

JOSEPH ARCH, M.P.

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This distinguished man is a leader in the class of agricultural labourers of which he has been a member most of his life. To him his fellow-labourers are greatly indebted for many of the improvements which have taken place in their circumstances during the last twenty-five years.

As a class the farm labourers of England, until recently, had few educational advantages, the majority of them could neither read nor write, hence it was no wonder that they should be so easily led astray by any demagogue who might see fit to excite them to deeds of violence. Happily, largely through the influence of Methodism, a better state of things now obtains. Several of them have become able to speak fluently and write intelligently on public questions. They have asserted their manhood and will not be likely to again become vassals. They

never will so long as they submit to be led by Joseph Arch.

Our hero was born in Warwickshire, in 1826. His father was a man of sturdy independence, and much of the same spirit inspired the son. During the Corn-law agitation, the landowners tried by every means to prevent the repeal of those laws, and sought by means of petitions to parliament to accomplish their purpose. All who refused to sign the petitions were counted as their enemies. Many labourers from compliance and fear attached their names, though inwardly they wished not to do so. The father of Joseph Arch was amongst the honourable few who withheld their names, and from that time forward he was a marked man to whom no favours were shown. He was a hard-working industrious man, and after labouring for fifty years he had only saved one dollar and a few cents.

When old age came up on the veteran he was compelled to ask for help, as he was both old and infirm. Joseph could not support him, and as his wife was obliged to give up an income of a few shillings per week to attend to the sick father, he went to the Board of Guardians and said, "I do not want you to support my father, but if you will give my wife one shilling and sixpence—thirty-six cents—per week for nursing him I shall be glad, though it will not make up for the loss of her earnings." The guardians refused, and told him that his father might go into the workhouse and he would have to pay one shilling and sixpence for his support. Arch bade the humane men good morning, and said his father should die under a hedge before he would allow him to be an inmate of the British Bastile, the hated workhouse.