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Catholic Land Federation of England and Wales

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The Organ of the Catholic Land Associations of England and Wales.

QUARTERLY.

TWOPENCE

CHRISTMAS

1941

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The Cross And The Plough

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The Papal Statements on the Return to the Land, and the statement of policy by the Catholic Land Federation, which hitherto have dignified our covers, have had to be suspended on account of the paper shortage. A copy of a previous issue containing them will be supplied on request to any new subscriber.—THE EDITOR

THE DUMB OX

I see His beauty in the manger curled:
One of my name shall shout it to the world.
—H.R.

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

COME DOWN TO EARTH

The first place in these notes must be given to a series of articles—*Christianity and the Land*—which are due to the energy and foresight of the Editor of *The Catholic Herald*.

Under the title of this paragraph the first and very effective article was contributed on 31st October by Mr. Stormont Murray. In successive weeks Lord Lymington contributed a very moving and valuable essay on *Soil and Civilisation*, Mr. C. Henry Warren one on *Craftsmanship for the Salvation of the Land*, Sir Henry Howard one on *The Rape of the Earth*, and the Editor of *The Cross and the Plough* on *The Church and the Land*. The series is to be summed up by the Editor of *The Catholic Herald* after these lines go to Press in an article entitled *What shall we do about it?* And as we go to Press, we receive the welcome news that Mr. H. J. Massingham is also to contribute to the series.

The good-will of the distinguished non-Catholic writers, and the great soundness of their contributions, are a very valuable feature of the enterprise, and we urge any Catholics who have not yet seen them to make a point

of doing so. There is some prospect, we understand, of the whole series being reprinted as a booklet, and if so, it should serve as a very effective weapon in our armoury. We hope to return to this point in our next issue.

AND IN AUSTRALIA

This admirable collaboration of all men of good will is being shown elsewhere. It appears from a column in a recent issue of *Rural Life*, the organ of the *National Catholic Rural Movement* of Australia, that Anglican and Presbyterian circles there are taking action parallel to the Catholic group. It also appears that a notable increase in mutual good-will has been the first happy result. *Floreat*. An important manifesto of the N.C.R.M. appears on another page.

DYING HARD

The abominable wages which have been imposed for a century and a half on farm workers, have been made possible by the oppression of agriculture on the one hand and by the segregation of farming and industry on the other. Now that various types of war-time dispersal have brought relatively high

urban wages alongside the farms, the atrocious disparity could no longer be concealed.

After six months' consideration, punctuated by several fast ones such as postponement until after harvest and the Government's refusal to intervene, the National Wages Board announced a national minimum of fifty-six shillings. The best commentary on this is the fact that several county authorities promptly made it three pounds, which was the workers' claim. The snub became so pointed that in the second half of November the Board had second thoughts and made it three pounds, too.

We recorded last quarter our conviction that one important but concealed motive in this disedifying cheeseparing was to maintain the pressure for mechanisation to replace human labour. This ramp is now of menacing proportions, but little can be done about it until the end of hostilities.

GILT-EDGING

For some curious reason, the extensive acquisition of land by wealthy corporations and individuals during the last few years has been described as "Land Speculation." Actually it is the plainest method of self-preservation—gilt-edged security with a vengeance.

It is by no means clear that the Government action to prevent the eviction of tenant farmers (except with its own approval) does anything but touch one corner of the problem. When the war is over, we may expect the factory farm to emerge full-panoplied from the debris of small farming—unless we can get going in good time to stop it.

CRYIN' OUT LOUD

The artificial fertilisers driven from the magic realms which they have occupied for so long, are fighting strong rearguard actions in which reason has little place. In an interesting correspondence in the *Daily Telegraph* in October there were some hard things said of artificials, including a significant disclaimer from Mr. Hugh Nicol, of the Imperial Bureau of Soil Science.

The opposition consisted of a Mr. G. A. Cowie, of Potash, Ltd., who said "Artificial fertilisers, properly used, have a high value

for crop production without the disadvantages erroneously attributed to them by some people. This is borne out by the significant fact that British farmers spend over £6,000,000 annually on artificial fertilisers."

What could be more conclusive?

TICKLING IT UP

It is of more interest, however, that Lord Cranworth, in an article on Fertility in *The Farmers' Weekly* of 10th October, says: "Generally speaking, the effect of artificials is to spur the land to give of its fertility, for the restoration of which other methods must be adopted."

MAKING IT UNANIMOUS

The curious unanimity with which the war measures of our Departments damage the small man and the small unit may be accidental or it may not. The fact is undoubted and (not to be tedious in repetition) we may mention two examples.

The Ministry of Food has announced that while the price of flour is to be raised, the price of the baker's loaf is to be lowered.

A lady, in *The Times* of 29th October, asks very pertinently whether the object is to discourage the home baking of bread; and if so, what is to become of the general practice of home baking in the North of England. Northern rural housewives will be in a particularly unfortunate position, and Northern rural bakers will be unable to cope with the rush of orders.

But no doubt some national utility company has plans for supplementing—and ultimately supplanting—the village bakers too.

SHOPS BY LICENCE

And the Board of Trade says that after 1st January next, no person may open a new shop without a licence. One cannot see Bill Jones, invalided out of the Forces, persevering with the necessary applications and correspondence for permission to open his little shop. One can see the Secretary of Mammoth Stores Incorporated persevering, and unfortunately one can see him getting away with it.

Cf. *The End of Economic Man*, mentioned on another page. Must we imitate Germany all the time?

CIRCUMSTANCES ALTER CASES

There are two classic cases of neglected action in England which only the State could undertake. They are the tendency to reversion to marsh, under the impact of modern drainage systems, of the Fens and of a large part of Somerset.

Under the stimulus of war, large schemes of reclamation have been put in hand in East Anglia. In Somerset 45,000 acres of the best land in England, much of which has been drowned annually, is being rapidly made safe by the construction of a river sixteen miles long. It has been done with no fuss and no argument. How easy it all is when money shuts its ugly mouth.

THREE MONTHS ON THE LAND

By LOUIS A. DESSURNE

LONG before the word was coined I was a Distributist; just as long before I was received into the Church I was—though unaware of the fact—a Catholic. And now for a period of just three months I have been an Agricultural Labourer. I wish I could write that I am still following that dignified calling; only an accident, which my friends tell me was probably a blessing in disguise, has, I like to think, prevented me from still wielding that fascinating tool—a grub axe. But I anticipate!

Six months ago I could not have told the exact difference between a bill-hook and a slasher, while the proper method of using a grub-axe was a thing unknown to me. It is therefore with some little pride, for which I make no apology, that I record the fact that I celebrated my 62nd birthday by getting down into a ditch and using the last-named implement to hack away the roots of furze bushes which 40 years of non-cultivation had allowed to over-run a 30-acre field.

Why at so late a stage in life did I take up this work? Let me concede to my Socialist friends that I was compelled in the first instance by what they love to call "economic stress." A small business which had for some years supported myself and my wife having failed, I was forced to seek employment. A

TAILPIECE

*It is science itself which, in a number of branches, is teaching that a root evil of our civilisation is that it is over-urbanised. Most thinkers have come to see it as one of the greatest if also one of the most difficult of our post-war problems to reverse this trend. Lamely to accept the fact that man is sub-human and to devise an educational system to teach him how the more painlessly to become so, seems an uninspiring vocation, hitherto only heard of in the pages of Mr. Aldous Huxley, or the history of totalitarian states.—Christopher Hollis in *The Tablet*.*

wandering life as journalist and photographer (I was 30 years in Fleet Street) had taught me much. But the outstanding fact of my experiences was that at no time had I any sense of a vocation. This earthly life might not be permanent, but there seemed no excuse for the ephemeral nature of my activities. There was but a momentary satisfaction in seeing one's story on the front page "From Our Own Correspondent" or in finding one's picture of "The Finish of the Oaks"—or whatever the "event" might be—reproduced in the "Picture Paper with the Largest Circulation." But there is satisfaction in knowing that one has helped to prepare ground which in a year or two will be covered with golden wheat or bearded barley or the delicate fullness of oats.

And this satisfaction is not lessened by the fact that one is working for that war-time organisation known as the "Loamshire War Agricultural Executive Committee."

Let me explain that last remark. How far the policies of the County War Agricultural Committees of this country are based on complete mechanisation I cannot say, but it is evident that in the case of Loamshire mechanisation is the thing. If this is a short term policy and one dictated by the urgent necessity of clearing and breaking as much

ground as possible, then it may be condoned—as a war-time measure.

But I cannot help feeling that our Committees would be well advised to study the words of such men as Lord Northbourne and Sir Albert Howard, who take a much wider view of the whole subject. I rather fancy that a chapter of Lord Northbourne's "Look to the Land," if read out before a gathering of "Machinery Officers" and "Tractor Foremen," might give them furiously to think! That huge disc plough which cut out the roots of the gorse left beneath the blows of our slashers might be an excellent thing for an emergency. In fact, it is frankly difficult to see how the work of grubbing up these roots could have been done expeditiously without it. It tore along in the wake of a caterpillar throwing up huge turves and resembling nothing so much as a destroyer—a destroyer with a wake of brown waves rearing themselves from its four discs. Yet an old stager working beside me ventured the opinion that "it was all wrong." "It ain't an 'oss plough" he said, and returned to his ditching to think over "these 'ere new fangled things." I suppose the answer is to be found in the fact that a once cultivated field should never have been allowed to get into the condition of our field! Gorse can grow very high in forty years.

And now for a moment I would write of what I will call the personnel of our "Camp" of land workers. We lived a communal life in a camp which consisted of several log huts built some year or two ago by some Canadians. The older men had cabins shared by two. We slept in wooden bunks made of rough-hewn boards, unplanned and often very splintery. Each man had three army blankets and a rug. Our food was obtained by the pooling of our "rations," the books being looked after by a camp warden and the food prepared by a very competent cook. On this score there was nothing to complain of, and the cost, including the cook's wages, worked out at a very reasonable figure. Of course, the living was rough—the average townsman would never have stood it—but if you don't mind eating from enamelled plates laid on tables of rough-hewn boards and drinking from enamelled saucerless cups—well, after a

hard day's work you wondered how Cook managed to prepare such glorious food! You told her that the treacle tart and custard were "top-hole!"—and you meant it.

We were a mixed crowd. Among us were some "Conscientious Objectors" and some men called up under the "Bevin Scheme." These latter were drawn as a rule from the ranks of men who had already some experience of land work in some form or another. My own bunk companion was a working gardener, a man who had a knowledge of such matters as land drains. These men naturally got selected when vacancies occurred for foremen. And it is just as well to remark that these foremen were and are the backbone of the Committee's work; the work would go to pieces without them. Since he is never likely to read these lines, I may say that the foreman under whom I worked was a man of outstanding ability. An ex-farm bailiff, he had lived close to the soil all his life. The force of Industrialism had, of course, left its mark, but he retained much of the old tradition.

Our working day began when we rose at 6-30. Breakfast over, we left for the field of operations—travelling in a motor van, sometimes as far as ten miles or more. There was a short break during the morning and we took half an hour for lunch. This we made off cheese sandwiches—when the cheese ration could be obtained—and a drink which was called "tea." It was prepared by one of the junior members of the gang by boiling water in a pail surrounded by "fuzz." Not unnaturally, the resultant liquid tasted more of fuzz than of that Oriental beverage which Chesterton said was "a gentleman at least." Moreover, those quaint little creatures, the grasshoppers, had a habit of committing suicide by jumping into the boiling stuff. Still, it went down! One thing I learned!—the addition of milk to the "tea" alters the specific gravity of the liquid and the leaves and grass-hoppers descend into the depths, leaving only the burnt fuzz ash to be skimmed off!

The day's work over and tools stored away in a neighbouring barn, we returned to camp to find our principal meal awaiting us.

Then the rest of the evening was spent as we would. There was, of course, the inevitable dart board! Sometimes little discussions would arise and I learned from one of these that there is a particular body of "C.O.s" who regard the Catholic Church as "the embodiment of evil." A suggestion that in that case my informant should forthwith begin an attack upon the evil thing was not accepted. Nor was the offer of the loan of a copy of Karl Adam! We talked about our families, for many of us were able to see our kith and kin at intervals only. Some of us were regarded, I am told, as "rebels" and there was a suggestion that the "C.O.s" should be segregated. This, I felt, would have been a mistake. As G.K.C. put it, "all the blue people (or was it 'green?') would get together and become more and more blue (or green)!" Needless to say, the outstanding fact was the predominance of the Industrial atmosphere. Neither of my two Catholic companions, for example, had the slightest idea of the teachings of the Church upon the position of the workers. Labour, as my friend Stanley B. James once said, is a greater slave to Industrial Capitalism than it realises.

And now someone, hearing that there were some "C.O.s" among us, will be certain to ask whether we were bothered by those well-meaning people known as "Welfare Workers." There was an attempt at this. On the day of my arrival I was sitting on a form in the "dining hall" and beside me were two "C.O.s," new arrivals. Suddenly there leapt upon us a gentleman who, divesting himself of his shirt with the remark "we are very unconventional here," announced that he was the WARDEN. "I am here," he said, "to look after the material and moral and spiritual welfare of the camp." It was at least some relief to hear that, for his first action had suggested that I had reached a nudist colony. I let him proceed for a few moments, when I thought he had gone far enough. Then I said: "Well, I am always grateful to anyone who looks after my material welfare; but when I want my spiritual welfare attended to I always go to the nearest Catholic priest." The Warden then expressed his profound veneration for Catholics and especially for priests. Since then he has been

removed to another sphere where his care for the "spiritual welfare" of others may have wider scope. I hear that he has given up "welfare work" and is using a slasher!

Now, I said at the beginning that I wished I could write of my experiment as still in being. I can truthfully say that never in my life have I had such a sense of doing something worth while, for though the work was not strictly "agricultural"—in the sense of being actual farm work—it was a preparation for harvests yet to be; and moreover I was in close contact with farm workers and learned something of their outlook. So it is with real regret that I have to record my failure to "keep going." I was driven away by wasps! Having been stung no less than five times in one week by the little fellows—who may have resented the fact that never before had I had any fear of them—I was compelled to seek medical advice. And that advice was that I had better give up such strenuous work as hedging and ditching; I had not, so far, done myself any great injury—but men of sixty should not suddenly change to hard physical labour. So that was that!

Of one thing my experience has convinced me; and that is this—the industrialisation of farming will fail. All that the Catholic Land Movement stands for—the small farm and especially the self-supporting farm—is right. A thousand "tremendous trifles" have brought this home to me. I was sure of this before, of course, but now I am positive about it.

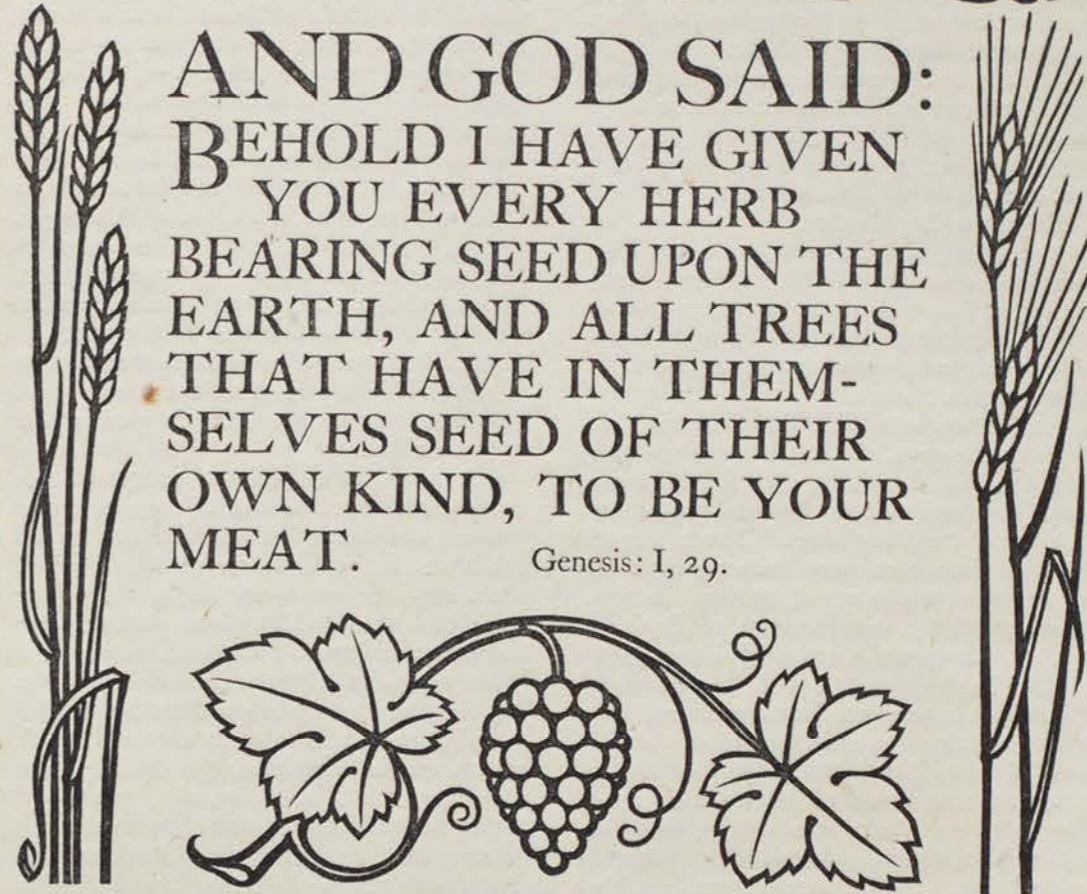
The danger in wartime, in all aspects of economic life, is that the policy dictated by strategic necessity may come to be regarded as the proper policy for peacetime; and this danger is especially great in agriculture, where war and peace aims are very different.—*An Economist Editorial, "Wartime and Peacetime Farming."* 30th August, 1941.

This war against mechanised barbarians, who, slave-hearted themselves, are fitted only to carry their curse to others, will be long and hard, but the end is sure.—*Mr. Churchill, on 4th May, 1941.*



AND GOD SAID:
BEHOLD I HAVE GIVEN
YOU EVERY HERB
BEARING SEED UPON THE
EARTH, AND ALL TREES
THAT HAVE IN THEM-
SELVES SEED OF THEIR
OWN KIND, TO BE YOUR
MEAT.

Genesis: I, 29.



PIONEERS

By THE REV. H. E. G. ROPE, M.A.

BEFORE the Catholic Land Movement took form many of the convictions it embodies had been reached by a number of single observers, Catholic and non-Catholic. It differs from earlier movements of the kind chiefly in being distinctly Catholic, by which we mean not merely Catholic in membership but founded upon the doctrine and philosophy of Holy Church, and seeking to carry out her social and economic teaching. It aims to be integrally Catholic.

The need of restoring the peasantry and rebuilding our national life on the true foundation, the soil, had been clearly seen by more than one far-sighted Englishman from the early days of Industrialism. William Cobbett, our English Gracchus, was the first to give battle, and his great successor, John Ruskin, from whom William Morris drew his inspiration, was a man of even keener vision, discerning the root fallacies of Industrialism at the height of its power and foretelling its sure disaster.

In 1857 appeared *The Two Paths*; in 1860 he flung the gage of battle with *Unto This Last*. In 1866 his *Crown of Wild Olive* exhorted the landlords of England to become "soldiers of the ploughshare." The misery of the cities drew him away from the art they had degraded to a luxury of the rich. In 1871 he addressed the working men of England in *Fors Clavigera*, a series of letters, and founded Saint George's Guild, "with a view of showing, in practice, the rational organisation of country life, independent of that of cities." He had laid to heart, son of a thriving merchant, that lesson of history so blindly ignored by our Venetian oligarchy, that the peasantry are the groundwork of every sound national life. There were others, notably Robert Stephen Hawker, who saw deeply into the evil, but Ruskin strove also to achieve some remedy. His pamphlet *The Nature and Purpose of St. George's Guild* showed him no doctrinaire. "The Guild was originally founded with the intention of showing how much food-producing land might be recovered by well-applied labour from the barren or neglected districts of nominally cultivated

countries. With this primary aim two ultimate objects of wider range were connected—the leading one, to show what tone or degree of refined education could be given to persons maintaining themselves by agricultural labour; and the last to convince some portion of the upper classes of society that such occupation was more honourable and consistent with higher thoughts and nobler pleasures than their favourite pastime of war; and that the course of social movements may ultimately compel many to adopt it—if willingly, then happily both for themselves and their dependents; if resistingly, through much distress and disturbance of all healthy relations between master and paid labourer" (in E. Hope Scott: *Ruskin's Guild of St. George*, 1931, pp. 137-8). Taking English society as he finds it he proposed a practical reform. The one thing wanting was—the faith of St. George. Both Cobbett and Ruskin came to see the close connection between the banning of the old religion and the tyranny of Mammon, but neither drew in practice the logical conclusion.

It would be difficult to overpraise the courage and good will of this great-hearted pioneer, and something practical was indeed achieved. If the Guild on the whole failed, the Langdale homespun linen, the Laxey cloth and the leadless glaze pottery were notable achievings. The Guild was to be a "raft" amid the deluge he deemed inevitable. But the true cause of languishment is not far to seek, the flaw in so many earnest English efforts, religious haziness, the delusion of a comprehensive Christianity, the ignoring of the Catholic Church. In his glowing account of the mediaeval churches, Ruskin overlooked one thing—the altar. So also in his social efforts.

A movement which, in effect (against his intention), depended upon a great personality for its driving force, could not very long endure.

Grateful mention should also be made of a group of Ruskin's disciples who in 1904 began a New Crusade, nobly planned and much like St. George's. Its aims were set

forth by Mr. Godfrey Blount in an attractive booklet *For Our Country's Sake*, published by A. C. Fifield early in 1905, and followed up by that excellent periodical *The Vineyard*, a treasury including work by Peter Rosegger of Austria and Selma Lagerlöf of Sweden. Brought to a stop by the war of 1914, it paid no court to war-time hatreds and ended with a fine Christian "au revoir" to kindred spirits on the other side of the gulf of battle. In a fine address, "The Fellowship and the Peace to Come," Dr. Greville Macdonald insisted that the outward enemy was not the only one, and that Industrialism must be defeated if England was to live. There is a freshness and vigour, a tonic hopefulness about these essays which gives them lasting value, often enhanced by admirable illustration. Their weakness is again the besetting illusion that an agreed Christianity, more or less hazily undogmatic, should suffice to give the movement abiding life. In 1919 *The Country Heart* (most happy title) replaced the old *Vineyard* for three or four years, making what head it could against the Bacchic riot of the twenties.

While Mammon controls law-making and education, every obstacle besets the settling of families on the land, and yet it is clear that in order to bring about any healthy change in the nation's life, land settlement must be by families and the families as much as may be grouped into communities. What was overlooked by most was the need of a sure and lasting bond to keep them together, and the inadequacy of common social principles and a vaguely pro-Christian view of life, a bond independent of time, not religious views but true religion. "Wanting in what?" The Faith and the Sacraments of the Church.

The Achilles heel of the New Crusade was shown in these words: "The Gospel of Simplicity must take its stand on a distinctly religious, that is to say, emotional, basis" (Godfrey Blount, *Gospel of Simplicity*, 1906, pp. 22-3). Matthew Arnold's "morality touched with emotion" once more! Without faith, emotion is a thing of nought. The good life, the life of land and hand, like that of nature, is ever new and ever old. It is also a noble contest with many difficulties, a slowly won triumph over great obstacles, and

like the spiritual life, to which the Word of God so often likens it, a warfare upon earth, a warfare which brings that peace that "labour-savers" vainly dream of, the peace that comes from holy heaven-directed combat.

A BALLADE FOR MAMMON

THEME (1939)

You killed the people's crafts and stole their land,
And set them digging Nibelungen gold
To swell your hoard: degraded Man to Hand.
Men's singing died, and Charity turned cold.
Dulled memories on the past relinquished hold,
Then you seduced men with a piteous pride—
When they discern in you that crime untold,
Go, sing a mournful song of suicide.

Now literacy comes trailing clouds of books,
Old wisdom hence from home and workshop flies.
Petrol has penetrated furthest nooks;
Turn knobs, press buttons, science in service hies
To bring us ease unstrained—your crowning prize.
(Then why, as we on plushy seats subside,
Do youths and tooth-bright girls with flapping eyes
Go sing a mournful song of suicide?)

The standard of living spirals with the lark,
Spurning the patient earth, long out of date.
Machine-made plenty ends the ages dark,
And factories trundle forth an endless spate
Of things to eat and wear and titillate,
Leisure for culture, jazz and pleasure-ride.
(Earth shrinks machine-torn: war and famine mate—
Go sing a mournful song of suicide).

CODA (1941)

Mammon, you trained the war-dogs ravaging now.
The bombs have burst your baubles. With new pride
Men look on home, love, labour and the plough—
Go, sing a mournful song of suicide.

—ELLEN M. POWER

MAINLY ON SHAVING

By H. ROBBINS

THE relations between *Blackfriars* and *The Cross and The Plough* have not been invariably those of close cordiality. For some years the phrase of (I think) Mr. P. G. Wodehouse in another connection has applied. We have been walking away from each other in a marked manner.

This tendency (to paraphrase Mr. Wodehouse again) has been corrected by the good offices of the Throne of the Fisherman. It is one of the consolations of advancing years to see how the Catholic spirit is responding so quickly to any major pronouncement by the Holy See.

The November issue of *Blackfriars* is "Mainly on The Land." It is prefaced by an Editorial of seven pages on "Prospect on the Land," evoked, there seems no doubt, by the Holy Father's Pentecost Sermon already discussed in the last issue of *The Cross and The Plough*. Apart from one or two passing phrases which are inconsistent with the main argument, the *Blackfriars* statement is in full accord with all that the Catholic Land Movement (and its doubtless unworthy Organ) has stood for these many years. It should be read with interest and applause.

I must resist the temptation to quote largely from a happily worded document, but one passage must be emphasised: "We must assert with conviction that unless, hidden beneath the destruction of most that is fine with much that is bad to-day, some secret force can bring life back to the land, our efforts towards Christian reconstruction are doomed . . . We are not even urban but suburban, below the level of any human city culture and without roots in the soil."

This is both fundamental and realist, for in the very chords of the promised (or threatened) reconstruction schemes of Lord Reith, there is the doomed dominant of suburbanism. It is very heartening indeed to find *Blackfriars* so fully alive to this part of our peril.

It is true that *Blackfriars* resists with complete success the inclusion of an inconvenient King Charles' Head. The work of

the Land Movement which kept these vital torches alight during the dark years is not mentioned. There can be no question of whose is the credit, for since the Land is fundamental to the Faith, we all learn alike from its Guardian. But at least it is true that without the illumination of those dark years, a sudden blaze of interest now would look, shall we say, a trifle odd. The Pope did not speak because the English had realised suddenly that their world was cock-eyed and their starvation threatened. He spoke because the Family and the Homestead are fundamental to the Christian life, and that is why we have spoken, even when our voice in England was a thin solo in a suburban wilderness. It would have been gracious in *Blackfriars* to recognise this, with whatever verbal safeguards it may have deemed necessary.

It would have been ever more gracious in *Blackfriars* to have omitted from the same issue (which, it has been stated, is in some sort a commemoration of the Golden Jubilee of Fr. Vincent McNabb) an article by Mr. Donald Attwater. The article itself, and its inclusion on such an occasion, are of some interest.

It appeared originally in a monthly periodical published by the *Central Verein*, an organisation of Catholics of German origin in the Middle West of America. I cannot recover, without a lengthy search among records which the point does not justify, my filed copy of this article. It dates from a year or eighteen months back, and was either just before, or just after, *Central Blatt and Social Justice* changed its name to *The Social Justice Review*.

The sole purpose of the article is to discredit attempts by Catholics and others in England to found communities on the land since the last war. The tone of personal acrimony is curious, especially since several communities are mentioned by name. Even *Blackfriars* comments on its "bitter tone." The phrase is an understatement. *Blackfriars* also refers to its "very sound criticism." It contains, on the contrary, no point which

has not been answered by anticipation, sometimes repeatedly, in the Organ and other writings of the Catholic Land Movement. If such points there be, they are contradicted so clearly by the common sense of the case as to need no reply. Certainly I do not propose so to dignify an undignified travesty here.

But there is one original point. (Or nearly original: it was made also, I think, by a theologian in *Blackfriars* some years ago). This point is the alleged addiction of Land Communities to *Beards*. The thesis is stated by Mr. Attwater as follows: "A number of people come into the country and proceed to make themselves a closed corporation, a colony, distinguished from their neighbours by their religion, by other principles and opinions, by their way of living, even sometimes by peculiarities of dress and deportment (e.g., beards. I like and defend beards, but they are not necessary to the tilling of the soil). By so doing, the colonists, whether they mean to or not, cut themselves off from those around them, from their life and common interests: they form a peculiar people: a sect."

The theologians of *Blackfriars* may be able to tell us how, in important and even decisive respects, any return of Catholics to the Land could fail to show these points of distinction from their surroundings. The conversion of England is not to be achieved by identity in all respects, which, if the passage means anything, is what Mr. Attwater desires. These distinctions do not, in my experience, exclude a growing friendliness and understanding with the countryside, and full co-operation on those common devotions to the Natural Law which, thank God, are still living in our oppressed rural societies.

However, the main point is evidently beards.

In my experience, which is probably at least equal to Mr. Attwater's, Catholics and others in land communities maintain a certain private judgment in the growing of beards. As the dummy in the orchestra said when challenged by the conductor for not using the keys of his instrument, *some does and some doan't*. I have even observed, in the late vast deserts of rural England, men with beards who could not be held to belong to any community except the Order of Buffaloes, or to be fanatical on any point except the decline in the quality of beer. Some

of my friends and acquaintances in land communities grow beards, others do not. And it may be said, with all deference to the present Censor under Regulation 18B, that it is nobody's business but their own.

In this matter, as in many others, I speak with authority; for I once grew a beard for a whole month and analysed with some success my own motives for abandoning the unequal contest.

Some fifteen years ago, I was injured in a road accident. I regret to add, although I have never mentioned it in Confession, that I was returning from Mass on a motor cycle at the time. My throat was cut, to an extent which some of my critics may hold stopped short of adequacy. And my medical tyrant instructed me on no account to attempt to shave again for at least a month.

There is no cloud without a silver lining. My household had long observed with regret that for me to indulge in mental preoccupations while shaving was fatal—these colloquialisms again—not fatal, but sanguinary. It hailed the doctor's dictum with delight, and decided that I was to remain a bearded primitive for the rest of my life.

But I discovered with great surprise that while all my mental reactions were (as is well known) archaic and rudimentary, my nerves were extremely modern. Without presumption I indulge the hope that my sufferings during that bearded and accursed month will save me quite a few years of satisfaction for my sins hereafter.

At any rate, when the month was up, I had had quite enough of it and of the beard, and in a moving appeal which I still regard as one of my more considerable achievements, I sought and obtained the necessary domestic sanction for reversion to the daily shave.

Here, then, lies the glittering truth. Shaving, like many modern operations, is a sheer waste of time. But even those of us who see through the modern idolatries may have to cast some grain of incense to Caesar. These shave: the stout fellows whose whole beings are of sterner fibre need not, and no doubt many of them don't.

I applaud them, and I applaud me, who did not forget the shining principle in *dubiis libertas*. But one could wish that both Mr. Attwater and *Blackfriars* had remembered the final limb of the argument.

ORDER OF BATTLE: IX

THE RETURN OF THE DEMONS

IN his remarkable book *The End of Economic Man*, Mr. Peter Drucker gave to a key chapter the title which appears above.

The book is remarkable. It might have been great, had Mr. Drucker accepted the implications of his own excellent first principles. He has no difficulty in showing that the mechanisation of life and society has introduced into the world that dominance of unreasonable things which he calls *The Return of the Demons*. Insecurity and inequality at the hands of mysterious Frankenstein Monsters—squalor and unemployment in an imposing set-piece of plenty—have destroyed the very basis on which the modern world has been built. "The mechanist concept of the world and of society collapsed." These terrors have been responsible for the acceptance of the irrational and brutal remedy advanced by Fascism and Nazism. Mr. Drucker does not say so, but it is clear that their victims have recoiled in terror from the spectacle of a machine-ridden world inside the organic social framework, and that they have accepted in despair the philosophy and practice of the Ants' Nest.

The working out and proof of this thesis must not detain us—little proof indeed is needed, for the case is almost clear enough to be axiomatic. At its conclusion Mr. Drucker reminds us that the rest of the world will have to do one of two things. It must accept much of the theory and practice of totalitarianism, or it must, from its vital depths, evolve some new and sounder social theory, which shall have no other point in common with it than its rejection of Economic Man.

Two points at once emerge. Mr. Drucker is bitterly disappointed that this real social remedy should not have been urged by the Church as the supreme non-Economic force in the world. It is not surprising that he has not discovered the real social teaching of the Church: for it has been buried so deep beneath bastard and compromising popularisations as to be inaccessible to his wide but shallow learning.

The second point emerging is that there are many signs of the determination of the secret rulers of England to adopt the ethic and practice of the Ants' Nest for our people. Certainly that is being done as a war expedient, and certainly there are important forces which have no intention of reverting afterwards to a human and organic life. As Mr. Drucker says of the totalitarians, "Organisation must serve for creed and order," and security at the price of strict slavery is to be the end of our fight for human decency and human liberty.

The mechanisation of life is the Beelzebub of Mr. Drucker's demons, but he nowhere suggests how he is to be destroyed, or what is to replace him.

But the Church knows: she has always known: and when the victorious but exhausted English are confronted with slavery as their reward, we must be ready with our own remedy for Economic Man. We must revert, as the Pope reminded us in his Pentecost Sermon, to the *Natural Law*, which is the eternal reason of God and the salvation of economic blunders. We must say it very loud and clear: we must go and shout it in their ear.

And the central point in the *Natural Law* is the right of every man to productive property. Industrialism—capitalist or collective—has exposed us to the demons of trade cycles and insecurity in the face of squandered natural wealth. When our rulers suggest the hide of the dog that bit us, we must retort upon them the vital space of the family and the homestead. Here is freedom: here is security: here is peace.

The Catholic doctrine of property is not a temporary expedient, it is a permanent remedy: and the Pope has taken us straight back to it.

We have always emphasised in these columns that the Catholic Faith is incompatible with Industrialism. It may have been thought that we have over-emphasised it. Yet with terrifying frequency the facts con-

firm us. Mechanisation is wrong for many reasons: it is wrong chiefly because it makes fully distributed property and independence impossible.

And if, as Mr. Drucker says and we believe, great communities have accepted the ultimate degradation of slavery because they were wild with the fear of insecurity; here is our chance—our last chance—to beat the demons and the planners at their own game.

You want security—we have it. But no more than in logic can you have it both ways.

A LETTER FROM THE LAND*

My dear Friends,

I was really delighted to receive your letter yesterday, it was an answer to prayer. I had wondered how you were all going on in this life and death struggle. I have prayed hard for you both and I can see that many of my prayers have been answered. Yes, it is certainly strange how time plays havoc with our affairs, but if we can, like Job, whisper to God in our affliction our Fiat then no matter what befalls us we are alright. The holy man Job said "O Lord, even if thou shouldst slay me, still would I trust in Thee." We see as we go through this life what a mixture man is. The lust for power, the trampling on people's rights will all have to be repaid to the last farthing. We ourselves owe God our debt of wrong-doing, but if we can ask for mercy knowing in our hearts that we have shown it, then indeed will the Precious Blood be our saving life.

The war has not affected me in any particular way as yet. I am not in the Army but still trying hard to fulfil my vows to God. I know now what it means to be really generous in His service, to give and not to count the cost, but His burden is sweet and yoke light. If only I could help to bring comfort to one poor soul in the world I should think my life well spent.

* The writer of this letter, now in Religion as a Salesian Brother, was trained for the land at West Fields Farm, Market Bosworth.—Editor.

You need not be slaves—but you must be men. And you cannot be men until you have got rid of the demons. Live close to God—live close to God's earth—reject the incantations of the planners and the Bank of England. You will have no cheap cars, no wireless sets, no slick but shoddy household gadgets. But you will have freedom, security and peace.

Very loud, please. Very loud and very clear. This is the last 'bus.

What about Mr. Robbins? You remember him saying that a man could work twenty-five acres himself. Well, in my case he is quite right.

I am in charge of about 30 acres of workable land; there is more, but it is woodland, etc. I keep six milk cows, four in milk as near as possible all the year round; the milk goes to the school, which has about seventy boys, also a staff of twenty. Three young heifers I have coming on. I rear my good heifer calves. When they calve down I sell a milk cow with her fourth calf, realising a good sum up to £40.

The fields are thus worked out:—

- 5 fields for hay—4 acres, 3 acres, two fields 1½ acres and 2 acres—12 acres hay.
- 3 fields pasture or grazing, about 10 acres.
- 3 fields of tillage, which includes:—
 - 1 acre of Black Tartar Oats.
 - 2 acres of Potatoes.
 - ½ acre Turnip or Mangold.
 - ½ acre Kale.
 - 1 acre to produce vegetables all the year round for the school.

I am cutting 5 acres of hay to-morrow (Monday, 30th). I hire a tractor mower for this purpose, also to do my main ploughing; the rest I do with one horse, who is very light but good. I make my own drills, broadcast my own oats, which are fine; a little help by students and a few boys at potato planting and haymaking time comprises my only help.

This year I have been badly hit with the Turnip Flea Beetle, but I think I have controlled this scourge now and the crops look very promising.

We are practically self-supporting in the line of vegetables, potatoes, milk, etc. The fields I mentioned received the following treatment:—

Hay fields.—Basic Slag, 6-cwts. per acre in Autumn. Sulphate of Ammonia, 1½-cwts per acre in Spring.

Grazings.—4-cwts. Slag, 1-cwt. Sulphate of Ammonia.

Tillage.—10 to 12 tons of dung with 4-cwts. per acre of Potash Salts Superphosphate, of Ammonia mixed.

My milk bought the cows concentrates when I could get it.

To buy my artificials and to be independent of the School funds, I sold two milk cows in the market, realising £40 and £33 10s. od. If the School had paid me for all produce I should be well ahead with cash-bought, but the surplus helps our Society and the School. So you see I have not been idle. The land in question is a very hard Sussex clay, very difficult to work, but if worked at the right time produces good crops. I hope I have not bored you: I thought you might like to know a little of my activities as a Lay Brother.

Well Ted, do write again soon and I appreciate your letter and thoughtfulness in thinking of me. I would have written you

DAILY BREAD BEAUTY: II

Further extracts from the correspondence and writings of the late Professor W. R. Lethaby

I AM sure that the natural and the normal is the beautiful. Gothic Cathedrals are as natural as birds' nests

The only really growing things in world history seem to be mere blind military power, and mere foolish commercial money power, with no idea behind either—that is, I mean the obvious things and the immediate; behind those there must be other better seeds a-springing up.

A war cuts away one of earth's pillars, then a whole piece of the earth tumbles in;

sooner but I felt that all was not well with you, so I asked the Lord to give me news about you.

This is the Feast Day of the great SS. Peter and Paul, both of whom suffered for God. If we want Heaven we must suffer. Our nature may shrink from it, but our superior will realises that the servant cannot be different from his master. St. Teresa said "To suffer or to die." If I am able to thank God for all he sends, well, it will be something. He has called me, He will certainly supply the strength. If in life we realised what fellowship we find with one another in sufferings we should pray harder for those whom God uses to be the cause of our infirmities. God's Will be done whatever Hitler or anyone else may do. We will pray together for a real lasting and permanent peace based on equality of justice for all classes. May we all unite our prayers during July for this end and when we meet together at the Holy Table let us say with St. Peter, Lord to whom can we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.

God bless you.

Your affectionate friend,

BR. F. HOLLOWAY, S.C.

P.S.—Don't forget to remember me to Mr. Robbins for the sake of the good old times. I owe him a lot. He was right. But God fitted me for His own service.

that disturbs another piece and it subsides, then a stream is diverted and a town decays, and it is twenty years after before a sort of balance is restored—meantime everybody in the world has been affected in some way.

Toy-making is more important than playing with toys. I wonder if the extravagant commercialised toys are not destructive to children's mentality? I am sure that Toys are terribly important. How big things be, and nobody knows.

Even you and I have at the back of our minds the idea that London and New York are "normal in God's providence," and that Pretoria and Havana are but queer places. We don't know the spirit of simple imbecility that is about in folk American and English.

Only religion can alter the spirit of violence. The thing before this generation and the next is to be a struggle for mere fragments of justice. Oh; too much is religion identified with spiritual consolation for Generals' wives. Devotion itself is a danger to a state where it takes the form of hiding away from *the knowledge of injustice*, and gradually takes the place of "righteousness."

I think I shall never find any other exponent of Religion-translated-in-terms-of-to-day, so altogether believable as Morris. Morris looking out on the facts of large city life and his heart moved by a great love for the famine-struck people, so flocked together, so shepherdless, so hopeless and so dumb, and considering that this famine could only be dealt with in a certain way, pointed out what should be the aims of civilised life—not this world-rage of money-gambling, etc., etc., but:—

1. A "conscious" love of the earth and care and reverence for it;
2. A looking on man's labour as sacred (not mere "art" so-called for which he cared not one farthing, but *all* labour—tilling of fields, and thatching cottages and making shirts;
3. Fellowship between men. But of all these—and all others—the immediate necessity, the one thing before we can even get some breathing-time to question what it is all about, is to make *labour*, which is the true *life* of man, a sacred thing, honest and serious.

I do believe most solemnly that "civilisation" *cannot* go on in its telephone and steam whistle career, or at least it would be better for the world to end than that it should *so* progress.

Truly people cannot be good in cities. Goodness is a thing invented in villages and woods and on hilltops and in the desert and under the stars with the wind and the seasons and harvests in "due kind," and with friendliness with cows and sheep and flowers and little chirping birds and with wonder at the

storm and falling snow. That's what "goodness" is made of. In towns it becomes "politeness" and "civilisation," quite other matters—*cities is cities!*

Oh! we people, we people! What Ishmaels we are!—all drifting into being more and more under the pressure of the force of the modern ideals. Every pressure of one mind over another, every effort at dominating "opinion" except by self-explanation and action is, I see, a form of violence.

One's spirit should be "holy-gay."

The world as it is is a shameful place to bring up any children.

Religion is the source and science of giving.

Life is *activity and work*. One must harden and strengthen and healthen oneself so much for work.

To me the restoring of joy in labour is precisely the most important thing before us in the sphere of general religion, and a necessary outcome of the love-spirit which is the individual embodiment of religion.

Everyone is really worthy of reverence, but how grateful one is to those who call out reverence in us.

Out of the fullness of the heart the hands build.

I have a notion of what I mean by town-life, but quite feeble as compared to what the reality once was when the towns were backgrounds for continuous church and municipal state and guild pageants, meetings, feasts, with 70 or 80 Holy Days in the year besides Sundays. *No wonder* that the Reformation found out that saints' days were "wicked" and laid the foundations of the life commercial.

When the 19th century comes to be summed up in a word, that word will not be Reciprocity, but I should think "Book-keeping" by double entry. Such a waste of valuable time, which might be spent in playing hoops, etc., expended in what somebody calls the mythology of commerce.

Even one's mistakes can be over-ruled to good ends.

Civilisation is the breaking up of society into groups of one.

Political economy is the science by which the wrong people can get the right things.

All the problems have been rushing over my nerves since I came back—the terrible lack of beauty—and I hunger and thirst for beauty, I long and cry for beauty, I don't mean art, but sweet poverty and gay childhood, and some nobility of purpose and some little shred (to use a colourless word) of picturesqueness in life, and some brotherhood in people. I have it every time I go into the street—the fear of people's faces. This hard commercial age is degrading people *unthinkably*, and I don't know what can come of it. We do, we do want religion spread once more in a form that a great number of people shall understand and agree with.

Modern society almost consciously originated in crushing down the art of the people.

Many a right opinion can be held from a wrong motive.

I am frightened of the world—the growing ugliness of Holborn, the frowning number of necessary wreckage about, the growing size of London, the growing vulgarisation of all art and letters, insist on one's thinking about them. I do not pretend to be thin-skinned, but it really makes me shudder to go out into the streets—there is evidently no beauty in the streets, but that might pass so easily if there were beauty in the people, children at play, happy animals, but I look at the people I meet, and see not one grave happy face, and so few children who are not either careworn with vanity, or battered with a terrible poverty.

So-called "improvement" means trivial bazaar smartness, and plush photograph frames sold by grocers.

Beauty is the faith of good works—inseparable from reality.

The uglification of the world and wick- edification of the world by commercialism is a fact, and it either has to be dealt with by men or it will strangle men.

Read the *Times* and believe the opposite.

Big cities take all courage for work out of me. I had to go to Leeds the other day to lecture and I could have had a screaming fit in the street. Without affectation the simple terror of it crushes the heart.

So many look on "art" and "music" from the mere spectator's point of view, as if they were things to be "admired" or not, by him. But true "Art" is the *evidence of the workman's joy in his work*. Go over and look at a tailor, what is lacking there? Go and look at the solidity of London, what is lacking there? Art should be looked on not as enjoyment and luxury to the buyer, but as life and breath to the maker, and extend the idea to cover everything of quality and goodness in things made by hands, and further to beautiful care of the tilled earth

Poetry must get near the heart of life and country and feeling and work. It must get in touch with the very old and very simple and very real; it must be near folded sheep and gathering of Harvests, and cows tied up in a shed, and the dog's bark, and the friend's knock on the door. And other than this kind of thing there is no other true life—material, poetry-stuff, or Art-motive

It's the Cathedrals, bring me always back to this, I see that in the great age of the Church—1,000 to 1,200—as an organised state system, that they had made a comparatively happy world to live in for everybody, *that happiness is the Cathedrals*—no accident about it whatever. You put so much happiness into a town and out sprouted this art. This is the central theory that true national art is a thermometer of happiness—not that Art was a luxury which made happiness, but happiness of condition made art. I am convinced of the truth of this in its minutest accuracy

(TO BE CONCLUDED)

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

The value of properly treated "sewage sludge" as a manure is well known. It has been in use for many years—one English Borough has been selling it for nearly fifty years. There is both tragedy and humour in the fact that on the outbreak of war, the *Agricultural Research Council* asked the *Rothamsted Experimental Station* to "investigate" its possibilities. Apparently Rothamsted has now decided that the field work may be extended, and appeals for co-operation, under various auspices, are being made. We shall watch their conduct with interest.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

BLESSED SIMONE FIDATI (c. 1290-1348)
TRANSLATED BY WALTER SHEWRING*

EVERY Christian who would be saved ought to be poor, either in will and deed together or in will alone; poverty in deed will not suffice if the will be contrary. For a Christian's riches should be Christ; and unhappy indeed is one who seeks other riches, and wretched indeed is one who is rich of the world and poor of Christ, for without him the whole world is poverty. We ought therefore to be poor.

And first, one who would be poor perfectly, in will and in deed, must conform himself to Christ in the lack of money and possessions. He must have no house or household things or city of his own; he must not seek eagerly for temporal friendships; he must put no trust in kinsfolk or other friends or in power or in wisdom, but place himself wholly under the care of God. If he cannot work, let him beg for his necessities. But if he can, then let him work at some lawful and honest† craft or trade, if this may be done without much mingling with other persons, especially such as use evil speech at their work and do not fear God or remember him reverently; otherwise let the man ask for some other honest work from honest folk and serve them, tiring his body in some honest fashion, that he may not be idle after his prayer and after those exercises whose direction is wholly spiritual.

Should he be unable to work, either through infirmity or through his manner of praying or through some other employment of the mind or because God would have it so, then let him beg from folk, though always taking heed that he does not remain idle without praying. I say this because there are many whose teaching and practice is that there should be no working but always praying. As to this I say that unless a man has assurance from God in his soul that it is not

his duty to work and tire his body, both to banish idleness and to procure necessities, then he should work and labour, honestly, in things that are honest, necessary to his neighbour, and useful to himself, according to the need.

As examples of this we have the holy fathers and, above all, Christ, who wearied his body, labouring, preaching, healing and serving the sick; with our Lady and the Apostles. It was the will of St. Paul to work and live by his own hands, and he commands that a man who does not work shall not eat. And many holy fathers in the desert and in monasteries have done in like manner.

Moreover, the things a man uses, whatever they are and for whatever use, should be poor and show a despising of the world. And with poverty let her sister abasement be present side by side; let a man hold himself of no account, showing in very deed the manners of lowliness and a person that is despised. When he mingles with folk, let it be without magnificence, and not with persons of worldly magnificence. Let him seek for his use all things that are basest; and everything that others despise for baseness, let him love and desire it, short of sin. And if he would follow Christ, let him walk as Christ walked, in much hardness of life, not with any love of riches or honour; rather let him shun honour like death, and never seek for delights; for the charity of God is not in these things.

It is not becoming to any Christian to hold another way of life than Christ and his Apostles did, or than Christ grants and allows. For Christ embraced all perfection in himself, and the Apostles endeavoured to come near to him; to other folk Christ has granted to live according to the lesser justice of the Gospel, that is to say the pure and simple observance of the commandments. And it is a great fault to be called a Christian and not to live as a Christian. Therefore, when a man has temporal goods, let him—if he is so inspired by God—sell them and keep

* Text in Levasti, *Mistici del duecento e del trecento* (1935) pp. 651-654.

† *Onesto*, a favourite word with Simone, has the wide sense of *honest* in earlier English—seemly, decent, honourable.

a life of poverty; if he is not inspired, let him keep them humbly, without vanity and without solicitude; let him not increase them without necessity, nor be disturbed if he lose them, nor show contentiousness and hatred if they be taken from him; rather let him say with Job: "The Lord gave them to me and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." And let him possess his wealth without greed, as a steward and dispenser of God. Let him always provide for the poor, joyfully and liberally if he has much wealth, and if he has little, willingly and with compassion of mind—keeping for himself only the sober and temperate use of it, and in all his ways preserving some likeness to the life of Christ.

REVIEW

THE FALL OF THE YEAR, by
H. J. Massingham (Chapman and
Hall, 6/- net)

Mr. Massingham is constant but never monotonous: he is prolific but never undistinguished. And almost any of his books can be used as a philosophy of the Return, as well as a model of distinction in an age of pedestrian writing.

In an earlier book, *The Sweet of the Year*, he used the first six months of the calendar to admit us to the beauty and reality of the real England. He uses here the second half of the calendar to do the same. Extensive quotation is often a device of the lazy. But not when the quotation illustrates, as no reviewer could, this writer's faculty for raising the whole problem before our eyes from almost anything seen:

"But there is a serpent in this Eden of green and gold and fallow russet like the tiling of the old cottages. Among the barley, with the bearded ail brushing its posts, stood a gargantuan notice-board with 'Building Lots For Sale' written in capitals across it. There is not much to be said about a thing like that, not much more than Belshazzar said when he saw the writing on the wall. For if a country so blasphemes the ancient

prayer, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' as to allow the staple of its existence to be bought and sold for villa and bungalow sites, it is clear that money is its god, that it will do anything for money and that the soul of that country is in bitter peril. I say nothing about national issues: there is still another issue, the worst danger that can befall any nation at any period, the danger of substituting god for God, a detestable little money-god for the Being that gave us this lovely, this bountiful land to be our home, to cultivate for our need, to make things of use and beauty from its resources, and to fill us with joy and thankfulness because there is no other land to compare with it in excellence of heritage. It is a good thing that William Cobbett is dead since, had he seen a thing like that, his heart would have burst."

And that Mr. Massingham has no pre-occupation with the purely natural, but sees all things whole, is shown in such passages as this:—

"Was not Christ born in the village of Bethlehem, and was not Joseph the village carpenter? The rusticity of the beloved festival through the ages expresses an historical continuity more real and vital than any book-learning could have given, and the celebrants understood unconsciously that the essence of the Nativity story was the glorification of the village. Christ Himself set the example by interweaving country rhythms, seasonal occasions and the great moments of the yearly husbandry with the poetic symbolism of the Parables. The carols, the plays, the tales, the incidents and the festivities smell of the earth and the human labour upon it like the upturned furrow behind the plough. This is one explanation of why the Christmas of to-day has become the ghost of itself. It is the Christmas of an urban civilisation which has no connecting links either with the Christ of rural Galilee or with the body of rites and legends that gathered about the most famous of all stories in the country England of the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance."

If ever we get to the stage of rewarding our champions as they deserve, I think the first award of the Order of Merit will go to Mr. Massingham.

—H.R.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

When the fig tree puts forth its leaves, said Our Lord, you know that summer is nigh.

And when a periodical called *The Dairy Farmer* welcomes an article by Fr. Vincent McNabb, we may be sure that the English season is changing too.

The November issue of this technical organ has an article by Fr. Vincent entitled "Does Dairy Farming Pay?" Knowing the author, we may be sure of the effective answer.

"Big-scale farming, like big-scale manufacturing, wants only the 'hand'; because the 'hand's' family is only an encumbrance. But as the family is the indispensable fundamental unit of the State, any economic enterprise tending to destroy the Family will be tending to destroy the State."

We could wish that this were the whole story, but it is not. In our last issue, we alluded to the way in which the B.B.C. is used to make the public take for granted any policy decided on by the Best People.

A particularly glaring example of this is a broadcast talk printed in *The Listener* on 20th November. It consisted of a discussion on *The Future of British Farming* between Professor J. A. Scott Watson, Mr. C. W. Whatley and Mr. J. F. Duncan. The first is well-known as Head of the Agricultural College at Oxford. The second is a large farmer; the third we cannot place with any precision.

The technique of this class of tendentious propaganda is easy and characteristic. It consists of such selectivity in the statement of the case as practically to force a particular conclusion. By a somewhat blatant use of this method Professor Scott Watson had no difficulty in manoeuvring his juniors into a position where they had no option but to agree that the characteristic type of British Farm must be mechanised, and of the order of 2,000 acres. The Professor made his point when he referred casually to "an efficient, skilled, trained manager." It was the unfortunate Mr. Duncan who was jockeyed into the position of saying "There's no reason why we should struggle to keep small-holdings alive, or family farms for that matter. They

are just small commercial undertakings and often inefficient. We should encourage the bigger units . . ."

Curiously, and perhaps significantly, it was the large farmer who registered most of the sane points and doubts. He at least had not lost all contact with reality.

We commend this discussion for study as a good specimen of the mentality we have to fight, and of the vested interests we have to smash.

ANOTHER GAFF BLOWN

"Christianity and modern civilisation to me seem to be incompatible, and we have to make a choice between the two. It may very well be that this war, however it turns out, will solve the antinomy, and if you want unadulterated Christianity, you may have to let material civilization go. If we beat the Germans, as I hope we shall, I can visualize Germany and Italy throwing themselves in despair into the arms of Communism, in which case it will only be a matter of time for England and America to follow suit. And if we are beaten, well then, you have only to look at Russia and Germany to know what will be our fate. It will certainly be bad for any one of us, but will it be so bad for Christianity? I am not so sure. It won't be pleasant for Christians, but that is a different affair altogether. Is Christianity so badly off in Russia, where priests can only do their work in the disguise of workmen and members of the Communist Party? They do so at the risk of their lives, but they are listened to. There Christianity means something to people; it is a working reality. Here it is not and never will be, however much you talk about it, until all our comforts are swept away. I am sorry, even for myself, to say so; but I am only a sort of Christian; I am not Christianity, and the interests of these two are not in the same street. I would hate having to go back to oil lamps and field sanitary conditions and sordid dirt, but I have no doubt they would help me to understand the Gospel as I never did before."—*Father Lekeux, O.F.M., at present artillery expert with the Belgian Army in England—quoted by "The Tablet."*

OUR NEIGHBOURS' LANDMARKS

The National Catholic Rural Movement of Australia, sponsored by the Australian Hierarchy, has issued the following manifesto. It will be seen that a distinction is drawn between Subsistence and Independent Farming.

The Catholic Land Movement in England, which was one of the first to use the former expression, has used it to describe, not part-time farming, but straight mixed farming for the purpose of ensuring first the needs of the farmer's family, and second the sale of the surplus. The diversity of crops alone provides protection against marketing and financial ramps, and the protection is increased where co-operation in buying and selling is practised.

The term Subsistence, however, has been gate-crashed by the part-time school, and some term for distinction has become necessary. Our Australian friends have brought into use the term Independent.

We shall be glad to receive the opinions of subscribers on whether a new term ought to be used, and if so, whether Independent meets the case.—Editor

SPECIALISED FARMING has led to a RUINOUS RELIANCE on OVERSEAS MARKETS which in turn has thrown the farmers into the hands of FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS and has reduced them to PRACTICAL BANKRUPTCY.

It has compelled the farmers who practice it to regard FARMING as a SPECULATION and the LAND as a GAMBLE instead of as a WAY OF LIFE.

Since specialised farming makes the farmer rely on factors over which he has no control, it DESTROYS the SECURITY of rural life, and puts the CONTROL of the life of the FARMING FAMILY in the hands of CITY INTERESTS.

SUBSISTENCE FARMING, while it is an excellent means of increasing the well-being of the wage-earner, whether in urban or in rural districts, is NEITHER PRACTICAL NOR DESIRABLE for the farmer.

INDEPENDENT FARMING gives to the farmer and his family a SECURE LIFE of MODERATE PROSPERITY. It is the

ONLY BASIS on which the LAND can ever be a WAY OF LIFE. It is the ONLY METHOD of ensuring A PERMANENT AGRICULTURE. It makes the farmer INDEPENDENT of the vagaries of OVERSEAS MARKETS over which he has no control.

Three other things are worth observation:—

(i) INDEPENDENT FARMING does NOT mean that we all have to go back to THREE ACRES AND A COW. It does not necessarily mean that it can work only on a small-holding. A man on a large holding can be an Independent Farmer. A man on a small holding can be a gambler on the market.

BUT THE FACT IS that the best Independent Farmers have been men on small holdings, which are not too big for them to work properly.

(ii) INDEPENDENT FARMING cannot be practised in every part of Australia. There are some places where rainfall is insufficient and irrigation impossible.

But IT CAN BE PRACTISED in very many places where it is considered impossible at the moment.

The N.C.R.M. WILL BACK every effort to spread those technical methods which will make it possible in more and more districts.

The N.C.R.M. will RESOLUTELY OPPOSE all plans to place men in areas where they MUST GAMBLE on SEASONS and MARKETS if they are to live.

(iii) INDEPENDENT FARMING honestly and competently practised, will keep the MONEY LENDER AWAY from the door of the young farmer JUST STARTING off on his own land.

Where the farmer ALREADY IS SUNK IN DEBT, Independent Farming, although it will improve his financial position, will NOT NECESSARILY get him out of the hands of financial institutions. It all depends on how he is involved.

THE N.C.R.M., as a body of Australian citizens, will, when circumstances are favourable, take the action it deems necessary to meet the problem of farming indebtedness.

—From "Rural Life,"
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