

remarkable. The sun rose over the southward range which Bunyan took for the model of his Delectable Mountains, and forty or fifty square miles of diversified land was spread out in front of me. The road cut down for a couple of miles like a geometrician's rule, and disappeared in a slight S curve, the work of a modern generation afraid of gradients, on to the other side of the Delectable Mountains. I thought: "How magnificent were those Romans in their disregard of everything except direction!" And being a professional novelist I naturally began at once to consider the possibilities of exploiting Watling Street in fiction. Then I climbed to the brow of my own hill, whence, at the foot of the long northerly slope, I could descry the outposts of my village, a mile away; there was no habitation of mankind nearer to me than this picturesque and venerable hamlet, which seemed to lie inconsiderable on the great road like a piece of paper. The seventy-four telegraph wires which border the great road run above the roofs of Winghurst as if they were unaware of its existence. "And Winghurst," I reflected, "is henceforth my metropolis." No office! No memorising of time-tables! No daily struggle-for-lunch! Winghurst, with three hundred inhabitants, the centre of excitement, the fount of external life!

The course of these ordinary but inevitable thoughts was interrupted by my consciousness of a presence near me. A man coughed. He had approached me, in almost soleless boots, on the