as if an impatient hand had cast them into the sky, then down they fell again, with a ceaseless whistling and clucking; up they went and down they came lost in the deep green foliage as if they had dropped in the sea. The long level of the wheatfield plain stretched out from my feet towards the far-away Downs, so level that the first hedge shut off the fields beyond, and every now and then over these hedges there rose up the white forms of sea-gulls drifting to and fro among the elms. White sea-gulls—birds of divination you might say—a good symbol of the times for now we plough the ocean. The barren sea! In the Greek poets you may find constant reference to it as that which could not be reaped or sowed. Ulysses, to betoken his madness, took his plough down to the shore and drew furrows in the sand—the sea that even Demeter, great goddess, could not sow nor bring to any fruition. Yet now the ocean is our wheatfield and ships are our barns. The sea-gull should be painted on the village tavern sign instead of the golden wheatsheaf.

There could be no more flat and uninteresting surface than this field, a damp, wet brown, water slowly draining out of the furrows, not a bird that I can see. No hare certainly, or partridge, or even a rabbit—nothing to sit or crouch—on that cold surface, tame and level as the brown cover of a book. They like something more human and comfortable, just as we creep into nooks and corners of rooms and into cosy arm-chairs, so they like tufts or some growth of shelter, or mounds that are dry, between hedges where there is a bite for them. I can trace nothing on this surface, so heavily washed by late rain. Let now the harriers come and instantly the hounds' second sense of smell picks up the invisible sign of the hare that has crossed it in the night or early



WINNOWING.

From a Drawing by P. MACNAB.

beautiful, for nature has made it of its kind perfect. The dim sea is always so beautiful a view because it is not disfigured by these buildings. In the ships men live; in the houses among the trees they live; these steeples and towers are empty, and no spirit can dwell in that which is out of proportion. Scarcely any one can paint a picture of the

dawn, and runs it as swiftly as if he were lifting a clue of thread. The dull surface is all written over with hieroglyphics to the hound, he can read and translate to us in joyous tongue. Or the foxhounds carry a bee-line straight from hedge to hedge and after them come the hoofs, prospecting deeply into the earth, dashing down fibre and blade, crunching up the tender wheat and battering it to pieces. It will rise again all the fresher and stronger, for there is something human in wheat, and the more it is trampled on the better it grows. Despots grind half the human race, and despots stronger than man—plague, pestilence, and famine—grind the whole; and yet the world increases and the green wheat of the human heart is not to be trampled out.

The starlings grew busier and busier in the dark green Spanish oaks, thrown up as if a shell had burst among them; suddenly their clucking and whistling ceased, the speeches of contention were over, a vote of confidence had been passed in their government, and the House was silent. The pheasants in the park shook their wings and crowed "kuck, kuck—kow," and went to roost; the water in the furrows ceased to reflect; the dark earth grew darker and damper; the elms lost their reddish brown; the sky became leaden behind the ridge of the Downs, and the shadow of night fell over the field.

Twenty-five years ago I went into a camera obscura, where you see miniature men and women, coloured photographs alive and moving, trees waving, now and then dogs crossing the bright sun picture. I was only there a few moments and I have never been in one since, and yet so inexplicable a thing is memory, the picture stands before me now clear as if it were painted and tangible. So many millions of pictures have come and gone upon the retina and yet I can single out this one in an instant, and take it down as you would a book from a shelf. The millions of coloured etchings that have fixed themselves there in the course of those years are all in due order in the portfolio of the mind, and yet they cannot occupy the space of a pin's point. They have neither length, breadth, nor thickness, none of the qualifications of mathematical substance, and yet they must in some way be a species of matter. The fact indicates the possibility of still more subtle existences. Now I wish I could put before you a coloured, living, moving picture, like that of the camera obscura, of some other wheatfields at a sunnier time. They were painted on the surface of a plain, set round about with a

margin of green Downs. They were large enough to have the charm of vague, indefinite extension, and yet all could be distinctly seen. Large squares of green corn that was absorbing its yellow from the sunlight; chess squares, irregularly placed, of brown furrows; others of rich blood-red trifolium; others of scarlet sanfoin and blue lucerne, gardens of scarlet poppies here and there. Not all of these, of course, at once, but they followed so quickly in the summer days that they seemed to be one and the same pictures, and had you painted them altogether on the same canvas, together with ripe wheat, they would not have seemed out of place. Never was such brilliant colour, it was chalk there, and on chalk the colours are always clearer, the poppies deeper, the yellow mustard and charlock a keener yellow; the air, too, is pellucid. Waggon going along the tracks; men and women hoeing; ricks of last year still among clumps of trees, where the chimneys and gables of farmhouses are partly visible; red-tiled barns away yonder; a shepherd moving his hurdles; away again the black funnel of an idle engine, and the fly-wheel above hawthorn bushes—all so distinct and close under that you might almost fear to breathe for fear of dimming the mirror. The few white clouds sailing over seemed to belong to the fields on which their shadows were now foreshortened, now lengthened, as if they were really part of the fields, like the crops, and the azure sky so low down as to be the roof of the house and not at all a separate thing. And the sun a lamp that you might almost have pushed along his course faster with your hand; a loving and interested sun that wanted the wheat to ripen, and stayed there in the slow drawn arc of the summer day to lend a hand. Sun and sky and clouds close here and not across any planetary space, but working with us in the same field, shoulder to shoulder, with man. Then you might see the white doves yonder flutter up suddenly out of the trees by the farm, little flecks of white cloud themselves, and everywhere all throughout the plain an exquisite silence, a delicious repose, not one clang or harshness of sound to shatter the beauty of it. There you might stand on the high Down among the thyme and watch it, hour after hour, and still no interruption; nothing to break it up. It was something like the broad folio of an ancient illuminated manuscript, in gold, gules, blue, green; with foliated scrolls and human figures, somewhat clumsy and thick, but quaintly drawn, and bold in their intense realism.

There was another wheatfield by the side of which I used to walk sometimes in the evenings, as the grains in the ears began to grow firm. The path ran for a mile beside it—a mile of wheat in one piece—all those million, million stalks the same height, all with about the same number of grains in each ear, all ripening together. The hue of the surface travelled along as you approached; the tint of yellow shifted farther like the reflection of sunlight on water, but the surface was really much the same colour everywhere. It seemed a triumph of culture over such a space, such regularity, such perfection of myriads of plants springing in their true lines at the same time, each particular ear perfect, and a mile of it. Perfect work with the plough, the drill, the harrow in every detail, and yet such breadth. Let your hand touch the ears lightly as you walk—drawn through them as if over the side of a boat in water—feeling the golden heads. The sparrows fly out every now and then ahead; some of the birds like their corn as it hardens, and some while it is soft and full of milky sap. There are hares within, and many a brood of partridge chicks that cannot yet use their wings. Thick as the seed itself the feathered creatures have been among the wheat since it was sown. Finches, more numerous than the berries on the hedges; sparrows like the finches multiplied by finches, linnets, rooks, like leaves on the trees, wood-pigeons whose crops are like bushel baskets for capacity, and now as it ripens the multitude will be multiplied by legions, and as it comes to the harvest there is a fresh crop of sparrows from the nests in the barns, you may see a brown cloud of them a hundred yards long. Besides which there were the rabbits that ate the young green blades, and the mice that will be busy in the sheaves, and the insects from spring-time to granary, a nameless host uncounted. A whole world, as it were, let loose upon the wheat, to eat, consume, and wither it, and yet it conquers the whole world. The great field you see was filled with gold corn four feet deep as a pitcher is filled with water to the brim. Of yore the rich man is said, in the Roman classic, to have measured his money, so here you might have measured it by the rood. The sunbeams sank deeper and deeper into the wheatears, layer upon layer of light, and the colour deepened by these daily strokes. There was no bulletin to tell the folk of its progress, no Nilometer to mark the rising flood of the wheat to its hour of overflow. Yet there went through the village a sense of expectation, and men

said to each other, "We shall be there soon." No one knew the day; the last day of doom of the golden race; every one knew it was nigh. One evening there was a small square piece cut at one side, a little notch and two shocks stood there in the twilight. Next day the village sent forth its army with their crooked weapons to cut and slay. It used to be an era, let me tell you, when a great farmer gave the signal to his reapers; not a man, woman or child that did not talk of that. Well-to-do people stopped their vehicles and walked out into the new stubble. Ladies came, farmers, men of low degree, everybody—all to exchange a word or two with the workers. These were so terribly in earnest at the start they could scarcely acknowledge the presence even of the squire. They felt themselves so important, and were so full, and so intense and one-minded in their labour, that the great of the earth might come and go as sparrows for aught they cared. More men and more men were put on day by day, and women to bind the sheaves, till the vast field held the village, yet they seemed but a handful buried in the tunnels of the golden mine; they were lost in it like the hares, for as the wheat fell, the shocks rose behind them, low tents of corn. Your skin or mine could not have stood the scratching of the straw, which is stiff and sharp, and the burning of the sun which blisters like red-hot iron. No one could stand the harvest-field as a reaper, except he had been born and cradled in a cottage, and passed his childhood bareheaded in July heats and January snows. I was always fond of being out of doors, yet I used to wonder how these men and women could stand it, for the summer day is long, and they were there hours before I was up. The edge of the reap-hook had to be driven by force through the stout stalks like a sword, blow after blow, minute after minute, hour after hour; the back stooping, and the broad sun throwing his fiery rays from a full disc on the head and neck. I think some of them used to put handkerchiefs doubled up in their hats as pads, as in the East they wind the long roll of the turban about the head, and perhaps they would have done better if they had adopted the custom of the South and wound a long scarf about the middle of the body, for they were very liable to be struck down with such internal complaints as come from great heat. Their necks grew black, much like black oak in old houses. Their open chests were always bare, and flat, and stark, and never rising with rounded bust-like muscle as the Greek statues of athletes.



REAPERS AT WORK.
From a Drawing by P. MACNAB.

The breast bone was burned black, and their arms tough as ash seemed cased in leather. They grew visibly thinner in the harvest-field, and shrunk together—all flesh disappearing, and nothing but sinew and muscle remaining. Never was such work. The wages were low in those days, and it is not long ago, either, I mean the all-year-round wages; the reaping was piece-work at so much per acre—like solid gold to men and women who had lived on dry bones, as it were, through the winter. So they worked and slaved, and tore at the wheat as if they were seized with a frenzy; the heat, the aches, the illness, the sunstroke, always impending in the air—the stomach hungry again before the meal was over, it was nothing. No song, no laugh, no stay—from morn till night, possessed with a maddened desire to labour, for the more they

could cut the larger the sum they would receive; and what is man's heart and brain to money? So hard you see is the pressure of human life that these miserables would have prayed on their knees for permission to tear their arms from the socket, and to scorch and shrivel themselves to charred human brands in the furnace of the sun.

Does it not seem bitter that it should be so? Here was the wheat, the beauty of which I strive in vain to tell you, in the midst of the flowery summer, scourging them with the knout of necessity; that which should give life pulling the life out of them, rendering their existence below that of the cattle, so far as the pleasure of living goes. Without doubt many a low mound in the churchyard—once visible, now level—was the sooner raised over the nameless dead because of that terrible strain in the few weeks of the gold fever. This is human life, real

human life, no rest, no calm enjoyment of the scene, no generous gift of food and wine lavishly offered by the gods—the hard fist of necessity for ever battering man to a shapeless and hopeless fall.

The whole village lived in the field; a corn land village is always the most populous, and every rood of land thereabouts, in a sense, maintains its man. The reaping, and the binding up and stacking of the sheaves, and the carting and building of the ricks, and the gleanings, there was something to do for every one, from the “olde, olde, very olde man,” the Thomas Parr of the hamlet down to the very youngest child, whose little eye could see, and whose little hand could hold a stalk of wheat. The gleaners had a way of binding up the collected wheatstalks together so that a very large quantity was held tightly in a very small compass. The gleaner’s sheaf looked like the knot of a girl’s hair, woven in and bound. It was a tradition of the wheatfield handed down from generation to generation, a thing you could not possibly do unless you had been shown the secret—like the knots the sailors tie, a kind of hand art. The wheatstalk being thick at one end makes the sheaf heavier and more solid there, and so in any manner of fastening it or stacking it, it takes a rounded shape like a nine-pin; the round ricks are built thick in the middle and lessen gradually toward the top, and toward the ground. The warm yellow of the straw is very pleasant to look at on a winter’s day under a grey sky; so too the straw looks nice and warm and comfortable, thrown down thickly in the yards for the roan cattle.

After the village has gone back to its home still the work of the wheat is not over; there is the thatching with straw of last year which is bleached and contrasts with the yellow of the fresh gathered crop. Next the threshing; and meantime the ploughs are at work, and very soon there is talk of seed-time.

I used to look with wonder when I was a boy at the endless length of wall and the enormous roof of a great tithe barn. The walls of Spanish convents, with little or no window to break the vast monotony, somewhat resemble it—the convent is a building, but does not look like a home, it is too big, too general. So this barn, with its few windows, seemed too immense to belong to any one man. The tithe barn has so completely dropped out of modern life that it may be well to briefly mention that its use was to hold the tenth sheaf from every

wheatfield in the parish. The parson’s tithe was the real actual tenth sheaf bodily taken from every field of corn in the district. A visible tenth, you see; a very solid thing. Imagine the vast heap they would have made, imagine the hundreds and hundreds of sacks of wheat they filled when they were threshed. I have often thought that it would perhaps be a good thing if this contribution of the real tenth could be brought back again for another purpose. If such a barn could be filled now, and its produce applied to the help of the poor and aged and injured, of the village, we might get rid of that blot on our civilisation—the workhouse. Mr. Besant, in his late capital story, *The Children of Gibeon*, most truly pointed out that it was custom which rendered all men indifferent to the sufferings of their fellow creatures. In the old Roman days men were crucified so often that it ceased even to be a show; the soldiers played at dice under the miserable wretches, the peasant women stepping by jested and laughed and sang. Almost in our own time dry skeletons creaked on gibbets at every cross-road:—

“When for thirty shillings men were hung,
And the thirst for blood grew stronger,
Men’s lives were valued then at a sheep’s—
Thank God that lasts no longer.”

So strong is custom and tradition, and the habit of thought it weaves about us, that I have heard ancient and grave farmers, when the fact was mentioned with horror, hum, and ah! and handle their beards, and mutter that “they didn’t know as ’twas altogether such a bad thing as they was hung for sheep stealing.” There were parsons then, as now, in every rural parish preaching and teaching something they called the Gospel. Why did they not rise as one man and denounce this ghastly iniquity, and demand its abolition? They did nothing of the sort; they enjoyed their pipes and grog very comfortably.

The gallows at the cross-roads is gone, but the workhouse stands, and custom, cruel custom, that tyrant of the mind, has inured us (to use an old word) to its existence in our midst. Apart from any physical suffering let us only consider the slow agony of the poor old reaper when he feels his lusty arm wither, and of the grey, bowed wife as they feel themselves drifting like a ship ashore to that stony waiting-room. For it is a waiting-room till the grave receives them. Economically, too, the workhouse is a heavy loss and drag.



HARVEST BEER.
From a Drawing by P. MACNAB.

Could we, then, see the tithe-barn filled again with golden wheat for this purpose of help to humanity, it might be a great and wonderful good. With this tenth to feed the starving and clothe the naked; with the tenth to give the little children a midday meal at the school—that would be natural and true. In the course of time, as the land laws lessen their grip, and the people take possession of the earth on which they stand, it is more than probable that something of this kind will really come about.

It would be only simple justice after so many centuries—it takes so many hundreds of years to get even that.

“Workhouse indeed!” I have heard the same ancient well-to-do greybeards ejaculate, “Workhouse! they ought to be very thankful they have got such a place to go to!”

All the village has been to the wheatfield with reaping-hooks, and waggons and horses, the whole strength of man has been employed upon it; little brown hands and large brown hands, blue eyes and dark eyes have been

there searching about, all the intelligence of human beings has been brought to bear, and yet the stubble is not empty. Down there come again the ever-increasing clouds of sparrows; as a cloud rises here another cloud descends beyond it, a very mist and vapour as it were of wings. It makes one wonder to think where all the nests could have been, there could hardly have been enough eaves and barns for all these to have been bred in. Every one of the multitude has a keen pair of eyes and a hungry beak, and every single individual finds something to eat in the stubble. Something that was not provided for them, crumbs that have escaped from this broad table, and there they are every day for weeks together, still finding food. If you will consider the incredible number of little mouths, and the busy rate at which they ply them hour by hour, you may imagine what an immense number of grains of wheat must have escaped man's hand, for you must remember that every time they peck they take a whole grain. Down too come the grey-blue wood-pigeons and the wild turtle-doves. The singing linnets come in parties, the happy greenfinches, the streaked yellow-hammers, as if any one had delicately painted them in separate streaks, and not with a wash of colour, the brown buntings, chaffinches—out they come from the hazel copses, where the nuts are dropping, and the hedge-berries turning red, and every one finds something to his liking. There are the seeds of the charlock and the thistle, and a hundred other little seeds, insects, and minute atom-like foods it needs a bird's eye to know. They are never still, they sweep up into the hedges and line the boughs, calling and talking, and away again to another rood of stubble without any order or plan of search, just sowing themselves about like wind-blown seeds. Up and down the day through with a zest never failing. It is beautiful to listen

to them and watch them, if any one will stay under an oak by the nut-tree boughs, where the dragon-flies shoot to and fro in the shade as if the direct rays of the sun would burn their delicate wings; they hunt chiefly in the shade. The linnets will suddenly sweep up into the boughs and converse sweetly over your head. The sunshine lingers and grows sweeter as the autumn gives tokens of its coming in the buff bryony leaf and the acorn filling its cup. They are so happy, the birds, yet there are few to listen to them. I have often looked round and wondered that no one else was about hearkening to them. Altogether, perhaps, they lead safer lives in England than anywhere else. We do not shoot them; the fowlers do mischief, still they make but little impression; there are few birds of prey, and there is not that fearful blood-thirstiness that makes a tropical forest so terrible in fact, under its outward show of glowing colour. There, with cruel hawks and owls, and serpents, and beasts of prey, a bird's life is one long terror. They are ever on the watch here, but they are not so fearfully harassed, and are not certain as it were beforehand to be torn to pieces. The land is well cultivated, and the more the culture the more the food for them. Frost and snow are their greatest enemies, but even these do not often last a great while. It is a land of woods, and above all of hedges, which are much more favourable to birds than forests, so that they are better off in England than in other countries. From the sowing to the reaping, the wheat-field gives a constant dole like the monasteries of old, only here it is no crust but a free and bountiful largesse. Then the stubble must be broken up by the plough, and again there is a fresh helping for them. Brown partridge, and black rook, and yellow-hammer, all hues and degrees, come to the wheatfield.

RICHARD JEFFERIES.

