

In two districts alone was some uneasiness felt, in Hainault and Liege, the coal districts, and there the strike was somewhat general. Everywhere else—in Brussels as well as in Antwerp, in Ghent as well as in Namur—the vast majority of workers kept doing their daily work; even in Liege the big works of John Cockerill, of Val St. Lambert, of the 'Fabrique nationale d'armes de guerre,' were not compelled to close their gates. Work went on with reduced numbers. Moreover, the working men depending on the towns and on the officials of the State railways, the post offices, telephones, water-works, gas departments, etc., did not join the strikers. Life went on during this troubled period exactly as before, and in cities and towns people wondered. They had believed in the strength of Socialism and

Thought that Shops would be Closed

and tramways stopped, and that armed men would be seen everywhere. Nothing of all that happened. They had stored potatoes, sugar, coffee, tea, and meat for weeks and months, as if we in Liege were about to be besieged by a German army, and all this for fear of the strike! It was, moreover, becoming clearer every day that an immense army, about 100,000 Catholic 'syndicated' workmen, would persist in their resolution to go on working as long as the doors of the factories remained open, and their example proved very efficacious. The promoters of the strike had hoped to see the figures rise day by day, but they did not rise. On the contrary, they went down. Having ascended once more, they went down after three days to a regular level till the end of the week.

The week was a very quiet one. No disturbances, at least no serious riots, occurred, thanks to the warnings of the Socialist leaders, and thanks, too, to the measures so wisely taken by the Government. For, from the Saturday before the 14th, the army occupied the coal mining districts and the industrial cities so as to protect those who desired to work. Of course, some acts of intimidation in big centres could not be prevented, but as a whole, things went on very well. It was manifest people were not very enthusiastic—not even the Socialists. They understand a strike for economical but not for political reasons. The less educated workmen—in Belgium the coalminers—formed the vast majority of the strikers.

Parliament and the Strike.

Something strange was to happen. On Friday, the 18th, as on previous days, Parliament met, when a member of the Left, a prominent Liberal leader, Mr. Masson, rose and brought forward a motion which ran as follows: 'The House, in view of the words spoken by the Prime Minister, passes on to the order of the day.' What were the magic words? On April 16 M. de Broqueville once more explained to the House the intentions of the Government. The main part of his speech consisted in reading a part of his declaration made on March 12, *twelve days before* the strike was decided on. The policy of the Government remained the same: a Commission would be nominated to enquire into the mode of elections to Provincial and Town Councils; no promise could be made concerning Parliamentary elections, but no opposition was offered by the Government to a change if the electorate, next year, proved in favor of one, and if the different parties chanced to agree. These were the Prime Minister's words. It appeared that the Opposition had not been able to understand them, but on Friday, the 18th, light was thrown on them, and they were understood and found very acceptable to the Liberals. Half an hour would be sufficient, they said, to make up their minds and to vote on Mr. Masson's motion; but the Minister asked the House to give the Socialist members some time for consideration, and the House adjourned till Tuesday, as it does every week, there being no sittings on Saturdays and on Mondays.

M. Liebaert's Motion.

The different political parties met on Monday, or on Tuesday morning, and in the evening the following motion was introduced by M. Liebaert, Catholic ex-Minister:—'Considering the declarations made by

the Government on March 12, April 16 and 17 and the following words (here followed the statement concerning the appointment of a Commission), and repudiating and condemning the general strike the House passes on to the order of the day.' The first part of the motion was carried by 175 votes, one member (M. de Broqueville) abstaining; the second part, condemning the strike, by 124 votes against 39 (Socialists). Ten Radicals abstained from voting. It is to be noted that before the division took place, M. Liebaert expressly declared that the appointment of the Commission neither directly nor indirectly involved any change in the Constitution (as would the adoption of a simple universal suffrage).

Thus condemned by an immense majority in Parliament, it was difficult, nay impossible, for the strike to survive. On Thursday morning a general meeting of the Socialist Party, after much discussion and violent opposition, voted that work be resumed. By Saturday nearly every workman had gone back to his work, and on Monday all resumed their places in the mine, the mills, or the factories, if the managers and directors allowed them to do so.

A Blow to Socialism.

The strike has thus been a failure. The Socialists delivered innumerable speeches, held hundreds of meetings, stirred the hearts of their followers, spread distrust and ill-feeling amongst the workmen, deprived them of their wages, caused very serious loss to the country, gave opportunities to rival industries and to rival harbors to harm dear little Belgium, and all that for a strike of ten days, at the end of which they possess exactly what they had before—nothing more, nothing less. The result will be additional strength for the Catholic Government. Many workmen in the Catholic or neutral federations dealt a very real blow to Socialism. This is already noticeable in more than one centre. The leaders, the politicians, were very badly treated, even abused by the people, when they went out to tell them how it all ended in Parliament.

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