

Prominent Topics.

The Urban Tendency.

The tendency of the rural population to leave the agricultural districts for the cities is as marked in England and Wales as it is on this continent.

The increasing predominance of the urban as compared with the rural population is shown in the table given below:

	Per Cent. of Total Population.			
	Urban Districts.	Rural Districts.	U. Dist.	R. Dist.
1851.	8 999 809	8 936 800	50.2	49.8
1861.	10 960 998	9 105 226	54.6	45.4
1871.	11 041 434	8 670 862	61.8	38.2
1881.	17 636 646	8 337 793	67.9	32.1
1891.	20 895 504	8 107 021	72.0	28.0
1901.	25 058 355	7 469 488	77.0	23.0
1911.	28 162 936	7 997 556	78.1	21.9

It will be noted that while in 1851 the numbers living under urban and rural conditions were, broadly speaking, evenly divided, in 1911 no less than 78 per cent. of the population were living under urban and only 22 per cent. under rural conditions.

One of the greatest problems for social reformers to solve is how to make country life more attractive. All the world over there are many city people who think rural life very fascinating, but nevertheless stay in town. The rising generation of the rural population find city life attractive and, to a large extent migrate to the big centres. It is easier for the farmer to adjust himself to city life than it is for the city man to adjust himself to country life. Probably the difference is due to the fact that the town satisfies the almost universal demand for interest, excitement and amusement to say nothing about the comforts of life. The well-to-do city man with a country home to which to go for a change finds no lack of comfort in the country. But to the poorer class among the agricultural population the country means a good deal of hard work and the doing without many of the comforts of life enjoyed by the poor in cities and the almost entire absence of exciting amusement. How great is the demand for this amusement may be seen by the popularity of all kinds of ten cent performances in the big cities. Some of them are less elevating than others, but they also seem to satisfy a human craving for amusement. To the country people all these considerations are evidently very fascinating.

Lord Roberts on the Situation.

If any man living has earned the right to be heard with respect and deference when he speaks upon the defence of Great Britain, it is surely Lord Roberts. He was one of the first to warn the British Government of the danger of war with Germany and the necessity for preparation. Every little scribbler at home and in the colonies felt himself at liberty to ridicule the veteran soldier as an alarmist. To-day it is difficult to a sane man on either side of politics who does not recognize that Lord Roberts was right. His latest utterance brings the warning up to date. He says: "Politicians tell

us that the country will not stand compulsory training. I am persuaded it is not true. As long as our fellow countrymen are soothed and flattered by their leaders that the territorial force as at present constituted can give the backing that is necessary to the navy and the regular army, they see no need for considering compulsory service, and are not to be blamed for their belief; but if our leaders would have the honesty and the courage to tell them the truth, namely, that we are on the eve of a great crisis, and a crisis without parallel certainly within the past one hundred years, and that our national forces are unfit to meet the strain that may be put upon us with any assurance of success, I feel confident that the present generation of Britishers would willingly accept the first reform necessary—universal training compulsory upon all alike, upon rich and poor, high and low, from the son of the Duke to the son of the laborer—as the foundation of our territorial force, instead of the foolish and unfair method of voluntary discipline. The real difficulty is to get our leaders to take the country into their confidence and tell them about this vital matter."

The great difference between the soldier and the politician in this matter is that the soldier knows what he is talking about and the politician does not, and that while the soldier tells his countrymen what he thinks they ought to know, the politician tells what he thinks they want to be told. Lord Roberts adds: "When I consider the certainty of the struggle, its probable nearness, and the momentousness of the issues at stake, I am astounded that the nation should be left in the dark as to the danger with which we have to cope, and for which we most certainly are not prepared."

Oil under London. Oil is said to have been discovered at a depth of 5,000 feet under London, and also in Nottinghamshire. Both discoveries are simultaneous with the opening of the oil exhibition at Olympia. J. D. Henry, who has charge of the development of the oil fields of the United Kingdom, reviewing the history of the early attempts to get oil in England, expressed an opinion that if there is petroleum in Great Britain it will be got at too great a depth and in too small quantities to be of real commercial value or to compete with the output of the world's great fields, or even the yield of the kerosene shale fields of Scotland. "What is really wanted," he added, "is the energetic and skilful development of oil fields in different parts of the Empire. In connection with the subsidy likely to be paid to a new 'all red route' passenger steamship company running steamers between this country and Canada, and thence on to Australasia, it would be an immense advantage to have the oil fields of New Zealand and Australia fully developed without any loss of time. The oil fuel of these colonies would be needed for steamers engaged in the inter-colonial passenger trade on the Pacific."

With all deference to Mr. Henry, we cannot help thinking that the fuel problem, not only for England but for the world, will be solved, not by the discovery of new sources so much as by the better utilization of the supplies we have. Only very small percentages of the energy locked up in coal and oil is available for actual use to-day. It is not too much to hope that the inventors will soon show us the way to utilise ninety per cent. of the energy of which less than ten per cent. is now available.