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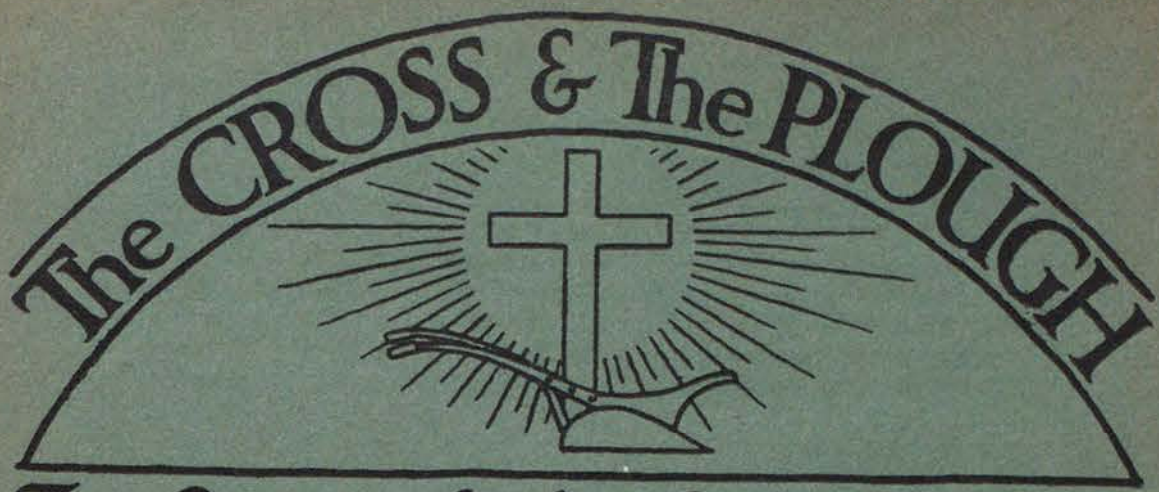

The Organ of the Catholic Land Associations of England and Wales.

QUARTERLY. TWOPENCE CHRISTMAS 1942

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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

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

THE SKY LIGHTENS

The English are not given to praising themselves in speech or thought: And God forbid that we should break that excellent custom. But it seems permissible to say, at this Holy Season, that their fortitude during the past three years has been of classic perfection. Our leaders were so sure of us that they did not even try to cheer us up. They said, as Our Lady said to Alfred in Chesterton's great Ballad:

I tell you naught for your comfort,
Yea, naught for your desire,
Save that the sky grows darker yet
And the sea rises higher.

And now, when the sky, please God, is lightening to dawn and full day, we may venture to remind them that if they could trust us in the dark, they can trust us in the sunshine to come.

APPLAUSE

It is very pleasing to all of us who do not despair of the State to be able to praise where we have had to blame. And in at least three cases we are in that happy position now.

THE MINISTER OF THE MIRACLE

Mr. R. S. Hudson, Minister of Agriculture, spoke at Salisbury on 24th September and said:

"This year's fruitful harvest may also bear results of incalculably greater benefit—the foundations of a new rural civilisation . . . . I believe it is possible to build up a sum of good life upon the land that will make the villages of the future blossom and shine again with the spirit that is in them."

And on 11th October he added in a broadcast: *"Much hard work and technical skill have played their part in these mighty yields, but I believe we have a Higher Power to thank as well . . . Some Power has wrought a miracle in the English harvest fields."*

Speech, said the classic cynic, was given to men that they might conceal their thoughts. But we should have to despair of the State indeed if we did not believe words like these to mean a vital change of heart.

THE TABLET TESTIFIES

And commenting on this broadcast on 17th October, *The Tablet* said: *"The Government has been able to foster war-time agriculture simply because it has not had to defer to the anti-agricultural interests which are so paramount in times of peace and world-trade. . . . .Mr. Hudson's promise that our domestic agriculture will not suffer in the future from the neglect which it has known in the past will not be fulfilled without powerful opposition."*

We cannot record, unfortunately, that *The Economist* has also subscribed to these sentiments.

ROTHAMSTED TO JUDGMENT

And in *The Times* of 27th October, Sir E. J. Russell, Director of Rothamsted, said of the ruined England in Northamptonshire which will be Industrialism's chief and fitting monument: *"The condition . . . illustrates well the difference between agricultural and industrial ownership of land . . . The industrial user of the land has no such feeling of responsibility to the future. As owner he feels that he is entitled to destroy it for ever if it suits his purpose, and as tenant he is prepared, and abundantly able, to pay the fine imposed in his lease for damage done, leaving the land a desolate ruin to his successors."*

We thank and applaud all these Birds of Dawning.

FOOD-BEARING LAND

Mr. G. M. Young, writing in the *Sunday Times* of 1st November, reminds us of a point where we are apt to repeat unreflectingly an idiotic phrase. He says: "I remarked some time before the war that . . . we were faced with a special mischief of our own, the diversion of food-bearing land to alien uses. I stick to my term, and I wish the absurd distinction of 'undeveloped land' where you feed cows, and 'developed land' where you build cinemas, had never been invented."

That we ever did so use these terms was a proof, of course, that we had accepted the commercial trick of valuing land in pounds sterling per acre. We stand corrected. *Food-bearing land* in future, by all means.

It is not equally clear what word we should use for land thus ravished from husbandry. Mr. Young suggests "Diverted land." This is probably the most we can expect from respectable circles. But there is a more tenderer word. We prefer *embezzled* land, since to embezzle is *to appropriate fraudulently what has been entrusted.*

It is of some interest that Sir P. Malcolm Stewart, who was one of the Commissioners for Distressed Areas, and whose gift of land for small-holdings at Potton started the Land Settlement Association on its misguided career, accepts, in *The Times* of 8th October, the principle that market value of land is dominant in the matter of restoration after mining, unless *"an economic or amenity value can be established as one of its post-war objects for creating employment."*

This in 1942 from a man high in favour with a Conservative Government.

LAND UTILISATION ADVISER

It is perhaps a sign of grace that the vice-chairman of the Scott Committee has been appointed adviser to the Minister of Agriculture on rural land utilisation. His first statement suggests that he is taking his duties seriously.

TAILPIECE

Oil Magnate requires for own occupation Mixed Farm in Kent or Sussex, accessible Charing Cross or Victoria; willing to pay up to £10,000 and has open mind about acreage; only small house required, 5-6 beds and comforts; would like take over stock.

This is a real advertisement in a real newspaper. And unfortunately we must assume that it was written by a real Oil Magnate in a real world. We said, perhaps too hastily, that that world died in 1939. Perhaps that is the measure of our task. Reality does not kill Oil Magnates: we need lamp-posts as well.

THE ENGLISHMAN SPEAKS

It makes the brain reel to think how many million times we have been told that we cannot put the clock back. It is strange that people should use the same mechanical metaphor in the same mechanical spirit so many times without once seeing what is wrong with it. It looks rather as if their clocks, anyhow, had stopped. If there is one thing in the world that no sane man ought to connect with the idea of unlimited progress, it is a clock. A clock does not strike twelve and then go on to strike thirteen or fourteen. If a clock really proceeded on the progressive or evolutionary principle we should find it was half-past a hundred in about a week. So far as the significance of the signs go, which is the only value of a clock, the case is altogether the other way. You do not need to put the clock back; because in that sense the clock always puts itself back. It always returns to its first principle and its primary purpose; and in that respect at any rate it is really a good metaphor for a social scheme. The clock that had completely forgotten the meaning of one and two would be valueless; the commonwealth that has completely forgotten the meaning of individual dignity and direct ownership will never recover them by going blindly forward to an infinity of number; it must return to reality. It must be reactionary, if that is reaction.—*G. K. Chesterton (in G.K.'s Weekly, 11th April, 1925).*

THE CASE FOR ACTION

The following letter from a serving technician in the R.A.F. was received by a subscriber simultaneously with the last issue of "The Cross and The Plough."—Editor.

You say that Fascism has never appealed to you, and that you think the only remedy for present ills can come from the Church. Yes, but *how?* English Catholics, at any rate, are so thoroughly steeped in and tainted with the evils of modernism that they are indistinguishable from the neo-pagans around them; and look at you as if you were mad if you give them a sample of the Church's *real* teaching on social questions. And, as I said before, the Bishops are much to blame. Never, *never* will we make an impression on the English working-man until we combine with our religious teaching the fanatical zeal for social justice which the communists display—more, our hunger for justice and our efforts to secure it must exceed theirs as the breadth and depth of our vision, and of the Church's teaching, already exceed the vision of Marx and all his followers. We have the riches; we don't use them! Not until every fair-sized town in this country has its Catholic platform calling, *first and foremost,* for the application of Christ's teachings to the social questions of the hour, shall we make any mark on our generation. It is probably already too late, humanly speaking, for anything like Distributism to make any headway, but it is not too late to leaven the post-war Socialist State with Christianity: which is the only thing which will make life in it supportable. From many arguments and contacts with all sorts of people, I am convinced that this practical application of Christian principles to social questions is the only way which will make an appeal, and during this past year I've seen a pretty good cross-section of working-class men drawn from all over the country. We need a thousand Vincent McNabbs training speakers on a cadre system; we need another Pope Gregory and another St. Augustine; we need *missionaries* to the heathen among whom we dwell. If we don't we'll have the servile state within a generation.

—H.C.M.

BALLADE OF THE COMMUNAL EVENING

(It has been suggested that, in order to save fuel, parties of neighbours should sit round a single fire)

Dusk in the village, autumn in the air,
The twilight thickens, softly falls the dew,
Put up the black-out, shall we now repair
With fires extinguished, a hilarious crew,
Round to the neighbours'? *Towards The Barley Brew*
I see some ardent fuel-savers tread
The path already. Heavens, what a queue!
No thank you! We had rather go to bed!

By day we face our fellows fair and square,
By night we gather courage to renew
To-morrow's challenge. In his elbow-chair
The farmer dozes. If report be true,
Our learned Vicar cons his sermon through
While six evacuees wail overhead,
Shall we disturb a man of eighty-two?
No thank you! We had rather go to bed!

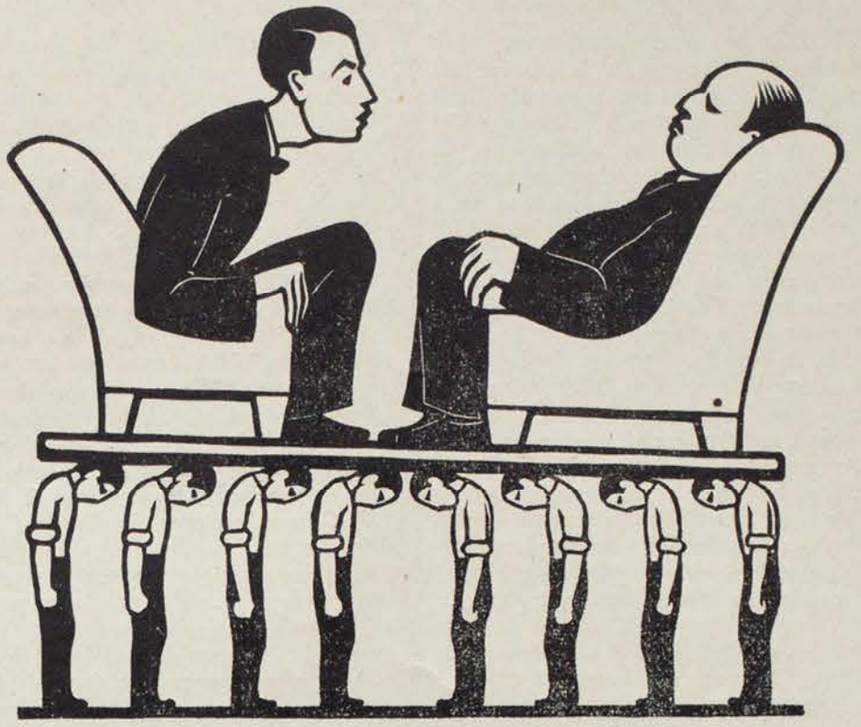
Jim Nokes has just slipped out to set a snare
And Mrs. Nokes (who always does make do)
Is patching up Jim's ancient underwear,
I doubt if *she* wants company? A few
Of us might knock up Squire, that crusted Blue?
Or Schoolmaster, that surly little Red?
The Doctor?—but his dinner-hour's taboo—
No thank you! We had rather go to bed!

Envoi

Princes, you do not grasp our point of view,
("They do talk soft" is what we *really* said).
We cannot share our hearthstones, even with you—
No thank you! We had rather go to bed!

—H.P.E..

NOTE.—Pressure of work has prevented a study of the Report of the Uthwatt Committee on Compensation and Betterment. If it proves to raise any points not dealt with in the recent article on the Scott Report, they will be discussed in the next issue.—Editor.



PLANNING FOR PEACE

"We must instil into the masses a sense of their responsibility"

ANGLIA TERRA FERAX

Anglia Terra ferax
et fertilis angulus orbis
Anglia plena jocis
gens libera digna vocari
Libera gens cui libera mens
et libera lingua
Sed lingua melior
liberiorque manus

Liber Niger Domus Regis Anglie
Edwardus IV
Harleian M.S. 642.

England, thou fruitful land,
rich garden by the sea,
Thy folk so full of fun
deserve to be called free.

Freedom is theirs whose tongue
may tell what mind can see,
But a greater good is theirs
whose hands are free.

—(Translation by P.H.)

MORE SCIENTIFIC ACCURACY

By H. S. D. WENT

I ENDED my recent examination of a remarkable inaccuracy in the late Sir Daniel Hall's *Reconstruction and the Land* by saying that it could only be explained in one of two ways: either scientists' pronouncements on their own subjects are not scientifically accurate; or Sir Daniel Hall was not a scientist. With a view to finding out which of these explanations is the right one, I have carefully examined two articles in the issue of *Agriculture: The Journal of the Ministry of Agriculture* for December, 1941. The first, on "Maintaining Soil Fertility," by Professor J. A. Scott Watson, M.A., Sibthorpian Professor of Rural Economy, Oxford University; the second, on "Organic Material in the Soil," by Professor E. J. Salisbury, C.B.E., B.Sc., F.R.S., of the Agricultural Research Council.

Professor Scott Watson's article begins admirably: "Our food production plans must obviously reckon with the possibility that the war may last for several more years, and we must therefore aim at an increase in food output that can be maintained for an indefinite period. We must avoid practices that will merely increase the 1942 output at the expense of 1943, or that will whip up the land for 1942 and 1943 and leave it exhausted in 1944. In fact, our aim must be to reach the end of the war, whenever it may come, with our land still in good heart." An aspiration which every supporter of The Return will share. The excellence of the statement is, however, marred by the misleading word "still," with its implication that our land is already in good heart. If I were to write: "My aim is to reach the end of the war still weighing 15 stone," my readers would be surprised if they learnt that, at the time of writing, I weighed only 7 stone.

The next section, on "Increased Call on the Soil," begins: "On the other hand, a considerable part of our agricultural land—both arable and grass—was in reasonably fertile and productive condition before the war, and much of this is now being driven harder." Put like that, it sounds quite cheering. "A considerable part" is not a very precise term, but it certainly means less than half and probably means more than a quarter. Again, "reasonably fertile and productive" is not very definite, but it certainly implies a state a long way short of complete fertility. In spite of Professor Scott Watson's vagueness it is possible to form a rather more definite estimate of the state of our soil. Lord Lymington, in *Famine In England,* published in 1938, wrote: "The war exhausted these (pre-1914) stocks of fertility and we have never replaced them." Sir Albert Howard, in *A Long-Term Policy for British Agriculture,* published in 1942, wrote: "When war was declared on September 3rd, 1939, British Agriculture was in sorry plight. Soil fertility had reached a low ebb; good farming had shrunk and was largely confined to the best lands." Professor Sir George Stapledon, in *England and the Farmer,* published in 1941, told us that of our 15,750,000 acres of permanent grass, 9,000,000 were only of second or third rate quality and that much of this was even worse than third rate. If Professor Scott Watson had said: "Most of our agricultural land—both arable and grass—was in a deplorably infertile state at the outbreak of war. Very little of our arable was even reasonably fertile; while four-sevenths of our permanent grass was in second rate, third rate, or even worse, condition." The meaning would have been the same, but the impression conveyed would have been much less cheerful—and much more realistic. The second paragraph of this section begins: "We cannot think of any reversal of our present food-production policy. We must make at least one more addition to our plough-land acreage before we think merely of maintaining it. We must maintain, and if possible increase, our acreages of essential food crops." I cannot, for the life of me, make out what the second of those three sentences is meant to mean; nor, I should imagine, could anyone else—except, of course, its author, who presumably meant it to convey something to his readers.

The next section bears the altogether admirable title, "Sound Manuring Essential."

Unfortunatley it does not live up to its name. It contains a pleasant little pat on the back for Professor Salisbury, who "in another article in this issue . . . gives a clear account of the nature and properties of humus, and points out that its most important characteristic is its capacity to absorb and hold both moisture and soluble manures—a capacity that it shares with clay." A sentence which would have been more accurate if its author had said "makes out" instead of "points out." Need I say that neither of our learned professors mentions a property of humus at least as important as its water-holding capacity, that is, its property of promoting the mycorrhizal association?

Professor Scott Watson continues: "It follows that deep 'strong' land can generally be kept in good condition without any special effort to maintain its humus content. The essentials of good farming in the case of heavy arable are good drainage, skilled tillage, and regular application of phosphates and nitrogen."

It is quite clear from the context that by "phosphates and nitrogen" artificials are meant. But artificials have only been in use for about a hundred years. It follows, therefore, that Professor Scott Watson would have us believe that no heavy arable land was ever well farmed until about a hundred years ago. Surely no more outrageous piece of nonsense was ever offered to a long-suffering public in the name of agricultural science. Professor Scott Watson ends this section with this sentence: "The chief materials available for maintaining fertility are four, namely, (1) dung, (2) artificials, (3) such crops, including catch crops, as are either folded or ploughed in as green manure, and (4) the grass sod produced by a temporary ley." It is curious to find an agricultural scientist who still believes that artificials can *maintain* fertility. Professor Scott Watson would do well to read the article on "Short-Term Leys and Soil Fertility" by Mr. W. A. C. Carr, of the School of Agriculture, Cheshire, which follows his own in this journal. Mr. Carr ends his introductory section thus: "Whilst artificial fertilisers are a great aid to latent fertility, their role can be no more than complementary; only organic material can recoup loss of fertility. Even the best arable land is all the better for a short-term ley to keep the soil in heart." I should have thought that, among the materials available for maintaining fertility, the ten million tons of humus in the controlled tips of our cities and great towns would have been worth a word. That Professor Scott Watson would not stoop to mention the possibility of eking out our scanty supplies of dung by composting them with vegetable or town wastes was only to be expected. The word "Indore" is taboo in polite agricultural scientific circles. The Professor goes on to discuss the use of his four materials, and the amount of space he gives to each is significant. Dung gets about two and a half inches, artificials about eight inches, catch crops about an inch and a quarter, and leys about seven and a half inches. In the beggarly space alloted to Dung NPK "rears its ugly head," for the Professor says "our war-time dung will produce the results that we ordinarily expect from a mucking only if it is supplemented by a dressing of sulphate of ammonia or other quick-acting nitrogen manure." He goes on: "It is, of course, possible to speed up the 'making' of farmyard manure by turning it over and leaving it in a loose heap. But if the heap becomes noticeably hot, there will be a considerable loss of ammonia." One is almost tempted to believe that Professor Scott Watson has never smelled a dung heap.

We have seen that Professor Scott Watson's statements are no more trustworthy than Sir Daniel Hall's figures; we will now turn to "Renowned Salisbury."

Professor Salisbury's article begins: "The part which organic material plays in the soil is perhaps subject to more dogma than any other topic with which the farmer is concerned." "Subject to more dogma" is rather a curious expression, but I think we can safely take it that the learned professor means that people hold very strong beliefs on the subject, that they express them strongly and that he disapproves of such dogmatism. He goes on: "The so-called 'humus' controversy has sometimes assumed the aspect of a political discussion rather than a sober attempt to form a balanced judgment upon the inferences to be drawn from the ascertained facts." Apart from the first four words—to which I shall

return in a moment—that is a perfectly true statement; what is more, the article we are examining provides abundant evidence of its truth. But why "so-called," and why the inverted commas? There is undoubtedly a controversy and the subject of the controversy is undoubtedly humus, so what else could it be called? As for the inverted commas, the Professor uses the word sixteen times in his article, five times with inverted commas and eleven times without; no principle governing his use of them is discernible.

The second section, on "Meaning of Humus," begins: "The most important organic material in the soil appears to be what is often spoken of as 'humus'." But as Professor Salisbury accepts and uses the word throughout the article, why does he insert the redundant words "what is often spoken of as"? A very fairly accurate description of humus completes this paragraph. The first sentence of the next paragraph deserves attention. It reads as follows: "Although we are unable to define 'humus' rigidly and admittedly there is still a great deal to be learnt about it, it would be well to disabuse our minds of the idea that humus is some mysterious substance without which healthy plant life cannot exist." At first blush that sentence gives the impression of being quite moderate and reasonable, but if we read it carefully we see that it boils down to this: "Although humus cannot be defined scientifically and although many of its properties are still mysterious, yet it is not mysterious and healthy plant life can exist without it." A statement which is, as to its first part, rather silly; and, as to its second part, highly dogmatic, almost certainly untrue and quite certainly unproved. The professor goes on to describe "soil-less gardening" and adds, in a passage which must be quoted *in extenso,* "Indeed, certain kinds of plants can be maintained in a much more healthy condition with this method of culture, but though reports of its use in California indicate remarkable yields of tomatoes, and even potatoes, due perhaps to climatic conditions, results in this country suggest that it would be likely to have commercial possibilities only for certain luxury horticultural crops. We are here only concerned to emphasize that the success which has attended these methods entirely disposes of the theory that organic material is essential for the growth of healthy plants." Let us consider that passage; bearing in mind that it is a statement by a scientist on his own subject, on which he is considered an authority, and that it is printed in an official technical journal. "Much more healthy" than what? Professor Salisbury doesn't tell us, but from the context he can only mean much more healthy than plants grown on fertile soil. There are two—and only two—criteria by which the capacity of any method of culture to produce healthy plants can be judged: plants grown by that method must have the power to reproduce, generation after generation, vigorous specimens of their kind, well able to resist the diseases to which that kind is subject; and they must, after the method has been followed for some twenty generations, be capable of nourishing those animals to which they are suitable. I say twenty generations because Sir Albert Howard has told us that it takes that time for the nutrient values conferred on a plant by previous manuring to work themselves completely out of its descendants. It therefore follows that Professor Salisbury's statement is not scientifically accurate unless plants have been raised, generation after generation, by "soil-less gardening" and after about twenty generations have been compared greatly to their advantage with control plants raised in the first instance from precisely similar seed and grown, generation after generation, on completely fertile soil; unless both sets of plants have then been exposed to the same diseases and the "soil-less" plants have put up a much stronger resistance; and unless the "soil-less" plants have been fed to suitable animals and that these animals proved much more vigorous and better able to withstand disease than control animals fed on control plants. Since we can be absolutely certain that no such experiment as I have described has been carried out—for if it had I.C.I. would very certainly have let the whole world know of it—Professor Salisbury's dogmatic statement is of no more scientific value than any other grossly improbable story told by Tom, Dick or Harry. The "theory" that organic material is essential to the growth of healthy plants is a scientific fact, based on millions of experiments carried out over thousands of years by millions of "practical scientists"—as Professor Salisbury very truly calls good farmers. There are, indeed, few scientific facts which are so soundly based. Yet the professor tells us that the fact of "remarkable yields" of tomatoes and potatoes obtained by "soil-less gardening" "entirely disposes" of it. A statement much better suited to "a political discussion rather than a sober attempt to form a balanced judgment upon the inferences to be drawn from the ascertained facts"!

After this Professor Salisbury goes on, in the section on "Retention of Water," to explain—in detail that one would have thought better suited to children of six or seven than to readers of *Agriculture*—why it is that finely divided rock or organic material will hold more water than a solid block of marble. He explains that a one foot cube of marble, if wetted all over, will carry a film of water six square feet in extent. He then asks us to imagine the block cut into thin slices, 256 to the inch, and continues: "We should still have the same volume of marble, but if wetted again, so that both sides of each slice are covered with a film of water, there will be no less than 3,072 sq. ft. of water film. If it were further cut into as many thin slices at right angles to the previous slicing, we should have innumerable little cubes the surfaces of which added together would total 12,288 sq. ft. or rather more than one-quarter of an acre." The accuracy of Professor Salisbury's facts and figures leaves something to be desired. Firstly, cutting a block of marble into thin slices would not leave us with the same volume, as very much more than half would be lost in dust. Secondly, the first slicing would give 3,072 slices, each a foot square, so that wetting "both sides" of them would give us 6,144 sq. ft. of water film and as the total area of their edges would be 4 sq. ft., the total film would not be 3,072 but 6,148 sq. ft. Thirdly, the second slicing would not result in "innumerable little cubes" but in rather more than 9,000,000 little rods. Fourthly, to get the cubes a third slicing would be necessary. Finally, the cubes when got would not have a total surface of "rather more than one-quarter of an acre" but of between a third and half of an acre.

I have only room for one more gem—from the section on "Varying Nature of Organics." "Hence, if we wish to maintain the fertility of our soil by means of such materials as sewage sludge, composts, etc., we must not expect them to produce the same results as farmyard manure, unless we ensure that the reservoir of mineral nutrients they contain has been brought to the same level." To speak of manuring with "such materials as sewage sludge, composts, etc.," is like speaking of dressing ourselves in such materials as cloth, clothes, etc. Professor Salisbury here enuntiates a truth—by accident. If we manure our soil with first-class compost we shall *not* get the same results as from farmyard manure. The late Sir Bernard Greenwell proved that Indore Compost invariably gave better results.

To sum up. We have seen that we cannot trust the late Sir Daniel Hall's figures. We have seen that we cannot trust Professor Scott Watson's statements of fact. And we have seen that we can trust neither Professor Salisbury's facts nor his figures. We are, therefore, forced to conclude that we cannot trust Agricultural Scientists to be Scientifically Accurate.

COMPLAINT TO OUR LADY

And without parable He did not speak to them

You rated us too highly when
In manger you laid the Food of men.
We could not bear that simple light:
Corrupt and hard, we needed night.
And in that labyrinthine dark,
With parable God clothed the stark.

—H.R.

The prophet is always at the mercy of events; nevertheless I venture to conclude this book with the forecast that at least half the illnesses of mankind will disappear once our food supplies are raised from fertile soil and consumed in a fresh condition.—*Sir Albert Howard in "An Agricultural Testament.*

FRAGMENTATION

By SIR ALBERT HOWARD, C.I.E.

ONE of the inadequacies of the modern world arises from the breaking up of great questions into smaller fragments to enable these morsels to fall into some artificial framework designed by man for the conduct of his affairs. This fragmentation occurs in matters great and small and can be seen in operation from international affairs through the whole conduct of the war and down to more limited fields such as scientific research. The statesman constantly forgets that the nations are members one of another: the administrators seldom realise that many of the problems they handle do not fall within the domain of a single ministry but affect a number: research workers are constantly trying to force their problems into the artificial subdivisions of science, a task which becomes increasingly difficult as the growth of specialisation proceeds and these compartments shrink in size.

I well remember a discourse by Dr. Temple, then Archbishop of York, in the Cathedral at Geneva on the eve of the Disarmament Conference, when he reminded his audience that the nations of Europe are fellow-members of a great community and that unless they could view the problems of disarmament and of peace from this angle, serious trouble was inevitable. But the Conference failed to act up to this principle and sectional interests prevailed, with results now all too clear.

In the region of administration one new ministry after another is being created to cope with the war effort. The conviction is growing that the evils of the resulting fragmentation are creating a fresh crop of problems even more pressing than those solved by the new machinery. Thoughtful people are beginning to realise that one of the great difficulties which will have to be overcome before the activities of the Ministries of Agriculture, Food and Health, for example, can be co-ordinated is the present splitting up of the subject. A school of thought has arisen and is rapidly gaining ground based on the principle that a fertile soil means healthy crops, healthy livestock, and last, but not least, healthy human beings, the logical outcome of which is the amalgamation of the three ministries which handle food—Agriculture, Food and Health—into a single agency. As the subject of nutrition becomes broken up into bits, two new problems are created: (1) powerful vested interests, like the milling and artificial manure industries, which now hamper progress are able to dig themselves in more and more effectively and to strengthen their stranglehold, because their operations escape attention when the nation's food supply is handled by three independent ministries; (2) the blunders of the administrators also increase. One glaring example has just been brought to my notice in which the Ministry of Food has nipped in the bud a most important development in social service which is vital to the health, efficiency and contentment of our labour force—a factor on which the result of the war might ultimately depend. Readers of this journal may like to know the details.

At the Winsford Bacon Factory in Cheshire, one of the most efficient organisations in the kingdom, the Co-operative Wholesale Society some time ago decided to try out the principles underlying *The Medical Testament* of the Cheshire doctors and to provide the staff, some 150 in number, with two good meals a day at cost price, the fresh food used being raised on fertile soil. For this purpose an area of land round the factory was brought into a high condition of fertility by the help of humus made from the wastes of the factory and of the land. Things were going well, the manager was enthusiastically devoting to this work his great powers of organisation and initiative, the local doctors, as well as the local notables, were watching the developments with interest and sympathy. I sampled one of these meals, which could not be bettered anywhere. At Winsford I felt a fire was being lighted which would soon spread throughout the length and breadth of the land for the reason that enlightened industry has for some time been trying to find some means by which cordial

working arrangements can be established between the management on one side and the labour force on the other. One direction is obviously for capital to use its powers to improve the health, well-being and contentment of the workers. Winsford was providing such an example of constructive social service. Then the blow fell. The Ministry of Food decided to close this factory under the scheme for the concentration of industry, quite oblivious of the fact that important developments were in progress in the processing of pigs, in the preparation of various animal extracts needed in medicine, as well as the provision of ideal meals for the workers already described. Naturally protests were raised. The Society's appeals to the Tribunal and to the Ministry of Food were disallowed. The Cheshire Panel Doctors also took up the case and laid the facts before Lord Woolton. In the correspondence which followed the Ministry cut a very sorry figure and were literally reduced to mincemeat. Had it been possible to take this case to the High Court, His Majesty's Judges would have castigated the bureaucrats in no uncertain fashion. The decision to close the factory was obviously made without a knowledge of the facts—in other words, on a fragment only of the case.

In the field of agricultural research the evils of fragmentation reach perhaps their highest development. I will quote two recent examples which have come to my personal notice.

The first concerns the Rothamsted Experiments on the continuous growth of cereals with the help of artificial manures. In a recent issue of this journal Mr. H. R. Broadbent has dealt with the weaknesses of one of these trials—those with wheat on the Broadbalk field. I shall refer to another on the greensand at the Woburn branch of Rothamsted. In the nineteen thirties the soil on these continuous experiments was beginning to go on strike as a result of repeated doses of chemicals, and the Board of Governors began to be alarmed. About 1936 I was invited by the Vice-Chairman of the Governing Body, the late Professor H. E. Armstrong, F.R.S., to accompany him to Woburn and see the condition of affairs with a view to the discovery of the cause of the trouble.

I have a vivid recollection of this visit. After listening to a learned discussion on the history of these plots by the officer in charge, we set out to see the crops, the Professor suggesting that we might take a spade with us. We saw the plots, to which a complete artificial dressing had been applied for many years. There was, however, no crop to see, only a copious development of the common mare's tail, which I believe was *Equisetum arvense*. I then enquired if any really good crops on similar land were to be seen and, if so, what was the manurial treatment. We were shown a fine crop of lucerne (a deep rooting perennial) which had been raised with pig manure. The cause of the failure of artificials on the cereals and the remedy were at once obvious. The natural aeration of the soil had been destroyed, as was indicated by the weed flora. I told the officer in charge that he would find a pan from six to nine inches below the surface of the ruined plots and that this had been caused by the destruction of the crumb structure, resulting from the stimulating effect of the artificials on the soil organisms, which naturally used up all the humus, including the humic cement of the compound particles, and that this diagnosis would be confirmed by a study of the root development of the *Equisetum* weed. This proved to be the case and the Rothamsted officials then came in contact, I believe for the first time, with the pan formation so common in sandy soils. This always interferes with soil aeration and upsets the normal life of the soil. At Woburn artificials had obviously changed the soil flora and prepared the conditions needed by a weed of semi-swampy land. My diagnosis was a simple application of the principle of reading one's practice in the plant.

The second example concerns the eelworm disease of potatoes which is now appearing all over the country as a result, I believe, of the continuous application of artificials. A few years ago I studied an interesting example on the lighter potato soils south of the Wash. Here the loss of the crumb structure following the destruction of the humic cement of the compound particles had given rise to the red and blue markings characteristic of heavy clay soils and a weed

flora typical of wet swampy soil. Under the conditions of poor soil aeration so established, the eelworm disease of potatoes flourished and destroyed all prospects of a crop.

The methods by which conventional agricultural science was dealing with these two problems was interesting. At Woburn a rigid statistical enquiry into the yields was mainly relied on to discover the cause of the land going on strike; south of the Wash an expert on eelworms was commissioned to discover, if possible, some means of overcoming the parasite. In neither case did it occur to the specialists that when troubles like these occur, Nature invariably sends us a messenger to say that all is not well with the soil. The only effective reply to such missives is to restore the soil conditions, and not to slay the bearers of evil tidings, as is now the rule. Naturally the results have never been impressive.

These two cases are typical of hundreds of examples to be seen all over the world of the misapplication of science to the vast biological complex we call agriculture and in which one factor is always influencing another. Not only are these factors in any particular season members one of another, but their incidence is dependent on what has gone before. In investigating such a system, how can the specialist, who has spent his life in learning more and more about less and less, or the statistician, whose data must always be in strict relation to the subject investigated, hope to succeed? Why not follow the methods Charles Darwin used in his studies of the earthworm and put simple questions to Nature and then build up a case on her replies?

I think I have said enough to establish the thesis that in the steering of the Ship of State, in the administration of our day-to-day affairs and in the investigation of our problems by means of science, we need an entirely new outlook. Knowledge must be the handmaid of understanding. There must also be a happy combination of the mental and the spiritual. One of the duties of our schools and our universities is to provide a stream of men and women capable of these tasks.

IN HONOUR OF JESSE COLLINGS

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

ON November 21st, 1935, I asked at Kidderminster Public Library for *The Life of the Right Hon. Jesse Collings,* written in part by himself, and in part by Sir J. L. Green (Longmans, 1920). The courteous librarian regretted it was not there. I reminded him that it was in the Library Catalogue of 1926 which he himself had given me. He answered that they had lately got rid of a number of books for which no further demand seemed likely, and was sorry this was among them. Such is fame. Jesse Collings is forgotten; even the hoary jest about the "three acres and a cow" is out of memory. This oblivion is too unjust to be lasting. His name will return, for the cause he strove for is abidingly the cause of England. In 1915 he gave us *The Great War: Its Lessons and Warnings,* which our day is writing anew in letters of fire that even financiers and politicians cannot wholly ignore, albeit they grudge to patriotic wisdom the paper granted to Bolshevism, blasphemous and Birth-prevention Interests and forms in triplicate. I am convinced that he will yet be honoured among the wisest and most loyal sons of England when our noisy celebrities are forgotten.

Born near Exeter in 1831, his father a bricklayer and builder, his mother of yeoman stock, he entered the ironmonger's trade, came to Birmingham in 1856, became Councillor for the Edgbaston Division in 1868, held with distinction the office of Mayor in 1878, entered Parliament in 1880 in the cause of true land reform, wherein, as Christopher Turner said, he stood alone. To him are due the few measures passed for small holdings; it was not his fault if they were in practice evaded. The tragedy of his lifework stands out clear. The devoted friend of a man of much showing, but, I will dare assert, far less wisdom and worth than his own, Jesse Collings followed blindfold the political changes of Joseph Chamberlain, and was

fascinated enough to believe that his party would some day restore the English peasant, in whom his country's safety lay. A tragedy of misguided humility. He died on November 20th, 1920.

Throughout his life he stood firm for peasant ownership, when even sympathisers were content with mere tenantship. This should endear his name to all distributists. A few of his testimonies during the heydey of industrialist triumph may now be timely. In his instructive book *Land Reform* (1906) he demolished the legend of the "hungry forties." The price of bread, he tells us, varied locally and from time to time, independently of the price of corn. Not the price of bread but the lack of money was the cause of complaint, that is unjust wages. "The cry of 'cheap bread' was used for political purposes then, just as the cry of the 'big and little loaf' is being used now and was equally false" (p. 335 cf. also 338, 343). Good milk was very cheap. "This with home-made bread, home-fed bacon, eggs, cheese, an occasional fowl or rabbit, with plenty of vegetables, formed a wholesome diet. The cost was small, the labour connected with the produce being done by the family. When this diet is compared with that of the poorer classes of the present day, which is largely composed of tea, white bread, salt fish, tinned meats, etc., with few if any vegetables, physical deterioration is largely accounted for" (p. 335). He laid stress on a due country education for country children.

In 1885 he said "the standard of welfare of the large family we call the nation should be not so much the amount of its aggregate money wealth, but the moral, material and social condition of the great mass of its members." The very thing Ruskin had been hooted down for saying in 1860. Citing an instance of an English smallholder who had lately made nearly 30 acres of neglected land richly productive, Collings added: "There is no mystery about this great yield of produce. It has ever been the result, both in ancient and modern times, of that intensive cultivation and heavy manuring of the land almost invariably found in connection with small farming and peasant proprietary" (*Land Reform,* pp. 219-220). Collings had an eye for history, and noted how in the English peasant "rebellions" there was devoted loyalty to the king, who was besought to enforce the *laws* upon the law-breaking baronage (p. 103).

I have not space to do justice to Collings's farsightedness, his rare aliveness to England's peril. Eight years before the first world war he wrote: "War, as a rule, breaks out suddenly, and for the unprepared there is no time for preparation. In the matter of food we are absolutely unprepared" (*Land Reform,* pp. 312 ff.). Again, "suppose the enemy had a dozen or so of swift, lightly armed cruisers of the 'commerce-destroyer' class, whose duties would be not to fight, but to run away from our ships of war, and to scour the ocean in search of grain-laden ships." Also, food might be declared contraband of war, Russia might be engaged, the Colonies and India would be reckoned as one with England, America would be neutral, besides needing more and more of her own produce, Argentina would be powerless to interfere. What other statesman then spoke so much to the point? The "practical" business folk repeated the guffaw about "three acres and a cow," and England drifted into war and peril of famine so great that Mammon himself decreed the restoring of tillage, but only, as the event witnessed, "until the times do alter." Once the peril was past, this criminal fool set in hand its redestruction. Will he be allowed to repeat this quisling treason? God knows. If Mammon and his servile *planners* have any say in it there can be no hope of a just peace or a sane settlement. We hope and pray that by God's mercy Nazareth may defeat and rout Babylon, and England be saved from Mars, Venus and Mammon. If England is saved she will not forget to honour the memory of Jesse Collings.

Of all the infernal uses to which a country can be put there is none like development. Let every good savage make incantation against it, or, if to some extent he has been developed, cross himself again the fructification of the evil. As for us whites, we are eternally demned, for we cannot escape the consequences of our past cleverness. The Devil has us on a complexity of strings, and some day will pull the whole lot tight.—*From a chapter on The African Coast in "Old Junk" by H. M. Tomlinson.*

THE POWER OF INDIVIDUALISM

By C. J. WOOLLEN

INDIVIDUALISM, as a social doctrine, was condemned by Pope Pius XI. In "Quadragesimo Anno," he shows the danger, on the one hand of denying or minimising "the social and public aspect of ownership," and, on the other, of rejecting or diminishing "its private and individual character." The one necessarily leads to "individualism"; the other to "some form of 'collectivism'." In his encyclical "Caritate Christi Compulsi," Pope Pius conjures "individuals and nations . . . . to put aside that narrow individualism and base egoism that blinds even the most clear-sighted; that withers up all noble initiative as soon as it is no longer confined to a limited circle of paltry and particular interests."

But it would be a grave mistake to regard "individualism" and "collectivism" as the bases of antithetic social theories. As the Pope further points out in "Caritate Christi Compulsi," "the most important decision proposed to man's free will" is "*for* God or *against* God; *this* once more is the alternative that shall decide the destinies of all mankind: in politics, in finance, in morals, in the sciences and arts, in the State, in civil and domestic society, in the East and in the West, everywhere this question confronts us as the deciding factor because of the consequences that flow from it."

Both "individualism" and "collectivism" are anti-social; and because anti-social, they are anti-religious. Both are in the same camp: *against* God. Not only that; they are manifestations of the same thing. All opposition to religion springs from the narrow egoism that prompts individuals to seek solely their own interests; from that aspect it is individualistic. It issues in "collectivism" when the individualist ideology is socially accepted.

If "collectivism" is basically individualistic, so is its extreme form, Communism. The apparent contradiction in calling individualism Communism is only one of the many paradoxes that the use of "isms" provides. It could be shown, for instance, that Puritanism is nothing of the kind. As much, if not more, internecine protesting has been carried on under the banner of Protestantism than against the supposed common enemy. Catholicism itself is hardly an "ism" so much as *the* "ism"; even so, there is a catholicism which is far too catholic. Even Thomism may be said to have been preceded by the doubting kind; the philosophic doubters of to-day might, from that point of view, be termed rival Thomists.

The paradox of the "isms" has led many people to-day to deprecate the use of them at all. But while there is much to be said against too long a catalogue, there is as much reason in demanding their abolition as there would be to refuse to recognise proper nouns because they can also be used in common, or even to object to words because they can be misunderstood. The ambiguity of the "ism" is solved as soon as we give it in its recognised sense inverted commas or, better still, capitals. Communism, for instance, may not be communism in fact, but it is certainly "communism" or Communism.

That being so, we may hasten to admit that there is in the Church a real collectivism or communism, but it is on the supernatural plane. Even so, it overflows into the natural social order. Pope Pius XI explains in "Quadragesimo Anno" that more lofty and noble principles than the economic must control economic supremacy; "to wit, social justice and social charity. To that end all the institutions of public and social life must be imbued with the spirit of justice; and this justice must above all be truly operative, must build up a juridical and social order able to pervade all economic activity." Further, the Pope recommends nations "to promote a healthy economic co-operation," and likens the social body thus formed to the Mystical Body of Christ, of which it would be, of course, the social expression.

The communism of the Church is in the union of faith and charity of her members. That is the answer to those who see in Soviet Communism, or at any rate in Communism as a social theory, a likeness to the communism of the early church. But on this, a quotation from "The Month," 1874, p. 168, is apt: "Some people are fond of the text: *They had all things in common*. But they forget the beginning of it: *The multitude of believers had one heart and one soul*. Union of faith and charity preceded union of property. And still through faith and charity lies the only road to a salutary and practical communism, that of the City of God on earth."

If the Church is essentially communistic —only we do not call her that, for fear of being misunderstood—she contains within herself the power of corporate action in the world. At first sight there would seem to be no need for lesser organisations within her ranks. Not only the motive force, but also the machinery of, for instance, Catholic action would seem to be there, so as to make any specific organising for Catholic Action superfluous.

But although the Church is collectivistic in the supernatural sense, she is composed of individuals. Her collective action must necessarily be carried out by her members, acting individually since each is an individual. She is too vast a body for concerted action to be initiated in other than purely supernatural work. There must be sectional organisation, and a getting down to groups. But the formation of these is only to provide an incentive to individual action. Without that, as the ultimate activity, the work would evaporate.

There is, in fact, in the Church, a collectivism and an individualism. And there is the same paradox of these being in reality manifestations of the same thing as there is in their material and anti-religious parodies. It is, moreover, only when Catholic activity becomes individualistic that it can be fruitful. One member of the Church cannot do the work of another, any more than the hand can do the work of the eye. The hand can work in harmony with the eye when they have the same objective, but the operation of each is distinct. And unless corporate action inspires and issues in individual action it is worse than useless. It becomes like a perpetual discussion whose resolutions cannot be put into practice because it never breaks off.

This doctrine is exemplified in the powerhouses of the Church, inhabited by the individualists in chief: the contemplative monks and nuns. But in more general Catholic Activity it is nowhere better illustrated than in the Catholic Land Movement. The Catholic principles involved are manifested in the Movement's insistence on the rights of the individual farmer and the smallholder; without that insistence the Movement would not be Catholic. The Catholic Land Movement is the bulwark against collective farming, and because of that, its success must always be a guarantee that Communist activities cannot prevail. "Communism," Pope Pius XI reminded us in his encyclical "Divini Redemptoris," "recognises in the community the right, or rather, unrestricted power, to draft individuals for the labour of the community with no regard for their personal welfare; so that even violence could be legitimately exercised to dragoon the recalcitrant against their wills."

The success of any Movement that protects the small man, particularly in agriculture because it deals with primary needs, safeguards human dignity: it protects from literal slavery. And the sense of human dignity—a healthy individualism—or perhaps Personalism, if again we revert to an acknowledged "ism"—is for the Catholic a necessity. It is true that, in the Pope's words, we must "unite all our forces in one solid, compact line against the battalions of evil, enemies of God no less than of the human race" ("Caritate Christi Compulsi"). But it is as individuals that we meet individuals of the opposite camp, and invite them, again to quote the Pope, "in the loving words of the sacred Liturgy: 'Be thou converted to the Lord thy God'."

"Roughly speaking, there are only two sets of combatants: those who say 'let us push ahead; everything will come right in the end', and the others, who say: 'Let us try to stop; we seem to be on the wrong road; we may have to go back to find the right road again.' The first set of fighters includes both capitalists and communists; they have, in spite of their deadly animosity, too many things in common, like father and son. They both accept the economic industrial development that has overtaken us as an inevitable process, a law of nature or a law of history, and they fully appreciate the whole thing as such. The Catholic Church has taken up her position in the opposite camp, hostile to both these fatalists, in defending private property, the institution of marriage, the right of parents to educate their children, the Church cannot help fighting Communism and Capitalism alike."—(Erich Meissner in *Germany in Peril* (quoted by *The Tablet*, 7th November, 1942)).

ORDER OF BATTLE: XIII

THE HORROR CALLED EUGENICS

IT is not surprising that the failure of Christian men to uphold the Christian ethic should have led to a crop of heresy and atheism.

Industrialism is the triumph of fragmentation, and our cowardly reluctance to accept the fact that human integration is incompatible with Industrialism has opened wide the door to an unprecedented onslaught of shoddy and evil substitutes for justice.

Eugenics is the theory that the squalor and misery of the poor are not caused by the denial to them of their share of God's good earth, but by their innate biological defects: that is, the theory that God and not man is responsible for this winter of our discontent.

Many English Catholics, quite characteristically, toyed with this theory. It was fought by a small group of Catholic writers, among whom the Editor of *The Cross and The Plough* was so happy as to find himself. It was killed, for Catholics, at a moment when much of the position had been ceded by clerical writers who ought to have known better, when Pius XI issued his Encyclical *Casti Connubii* on 31st December, 1930. The present writer was one of four or five Catholic writers against eugenics who had nothing to withdraw when that hammer-blow fell.

So much it is necessary to say in explanation to a generation which hardly remembers that desperate fight.

In those days an old fool in Australia gave £100,000 for the furtherance of sterilisation of the unfit: the Press became filled with nauseous propaganda, and local authorities with resolutions.

Their case was never within sight of being proved: their motive was never seen. The concept of the totalitarian state was hardly present to our minds. But it was present to the Nazi mind, and the Nazi leaders knew what a perfect instrument they had been given.

It is not generally known that the first—*the very first*—major public act of the Nazi Administration in Germany was to pass a drastic—an ideologically perfect—Sterilisation Law. Courts of experts were set up, and its terms of reference were so wide that anyone, or any group, repugnant to the State could be sterilised out of hand. *The Lancet* never did a better job than when it published the full text of this vile law.

The shock was severe and immediate. Their bestial and highly subsidised propaganda disappeared from the Press, sterilisation disappeared from the agenda, and the eugenist movement went underground.

Leopards, as is known, do not change their spots. The innate lust of the Best People for control instead of justice is not killed so easily. The war gave them their chance. This war in defence of the four freedoms has been marked on our side by an increasing tendency to adopt totalitarian expedients. There may be a case for this—we are not discussing that at the moment. But there is every indication that many or all of those expedients are intended to survive the war. It was only a question of time, therefore, for tht classic totalitarian expedient of eugenics to be restored to the agenda. Planning has its nemesis, and it is here. We are to plan not only things, but men.

The opening move has been made.

On 24th October last, Sir Cyril Norwood, President of St. John's College, Oxford, announced in his presidential address to the Educational Advisory Board that the only way to make people biology-minded in one generation was to make biology a compulsory subject in the schools. What he meant was made clear by his further statement that "*the world would have to turn to the problem of breeding from quality and not quantity.*"

He was followed by Mr. W. L. Sumner, who said "*It is very likely that in the near future chemical substances will be produced which will allow only males, or females, as the case may be, to be conceived.*"

So there it is again, in all its diabolical simplicity. Under which of the FOUR FREEDOMS it is included need not detain us. Let Poland answer. *Our* blood and tears will not be wasted.

We venture to suggest that our Catholic Press would be well advised to abandon many of the subjects which in Gibbon's sense, have *amused* it for so long, and to reflect that this is not a plot from the Left, but a Plan from the BEST PEOPLE.