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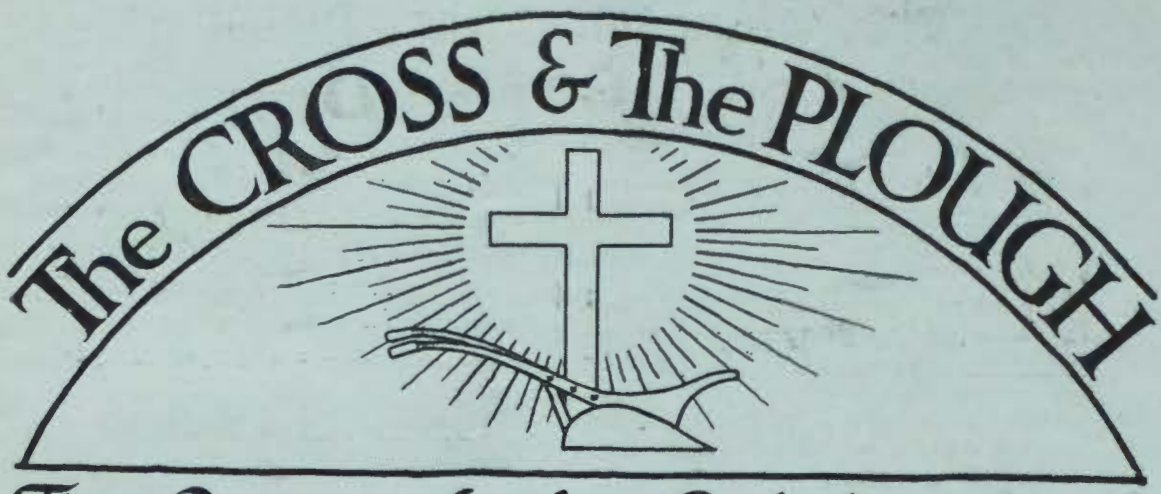
Catholic Land Federation of England and Wales



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The Cross and The Plough

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THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

STRAW IN THE WIND

Mr. Tom Williams, Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, spoke at Liverpool on 30th January.

He was so indiscreet, or so honest, as to plead for a "larger" agriculture after the war on the specific ground that we should need to be more self-sufficient.

The Economist was gravely shocked. *"His argument for an enlarged agriculture is based on a defeatist attitude towards export trade."* (3rd Feb., 1945).

A close perusal of the many references to exports in this and other issues of *The Economist* has not disclosed any basis of reason for that weekly's preference for exports. In this respect, Mr. Williams is the realist, and *The Economist* is the wishful defeatist.

THE WHOLE BOLTON

There is, indeed, the utmost uneasiness about exports among big industrialists. *Bretton Woods,* when digested, has been seen to involve a Leonine contract as between America and England, with the Lion on the other side of the Atlantic.

Lord Woolton, speaking at Bristol on 20th January, said that in this matter *the spirit of adventure would be needed as never before if we were to restore the nation's prosperity.*

Not even excluding Elizabethan times, presumably. It is, however, unlikely that even the modern financial and industrial buccaneers will throw up anybody more effective than Drake and Raleigh.

SNAKES IN THE GRASS

So clear is the dilemma before us that there are signs of raids on agriculture, not for agriculture's benefit.

When an English publicist or business man turns to see what can be looted from English land, he thinks naturally in terms of machines.

A Mr. A. P. Young, of the *Factory and Welfare Advisory Committee* of the Ministry of Labour, addressed a luncheon meeting of the *Engineering Industries Association* on 7th February.

He advocated a ten-year plan for the mechanisation of agriculture after the war, involving what he pleasantly called *drastic replanning of farm lay-outs.* He considered that by these means we could *aim at bringing down food imports to 30 per cent. of total consumption.*

He seems, like many another ignorant fellow, to think that mechanisation results in *more food.* Actually, as our readers know, it means no more than *fewer men.*

Whatever the nature of the problem, it is not that.

LADDERS IN THE AIR

Mr. Young went on to say that workers on the land must be able to *move upwards through the managerial structure.*

This phrase went home, no doubt, to the *Engineering Industries Association,* which knows how often, and to what extent, a mere working man in industry moves higher than Foreman. We trust that eminent body concealed its amusement.

THE MANAGERIAL STRUCTURE

A great deal of nonsense, indeed, is being talked generally about a *ladder of promotion* on the large mechanised farms. The Minister of Agriculture, deprecating too great an insistence on Small-holdings, at the Middlesex Guild Hall on 6th December last, urged *"The right way to make a success of farming on your own account . . . is to learn the job first by working for a farmer."* This is quite true if a small farmer is meant, but if indications are anything to go by, the County Committees will think first of workers on large mechanised farms. What hope an ex-Service man would have of learning small farming from a tractor needs little thought.

And on such farms, it cannot be emphasised too much, promotion is to the product of the Agricultural College, not to the peasant returned from the wars.

THE GREAT POTATO MYSTERY

As has been mentioned already in these columns, the Government arranged for double the pre-war acreage for this crop. It announced late last autumn that more than twice the pre-war tonnage was produced in 1944. And as the pre-war tonnage was 95% of our needs, this should have meant that we had nearly twice the potatoes we needed.

But there is a nigger in the wood-pile somewhere, for there has been a shortage of potatoes for the public, unprecedented in past spells of severe weather.

The air has been full of sinister rumours of potato crop left in bags on Lincolnshire fields, presumably forgotten, and if so certainly frosted in January. There are other rumours of potato flour in bread.

MORTON'S FORK

The only alternatives would appear to be two. Either the crop was wrongly stated (and we gave some reasons at Michaelmas why this should be so) or the growing monoculture and artificial doping is producing a potato that will not keep, especially through a severe winter.

Many housewives were already complaining that purchased potatoes tend to go black in cooking. The frost will not have improved matters in this respect.

We were all urged not to grow potatoes in our gardens because plenty were available from the potato miners. No gardener of any experience took any notice of this. He is justified by the event.

FINAL GUESS

Or can it be that bus drivers do not know how to make a clamp?

TAILPIECE

"The sun did not look on Sydney yesterday with its old, sharp brilliance, but shone through a blanket of dust with an orange glow. So weird was the effect over a great area that in distant Mildura a man telephoned the local newspaper to express his fear that the end of the world was coming. It is to be hoped that, in a sense, he was right. The great Australian cities have been living in a world apart from that of the soil which nourishes them, a world full of the preoccupations of industry and urban life but empty of realisation of how gravely the national heritage was being despoiled. That the man-made desert should arise and visit the greatest city of the Commonwealth was a dramatic warning—sufficiently so to encourage the hope that the old world of indifference may, indeed, be nearing the end. The dust blanket was more than a symbol of the present drought; in nature's inexorable cause and effect it links with generations of ruthless exploitation of the land. Growth and decay are not beginnings and ends in the timeless cycle of the soil, but repetitive processes: growth leads to decay and decay nourishes new growth in a delicate balance which maintains continuing fertility." — (*From the "Sydney Morning Herald," quoted by the N.F.U. News Sheet, 14th Feb.*).

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NOTES

The critical analysis of *Plowman's Folly* which appeared in the Christmas issue, has been followed, as we predicted, by an English edition.

The *Sunday Chronicle* of 11th February claims that Ministry of Agriculture officials "had been trying for six months to get a copy of Plowman's Folly. . . . The Minister will read the book as soon as it can be obtained."

Developments should be interesting.

On the other hand, the Editor must admit a slip in his arithmetic, which was never his strongest subject.

At Michaelmas, he calculated that official figures supplied meant that 12% of acreage was lost in mechanised cultivation of roots. This is true, but only if the area concerned is one acre *deep*. The percentage must be divided by the depth in acres. For example, a field "four acres" deep would mean a loss of 3% in the area. The main point remains that there is a substantial practical loss under mechanised cultivation.

"It is undoubtedly true that the first century of our era, being the time of a very free society . . . made the spreading of the Gospel very much easier. Those who were called to the apostleship were free men, good examples of distributism in their small fishing enterprises, and were able to leave their employment without any of the trouble there would be to-day. . . The world envisaged by the parables is all the time a society of men all very unequal in their possessions and their status."—*(Mr. Douglas Woodruff in "The Tablet," 10th February, 1945).*

Mr. Woodruff persistently associates distributism and inequality. We hope we do not do him an injustice in suspecting that in his view the inequality is of more social importance than the Distributism.

OUR DAILY BREAD

(*Your Daily Bread*: by Doris Grant, Faber & Faber Ltd., 4/6)

IT is curious how often the value and importance of a book are in inverse ratio to its size. Many years ago, on an important occasion, the present writer was offered a Penny Catechism by a very wise old priest. The youth, who was feeling very intellectual at the time, must have looked down his nose at this modest publication. He was corrected by the old priest in these terms: *"My dear boy, any fool can write a big book, but it takes a very clever man to write one as short as this."*

Mrs. Grant has written a very important book indeed. She deserves our gratitude not only for saying everything necessary about our daily bread, but for saying it in ninety pages. And these ninety pages include a short but characteristically pertinent chapter by Sir Albert Howard, the text of the famous Cheshire Medical Testament, and an account of the Bolton experiment.

The book is severely practical. It gives the reason why whole-meal bread is necessary to positive health; it gives the recipe for baking, with the little-known fact that whole-meal dough *must not* be kneaded, thus reducing considerably the work of baking. It deals faithfully with the Combine Millers, and gives the addresses of a number of firms from whom whole-meal flour may be obtained. A number of appetising scone and cake recipes, and suggestions for a balanced diet, are also given. It is of some interest that the Manager of one of the firms warned a purchaser recently that all-English whole-meal flour could not be used for bread. (It was promptly so used, with excellent results). It is extremely curious to find a man in such a position swallowing this ridiculous and unscrupulous legend. The whole of our history contradicts it loudly; the only element of truth it contains is never stated. This is that while the old English hard wheats make excellent bread, farmers have been constrained by economic necessity to grow soft white wheat, which contains more water and was used largely for poultry food. There is a welcome tendency to revert to the harder wheats.

Our readers are aware that some years ago, the Combine millers were constrained by the Government to produce flour giving 85% extraction. This was not more than a half-way house, since very important constituents were still extracted by the millers for their own nefarious purposes. Lord Woolton, in the face of indignant opposition, promptly decreed that chalk was also to be added to the flour. The millers have announced since Mrs. Grant's book was published that a whiter flour would be produced by reducing extraction to 80%. Who authorised this step has not transpired. Its indecent haste throws a very nasty light on the commercial millers. Certainly it was not the result of popular pressure. Our own conviction is that the said indecent haste was not only to initiate a reversion to that white flour which, being dead, can be stored for years, but to sell what are pleasantly called the offals, at inflated prices, to the manufacturers of patent foods for humans and livestock. The chief of our national ailments is constipation, which is increased and largely caused by white bread, and is cured quickly by whole-meal bread. This fact must be well-known to the Combines, and the callous decision to revert to a dead and constipating flour provokes the suspicion that the controlling financial interests are identical with those of the large manufacturing chemists.

The whole process may be described in Lewis Carroll's lines, which have been quoted previously in these pages, but which give the best short description of the modern world.

But I was thinking of a plan
To dye one's whiskers green:
And always use so large a fan
That they could not be seen.

The chalk episode provokes another reflection. Our uneducated, or at least unacademic, ancestors knew all about good food, and practised what they knew. This cannot be allowed in a world which, as we all know, depends for its life on men who have been to special colleges and have special degrees and titles. So as we approach the bread which our ignorant ancestors enjoyed, experts must intervene and add chalk. It is true that everybody called it calcium, but the wonder is that they did not insist on adding nicotinic acid, which is one of the ingredients of the wheat berry, desirable for us, but withheld by the roller mills. Perhaps no one could think of the formula in time.

The whole weird process, in so far as it is not explained by the lust of money or power, throws into focus one of our most curious superstitions. It cannot be doubted that many people who hold that Shakespeare did not write his plays are affronted chiefly by the fact that Shakespeare had no University Education. We do not, here, exclude the possibility that as Mark Twain said, the Plays were actually written by another man of the same name. But that Shakespeare had no academic qualifications is undoubtedly his chief defect in many quarters. So with bread (and beer and many another good thing). To produce and consume them without the intervention of the chemist and the Professor is regarded as little less than the Sin against the Holy Ghost.

Mrs. Grant has done much to kill that worst of the modern superstitions. This book is essential reading. To act on it is now essential practice.

HOME TO ROOST

"The real truth is that the matter goes far deeper than you imagine. Large fields, water supply to each, electric power, modern cottages, milking machines—I have done all this and yet I know none really meets the case. The real fact is that the nation has become commercially-minded, and it has lost all interest in agriculture. It is a phase through which all civilisations pass, and it leads to disaster. The surer you make life in the town, the more regular the employment, the softer and more glamorous the life, the less will men wish to endure the physical toil of the fields. My tractor driver, a good hard-working industrious man, was asked by one of my land girls what he thought about as he sat all day long on his tractor. He replied: 'I LOOKS AT THE BLOODY EARTH AND I SAYS BLAST IT'."—Major R. A. Dyott, of Lichfield, in a letter to *The Economist*, 13th January, rebuking that organ of the disaster for a characteristic article on *Farming Efficiency*.

It is of interest that in that Editorial article, The Economist *quotes with hearty approval a proposal, after survey, to turn 123 farms of an average acreage of 109 into 28 farms of an average acreage of over 450. There was no mention of what would happen to the balance of 95 farmers, even on the (unstated) supposition that 28 of the 123 would be used in charge of the large farms. The capitals are ours.—The Editor.*

JANUS

By CAPT. H. S. D. WENT

IN the momentous debate on Soil Fertility in the House of Lords on October 26th, 1943, the late Sir Daniel Hall was quoted by two speakers. The Duke of Norfolk, Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, speaking to his brief and attempting to answer Lords Teviot, Portsmouth, Geddes, Bledisloe, Warwick and Glentanar, quoted Sir Daniel as having said:

"When it is asserted that the produce grown from artificial fertilisers has no nutritive value, lacks vitamins, or flavour, or is subject to disease, my scepticism asserts itself. I only remember that the men who grow 60 to 80 tons of tomatoes to the acre must depend very largely on artificial fertilizers and that their crops are entirely free from disease and are of unrivalled quality. Disease is not a product of modern high farming with chemicals, though it may be the mark of their use in an ignorant manner."

What ass ever asserted that crops grown with the help of chemical manures have *no* nutritive value? What Sir Albert Howard and his disciples assert, and in some cases (e.g., the late Sir Bernard Greenwell) have proved, is that they have less nutritive value than crops grown with farmyard manure or compost. Sir Daniel did not say upon what he based his scepticism as regards the superiority in flavour of naturally grown over chemically grown vegetables. Possibly he had tasted both and could detect no difference. If that was his experience, it differed from that of a large number of people who have made the experiment. Sir Daniel's scepticism as to disease of chemically manured vegetables was remarkable. The bulk of our crops are chemically grown and diseases of all kinds are increasingly rife among them. The proof of this can be found in every issue of our farming and gardening Press, from the most technical and scientific to the most popular, in the articles and the advertisement columns alike.

Apparently Sir Daniel's scepticism was based on his knowledge of successful market-gardeners who grow 60—80 tons of tomatoes to the acre and whose crops of tomatoes he believed to be entirely free from disease. His information on this point must have been curiously incomplete, for it is common knowledge that disease is a positive nightmare to tomato growers throughout the country. Mr. A. R. Wills, of Romsey in Hampshire, is one of our leading market-gardeners. Some years ago he lost three acres from wilt fungus. He composted the haulms of the diseased plants with farmyard manure by the Indore process and raised a completely healthy crop of tomatoes on the compost. Mr. Wills says—

"This compost we have used in tomato houses for several years, and in spite of the fact that plants affected by disease are put into the heap, no ill-effects have been traced."

From about 30-cwt. of stable manure plus vegetable wastes, he produces eight to nine tons of compost (cf. Sir Bernard Greenwell:

"From the results I have seen that we can multiply our dung by four and get crops as good as if the land had been manured with pure dung.").

Possibly Sir Daniel would not have accepted Mr. Wills' evidence, for I do not know if he gets 60—80 tons of tomatoes to the acre, but he could not have refused to accept that of Mr. Secrett, for, in "*Reconstruction and the Land*," he mentioned that gentleman as an example of a large market-gardener who produces crops of a quality that the small man could not hope to rival. Mr. Secrett writes:

"As stable manure became scarce troubles arose, especially on poor, sandy lands; output per acre gradually fell, and all kinds of diseases and pests became prevalent. Some growers attempted to counteract the loss of stable manure by applying heavy dressings of inorganic salts, but in most cases the results were disastrous."

He also writes:

"The NPK school, having no market-garden experience, viewed the whole situation from a farming angle, and indeed were not convinced that the problems of vegetable growers differed from those of cereal farmers. But whereas a cereal farmer producing a few acres of vegetables can arrange his rotation so that fresh land is utilized each year, and in the interim can apply muck to his fields, the same is not possible with a market-gardener."

It will be noticed that Mr. Secrett does not condemn the use of chemicals for corn growing. His evidence is therefore even stronger than if he had been as whole-hearted as Sir Albert Howard in his condemnation. Sir Daniel Hall would seem to have picked upon a singularly poor example of the beneficial effects of NPK.

From this short examination of Sir Daniel Hall's pronouncement we see that it started with a serious misrepresentation of his opponents' position, was full of highly disputable statements and, coming from a man in the position he held in the world of agricultural science, was bold to the point of rashness. This boldness is in curious contrast to the caution shown in the quotation given by Lord Bledisloe in the same debate. He quoted Sir Daniel as having said to him:

"Be cautious in what you are saying, at least in print, because although there is every likelihood that these" (i.e., Sir Albert Howard's) "*conclusions will ultimately be proved to be true, there has so far been no full development of research to establish them beyond all doubt."*

I think it will be agreed that the contrast between the two quotations is not only curious, but unpleasant. In the one, we have Sir Daniel Hall advising Lord Bledisloe to be cautious in identifying himself with conclusions which, although Sir Daniel thought them to be most probably true, in his opinion had not yet been indisputably proved; in the other, we find him first grossly misrepresenting these same conclusions and then holding them up to ridicule on the flimsiest evidence. Neither nobleman mentioned the source of his quotation, but from internal evidence I think we can safely take it that Lord Bledisloe was quoting from a personal communication and the Duke of Norfolk from some published—or at any rate official—work. If this assumption is correct, the unpleasantness of the contrast is accentuated.

To draw attention to blots upon the record of a man so eminent and so lately dead as the late Sir Daniel Hall is an ungrateful task, but if Sir Albert Howard's conclusions are true they are of vital importance to the future of England, and that matters more than the posthumous reputation of any man.

Fas est ab hostibus discere, and we who are working for The Return must make it as widely known as possible that Sir Daniel Hall thought it most probable that Sir Albert Howard's conclusions are true and that their truth will eventually be established as a scientific fact.

THE SOIL OUR TEACHER

In our issue for Ladyday, 1944, we reviewed *The Compost Gardener*, by F. C. King. This little work, we pointed out, was very remarkable because gardeners can seldom write, and writers, all too often, cannot garden.

Mr. King has now placed us further in his debt by *Gardening With Compost* (Faber & Faber: 4/6 net).

This is a thoroughly workmanlike statement of the reasons why gardeners who wish to retrieve the higher standards of the past should use compost and eschew artificials. It is full of practical examples of the bad long-distance effects of using NPK and the astonishing recoveries when compost has been substituted.

This book is entirely practical, and conclusive for that reason. It should be in the hands of every gardener.

"*The operations of nature,*" says Mr. King, "*the waste products of industry and of the countryside, the germination of seeds, the growth of the seedling, the maturity of the plant, its fruition and its decay, are all linked together in the endless chain of events. If any one link can be considered of more vital importance than the rest, then I declare that link to be the return of all waste materials to the land.*"

This thesis he proves with knowledge and vigour, and with numerous examples which will be conclusive to all but the Ministry of Agriculture. In his later chapters, he attacks with equal vigour and point the Townsman who acquiesces in the appalling destruction of urban wastes, the Scientist who specialises on effects rather than on causes, and Flower Shows in their present form.

Sir Albert Howard contributes an introductory and a final chapter with all his normal incisiveness.

PIUS XI

PASSAGES FROM QUADRAGESIMO ANNO (1931)

Newly Translated by WALTER SHEWRING

. . . . The aim which Leo XIII declared us bound to strive for is the rescue of the proletariate. We must reassert it all the more strongly now because his salutary injunctions have been too often consigned to oblivion, either through deliberate suppression or in the belief that they were impracticable—a false belief, for they can and must be applied to-day. The horrors of "pauperism" that faced the Pope then may be less rampant among ourselves, but his words have not lost their force and wisdom. True, the conditions of workmen have been improved and some injustice repaired, particularly in the larger and more civilised States, where it can no longer be said that the class of workers are victims one and all of misery and of destitution. But modern machinery and industrialism, rapidly flooding great tracts of territory —alike in the New World and in the ancient civilisations of the Far East—have enormously increased the numbers of dispossessed proletarians there, whose groanings go up from earth to God. There is, moreover, the huge army of rural labourers, sunk in status, hopeless of ever obtaining "a share in the land"[1] and hence, unless proper and efficacious remedy be applied, bound perpetually to the proletarian status.

There is, it is true, a quite valid distinction between proletarianism and pauperism. Nevertheless, when we see on the one side the vast masses of property-less wage-earners, on the other the enormous wealth in the hands of a few over-moneyed men, we have incontrovertible proof that the riches so plentifully produced in this age of industrialism are far from rightly distributed and far from justly apportioned between class and class.

Every endeavour then must be made that henceforth at least the fruits of production shall be divided otherwise; that no more than a rightful portion of them shall pass to the rich man's store and that the workers shall have an ample sufficiency—not in order to work less (man is born to labour as birds to flight), but to improve their resources by thrift. By wise management of their savings they may then bear the burdens of a family more easily and more hopefully, emerge from the hand-to-mouth uncertainties besetting the proletarian, meet the changing fortunes of life with confidence, and rest assured that the end of their own lives will not leave their survivors without provision.

These principles Pope Leo not merely suggested but proclaimed in open and unmistakable terms. In the present Encyclical we repeat them with every emphasis and call for firm and immediate effort to put them into practice. Failing that effort, let none suppose that public order and the peace of human society can effectively be defended against the forces of revolution. . . .

It is clear that since the time of Leo XIII there have been important changes in economic conditions. As you are aware, his Encyclical chiefly envisaged that economic system where Capital and Labour co-operate for production—where, as he admirably put it, "Capital cannot dispense with Labour nor Labour with Capital." Since his whole endeavour was to remould this system to the principles of right order, the system in itself is patently not to be condemned. And indeed it is not inherently evil; but it transgresses right order when the one concern of Capital in employing workers or proletarians is to turn all business and all economic activity to its own private interest and arbitrary pleasure, setting aside the human dignity of the workman, the social implications of economics, social justice itself, and the good of the community.

True, even to-day, the system in question is not the only existing one; there is another which still embraces a large and important group of men, among them the peasant class (the greater part of the human race) who win a livelihood for themselves in honest and honourable fashion. This system too has its problems and difficulties, touched upon more than once both by Pope Leo and by ourselves. But with the world-wide spread of industrialism, the capitalist economic system has likewise extended everywhere, and this since the time of *Rerum Novarum*; even those outside its own orbit have seen it invade their social and economic life, colouring and pervading this with its own characteristics, useful, harmful or vicious. When therefore we turn to speak of the changes in the capitalist system which have come about since Pope Leo's time, our concern is not only with those countries whose system is admittedly that of industrial capitalism; it is the whole human race whose welfare we have at heart.

In the first place, it is perfectly evident that the special mark of our times is not the mere accumulation of wealth, but the centring in a few men's hands of immense power and tyrannous economic supremacy; these few, moreover, are most often not owners, but trustees and directors of funds invested, which they administer at their own arbitrary caprice. This supremacy becomes irresistible when those who exercise it, the holders and controllers of money, are also the masters of credit and arbiters of lending. Hence they supply the lifeblood to the whole economic body; every channel of its vitality is in their hands, so that none can breathe against their will. This concentration of power and influence, the characteristic note of modern economics, is a natural result of the unchecked freedom of competition which permits survival only to the strongest—and in practice that often means the most ruthless and most unscrupulous in the fray.

Again, from this concentration of power there comes a three-fold rivalry. There is first the struggle for domination in the economic field itself; then the grim battle for control of the State, so that its resources and its authority may be made to serve economic rivalries; lastly, there is the clash between State and State, and here we see two forces at work. On the one hand, there is the use of military power and political means to secure national economic advantages; on the other, the use of economic power and supremacy to decide international political quarrels.

The final outcome of economic individualism is such as every Catholic bishop, every Catholic priest and layman must see and sorrow for. Free competition has killed itself; economic dictatorship has taken its place; desire for gain has been succeeded by unbridled ambition for absolute power; the whole economic life has hardened, passing into hideous ruthlessness and barbarity. There has also been a confusion and intermingling of the functions of civil authority and of economics, scandalous in itself and calamitous in its consequences, one of the worst being the degradation of the majesty of the State. The State should be free from all strife of parties, bent only on justice and on the common good, throned above all that it rules and governs; it is now a slave, given over in bondage to human greed and passion. In the relations of peoples to each other, these conditions have had contrasting consequences; on the one hand, economic Nationalism or economic Imperialism; on the other, financial Internationalism or the international Imperialism which finds its own country where it finds its own profit. Either system is detestable and pernicious; either goes back to the same source.

These are all great evils. The remedies for them have been expounded in the second part of the present Encyclical; having given explicit teaching on them there, we need only resume them briefly here:—

The existing economic system is mainly based upon Capital and Labour. Each of them in itself, and the two in co-operation, can only be considered aright through the principles of sound reason and of Christian philosophy. These principles therefore must be both assimilated and practised.

Two particular dangers lie ahead—individualism and collectivism. To escape them both, proper regard must be had to the two-fold character of Capital and of Labour; each is at once individual and social.

The mutual relations of Capital and Labour must be conformed to the laws of strict justice—commutative justice—but with the support of Christian charity.

Free competition must explicitly be confined within proper bounds; it must be brought under effective control by public

1 Rerum Novarum.

authority in things within the latter's province. This holds still more strongly for economic dictatorship.

In every nation, public ordinances and institutions must be such as to mould society as a whole to the needs of the common good and to the standards of social justice. If this be done, economic life—so important a part of social life generally—will unfailingly be restored to sanity and right order. . . .

It is a lamentable thing that there have been, and still are, men who call themselves Catholics yet who scarcely regard at all the sublime commands of justice and charity which bid us not only give every man his due but succour our needy brothers as we should our Lord himself; more, in their greed for profit they do not shrink from oppression of the workers. Worse still, there are some who pervert religion itself, using its name to cover their exploitations and to screen themselves from their workmen's quite just complaints. Such conduct will always meet our strong condemnation. Though the Church is guiltless in the matter, she has been supposed and alleged to take sides with the rich and to be indifferent to the sufferings and needs of the disinherited; and for this these men are responsible. How false and unfounded such thoughts and charges are is amply illustrated by her history in general; and the very Encyclical whose anniversary we are celebrating is admirable proof that such aspersions on the Church and her teachings are eminently unjust. . . .

Men's minds to-day are almost entirely preoccupied with temporal unrest, temporal disaster, temporal ruin. Yet if, as we should, we view things with Christian eyes, what are all these to the ruin of souls? Nevertheless, it may truly be said that the present conditions of social and economic life are for great masses of men the gravest possible hindrances to concern for the one thing necessary, eternal salvation.

We then, made Shepherd and Guardian of these numberless sheep by the Prince of Shepherds who bought them with his Blood—seeing them in such jeopardy, we can scarce withhold our tears. Conscious of this pastoral office and anxious for all our children, we consider continually all means to help them and we call to the tireless zeal of others whom justice or charity links to the same cause. If by a wider use of riches men learn to win the whole world, what will it profit them if thereby they lose their own souls? What will it profit to ground them in wholesome principles for the conduct of economics if they let themselves so be swept away by selfishness, by mean and unbridled greed, that *hearing the commandments of the Lord, they do all things contrary*?[1]

This defection from the Christian law in social and economic matters, and the consequent apostasy from the Catholic faith of great numbers of working men, are due fundamentally to a disorder in the soul and its affections which is a dire effect of original sin. By original sin the marvellous unison of man's faculties has so been broken that he is easily led astray by perverse desires and strongly tempted to set the fleeting goods of this world above the enduring goods of heaven. Hence comes the unquenchable thirst for riches and temporal possessions; at all times it has instigated men to transgress God's laws and trample upon their neighbour's rights, but in the economic conditions of to-day it lays stronger snares than ever for human frailty. The uncertainty of economic affairs, and still more of their general background, demands from all those engaged in them an extreme and unremitting exertion of energy; as a result, some have become so deaf to the voice of conscience that they have come to believe that they have the right to make money no matter how, using fair means or foul to protect their hard-won gains from the accidents of fortune. Easy returns, such as anyone may win in a market subject to no control, allure great numbers to the business of sale and exchange with no other aim than the making of clear profits with the least trouble to themselves; speculating without restraint, they raise and lower the price of goods at their own greedy whim—the makers of them, however careful, being quite thrown out of their reckoning in the matter. Again, the legal provisions in favour of limited liability companies have been the occasion of scandalous abuses. When responsibility is so weakened down, it has little hold upon the conscience; so much is obvious. It is equally obvious that the impersonal name of some

1 Judges, 2, 17

firm may be a safe cloak for the worst injustices and frauds, and that unscrupulous Boards of Directors betray the trust of clients whose savings they undertook to administer. Lastly, there are the clever and conscienceless men who rouse an appetite for their wares without asking themselves if they serve a decent purpose; pandering to that appetite, they thrive on the wants they have created.

These monstrous evils might have been checked—they might even have been averted—if the moral law in all its strictness had been vigorously enforced by civil authority; but too often such action was miserably lacking. The changes in the economic order began at a time when in many minds the teachings of rationalism had already taken firm root; it was not long before there came into being a new economic doctrine divorced from the true moral law, and human greed, quite unrestrained, was abandoned to its own courses. As a result, more men than at any time before centred all their aims on indiscriminate money-making; letting their own selfish interests over-ride all else, they perpetrated without misgivings the most flagrant crimes against their neighbours. Themselves a pattern of obvious success, flaunting their wealth, mocking as idle the qualms of others, and crushing any more scrupulous rivals, these pioneers on the highroad to destruction[1] found many to follow their evil steps.

When captains of industry went thus astray from the paths of justice, it was natural enough that working men in their multitudes should everywhere plunge into the same slough—the more so since more often than not they were treated simply as tools by employers as unconcerned for the souls of their men as they were unconscious of spiritual things. And indeed the background of modern factory life has elements which one shudders to contemplate: the terrible dangers besetting their workmen's morals (the younger men's especially) and the virtue of girls and women; the constant thwarting of family life and ties, in general by our whole economic system, in particular by abnormal housing conditions; the almost unsurmountable obstacles to the proper keeping of holy days; the general weakening of that Christian sense of things which once taught such lofty wisdom to simple unlettered men, and its replacement by the single anxiety to win food for the day, no matter how. Thus bodily labour, decreed by Providence for the good of man's body and soul—this even after the Fall—is everywhere changed to an instrument of perversion, and the factory which turns dead matter to higher uses brings men to corruption and degradation.

For this pitiful ruin of souls, whose continuance will baffle all efforts for the reform of society, the one true cure is a frank and single-hearted return to the teaching of the Gospel and the commands of Him who alone has the words of eternal life, words which, though heaven pass and earth pass, will not pass away. All men of real experience in social matters are bent upon some re-shaping of things in accord with reason to restore economic life to a sound and rightful order. But such an order—which we ourselves vehemently desire and earnestly strive to bring to pass—will be essentially halting and imperfect unless all men's energies are set unanimously on imitating and, as far as man may, on achieving, the marvellous unity of the divine plan. We mean that perfect order untiringly preached by the Church and demanded by human reason itself when it walks aright; the direction of everything towards God as the primal and sovereign end of all created activity, and the holding of all good things beneath him as simple means, means to be used only as they lead to the winning of that sovereign end. . . .

1 cf. Matt. 7, 13

These fields are mine. I have brought back their fertility; my son will farm them when, in the course of time, I leave them—better than I found them.

He spends his weekdays ploughing the arable and his week-ends feeding the bullocks, helping the yardsman. He says he enjoys it. His brother, still at school, hopes to work there when he leaves. It is his choice, not mine. A third son wants to do the same, and the fourth littlest boy says he will help him.

These boys know what work is; they "cop into it" at harvest and do a nine or ten hour day to help get the corn in. Too much for mere children?

They seem happy and mentally free; it is their rhythm of life; they have learned neatness and method. The farm, I tell myself, as I look over the beautiful landscape, is a success; and for myself, it has given me a vision of life based on work which seems, neither directly nor indirectly, to bring harm to no man.—*Henry Williamson, in the Evening Standard.*

"PRO FOCO . . ."

AN IMAGINARY DEBATE ON AN AGRICULTURAL POLICY

By CECIL D. BACHELOR

MR. A.—"I take it, Sir, that your idea is to make this country of ours an agriculture country, thereby scrapping all our industries and reducing the population to the level of underpaid farm-workers!"

Mr. B.—"Well, it is hardly as drastic as that, but in the main, yes. Let me reiterate my suggested policy. For many years past we have put our faith in industry and commerce. We have encouraged men to leave their homesteads in the country and to migrate into the towns. Attracted by higher pay, bright lights and the so-called amenities of large cities, our population deserted their birthright—the land—and became willing slaves to the machines of Industry. And what was their reward? Poor health: undernourishment: the loss of their dignity and the prospects of joining the ranks of the two million unemployed which disgraced this country before the war.

The only solution left to restore man's self-respect, health and the dignity of his labour, is to reverse the process and bring him, and his family, back to the land; to live in peaceful and healthy communities; living on the land and not off it. Towns must be reduced and their populace rehabilitated in the country. It is the only way to break the throttling grasp of Industrialism."

Mr. A.—"So you think that by liquidating Industry and all that it stands for, and reducing our manhood to poverty-stricken land-workers, you are going to make their lot happier?"

Mr. B.—"Why poverty-stricken? Do you call a man with a full stomach, a healthy body and a happy and contented mind, poverty-stricken? Surely the man who works on some monotonous soul-destroying job in factory or office is the one who is suffering in poverty! The poverty of a slave with Industry as his taskmaster."

Mr. A.—"That's all very well! But unless we have Industry how are we to manufacture, and what about our export trade?"

Mr. B.—"Well, what about it? Magnates of Industry tell us that unless we import foreign foodstuffs we cannot export our manufactured articles. This, to me, is all very absurd, because who gains if to enable us to export, say, one million pounds worth of our manufactured articles, we have to import one million pounds worth of foodstuffs? The man who made these manufactured articles hasn't gained anything; true he got his living making them, but he could have equally as well earned his living growing the million pounds worth of foodstuffs. In fact, he would have gained had he done so, by living and working in a healthy atmosphere as against working in some ill-lighted, ill-ventilated factory or office."

Mr. A.—"Are you suggesting that all skilled craftsmen should be compelled to drop their trades and work on the land?"

Mr. B.—"No. Certainly not. Crafts would be as much an integral part of the plan as farming. Craftsmen would work in the villages, using the raw material of the district: for example, the carpenter would use wood from the nearby forest; the weaver wool from the backs of the sheep roaming in the adjoining meadow; the baker would make his wholewheat bread from locally grown wheat and slake his thirst with beer brewed from barley grown in the district, and so on."

Mr. A.—"In other words, you propose making each village a self-contained community?"

Mr. B.—"As far as possible, yes!"

Mr. A.—"Then do you suggest pulling down existing towns and erecting them around villages, which would then cease to be villages under these circumstances?"

Mr. B.—"Hardly that. After the war there will be much of London, for example, which will have to be rebuilt. Instead of rebuilding in London, would not a suitable opportunity be presented to erect new villages in rural areas well outside the metropolis? This would at the same time reduce the built-up area of London and increase the open spaces which could in time be used for agricultural purposes."

Mr. A.—"It sounds very Utopian. But what about our heavy industries such as coal and steel?"

Mr. B.—"They would have to remain, but a lot could be done, I feel sure, to intermingle agriculture with industry even in the black country. At the present time there is too much segregation of industry and agriculture, and industry gets all the plums."

Mr. A.—"Such as?"

Mr. B.—"Economics, taxation and laws generally. These are all designed to assist industry. Agriculture is always the Cinderella."

Mr. A.—"Would a man working and living in one of these village communities earn as much as he did when working in town?"

Mr. B.—No, possibly not. He wouldn't have to, his outgoings would be less. No travelling expenses, lower rent, cheaper and better food, less wear and tear on clothes and far less expenditure on ready-made amusements."

Mr. A.—"Who would run these community farms? The State or private enterprise?"

Mr. B.—"Neither. They would be individual smallholdings, and the craftsman a master man running his own business. Both would be free to sell their holding or business and to remove to another village if they so wished."

Mr. A.—"Who would build the farmhouses and workshops?"

Mr. B.—"Private enterprise, with the rents controlled by the local Council, or, of course, the small-holder or craftsman could build their own property."

Mr. A.—"What proportion of the town population could these villages absorb?"

Mr. B.—"On the assumption that two acres can produce all life's necessities for one man, then this country could absorb some twenty million persons on the land."*

Mr. A.—"But what an existence it would be! The modern man could not be expected to revert to the position of a villein of the feudal days. The man, woman and child of to-day want life, variety and travel!"

Mr. B.—"True, they want it; but is not a lot of this craving for change and excitement but a sign that man is so bored with his particular work, that he has to have a palliative in the shape of films, entertainments, etc.? Man is really happiest when he is working on a job he really likes doing."

Mr. A.—That is true. But supposing the bank-clerk, for example, didn't like farming, how would he get on living on the land?"

Mr. B.—"He could stop at his bank. There would be no compulsion for any man to take to a country life. The scheme is to encourage the return to the land, not to enforce it, and it would take more than one generation to accomplish the task."

Mr. A.—"Well, it would be worth trying. It couldn't lead us to a worse existence than that which we enjoy under industrialism."

* *EDITORIAL NOTE.—Extensive farming has been so general in this country that experiments on the maximum food to be expected from one acre have not been on such a scale as to* prove *a definite general minimum.*

In 1821, William Cobbett, that very practical man, gave specific directions how a cow could be fed entirely from the produce of a quarter of an acre (Cottage Economy, V). *The latest experiment in this direction is probably that of Mr. Thomas Wibberley, son of the well-known Professor Wibberley.*

This gentleman gave detailed accounts week by week of the progress of his attempt to show that a family *could be maintained on one acre, except for bread. It must be taken that substantially he proved his case (see* The Smallholder, *April to December, 1941).*

In view of these and similar experiments, Mr. Bachelor must be taken to be well within the possibilities when he gives a general figure of two acres per person. The final demonstration might show a much smaller figure. It is certain that it would not be larger.—The Editor).

PRELUDE TO VISION

In this dear England let me stay
Where waving trees their garlands spray
In splendour rife.
Where roses bloom and thrushes sing,
As summer, kissed by graceful spring
Leaps into life.
Where lilacs drenched in gentle rain
Diffuse their perfume, and again
The cuckoo calls.
Where nightingales in ecstasy
Spill their sweet songs of fantasy
As evening falls.
Laburnum trees cascading gold
As blackbird yellow-beaked and bold
Trills to his mate.
And towards the river as it winds
The purling brook at long-last finds
A happy fate.
In this dear England let me stay.
Fair Dowry of a Queen whose sway
And peerless grace
Prevailing through both cloud and shine
Makes of this Plot a glowing shrine—
A holy place.
Deep in the smiling countryside
Of this my native land I'll bide
Until I'm dead.
And while the woods of elm or oak
Encase my clay, and willows soak
With tears my bed,
I hope to hear as parting knell
The chant of birds I've loved so well
Mourning my flight;
And candles on the chestnut tree
Shall point the darksome path for me
To deathless light.

—G.P.

"The idea of self-denial for the sake of posterity, of practising present economy for the sake of debtors yet unborn, of planting forests that our descendants may live under their shade, or of raising cities for future nations to inhabit, never, I suppose, efficiently takes place among publicly recognised motives of exertion. Yet these are not the less our duties; nor is our part fitly sustained upon the earth, unless the range of our intended and deliberate usefulness include, not only the companions but the successors of our pilgrimage. God has lent us the earth for our life; it is a great entail. It belongs as much to those who are to come after us, and whose names are already written in the book of creation, as to us; and we have no right by anything that we do or neglect, to involve them in unnecessary penalties, or deprive them of benefits which it was in our power to bequeath. And this the more, because it is one of the appointed conditions of the labour of men that, in proportion to the time between the seed-sowing and the harvest, is the fulness of the fruit; and that generally, therefore, the farther off we place our aim, and the less we desire to be ourselves the witnesses of what we have laboured for, the more wide and rich will be the measure of our success. Men cannot benefit those that are with them as they can benefit those who come after them; and of all the pulpits from which human voice is ever sent forth, there is none from which it reaches so far as from the grave."—*Ruskin: The Seven Lamps of Architecture. Aphorism 29.*

SONNET

Upon re-reading Richard Jefferies' "After London"

He saw the vision of catastrophe
Long ere the time of ruin, strife and fire;
And none could dream that ever Warwickshire
On a November night of fear could be
Lit by the flames of burning Coventry;
Or those old cities trodden into mire
Which were englamoured with long history.
And while as yet the proud triumphant scheme
Of everlasting Progress was not torn
To mocking fragments; hardly yet as born
The generation to whose eyes could seem
The thing as grim reality, he could dream
Of cities changed to willow-herb and thorn.

—W.P.W.

ORDER OF BATTLE: XXI

JEKYLL AND HIDE

IN the *Tablet* of 6th and 13th January last appeared two remarkable articles from the pen of Mr. Colin Clark, under the general title of *Property and Economic Progress*.

In the first article he defined and distinguished productive from nominal ownership, and the relation of ownership to Capitalism and Communism. In the second he assessed the prospects of productive ownership in the world which confronts us.

The analysis in the first part is almost altogether admirable. Mr. Clark is to be congratulated on a precision of emphasis not commonly found in statements on the role of diffused ownership in a sound society.

Thus: "The reasonable norm of human affairs, from which both Capitalism and Communism are unpleasant aberrations, is the *working proprietor*, who prevails in many parts of the world to-day, who prevailed among our ancestors, and to whom we shall eventually return. . . . There will be no attempt at a precise equalisation of incomes, but in general the distribution of incomes, as of property will . . . . become much more equalitarian than it is now."

And again: "Communism and Capitalism have hitherto been regarded as poles apart: but in the face of the spreading idea of a community of independent proprietors, in the light of which concept both Communism and Capitalism are equally condemned, it is quite possible that we shall see the two combine to oppose this idea. Indeed, we may be seeing the beginnings of such a combination already. . . . When people talk about reconciling Capitalism and Communism, then it is time for honest men to look out."

This is admirable. Not less admirable is his analysis of vocation in work, which cannot detain us now, and his insistence that right and dignity are of greater importance to mankind than mere mass of production.

He reminds us that Capitalism is unstable, since it "*needs* unemployment on an increasing scale. . . Attempts to create full employment in a Capitalist State are a well-meaning illusion." Hence the pressure on the system to cede to the Servile State.

A great deal of pleasant expectation, raised by this first article, was dashed by the second. This showed a curious disparity of principle and emphasis. We may leave aside Mr. Clark's analyses of the consequences "if the importation of all food and textile fibres into Great Britain were forbidden," since to our knowledge no one has ever made so ridiculous an assumption.

The substance of the second article is curious. We may leave without too much distress the lessening numbers of those who make their living on the land. We may also leave manufacturing in the hands of Big Business. The complications of industrial and commercial life are such that there is a growing proportion of "services." That is, employment ancillary but not strictly productive. Garage maintenance and distribution are given cases in point. Such "services" he regards as the most hopeful prospect for the beginnings of a restoration of property and the better things.

Now it is clear, of course, that any sort of diffused property, and any sort of independence, are better than no property or independence at all. But it is curious that Mr. Clark does not see how small property confined to "services" can always be absorbed at will by the dominant Big Business in so far as it controls the sources of production: and that he does not see how the problem is not separable into components, but hangs together and must be tackled as realities are tackled—first things first.

The progressive increase of "services" as compared with actual production, is of the very essence of the unsoundness of Industrialism. Certainly the multiplication of "services" will ultimately make Industrialism topple over. We do not facilitate the recovery of society from that happy fall by concentrating on sidelines. No remedy exists which does not include the supersession of Industrialism as well as the decline of Capitalism and the avoidance of the Servile State.

Finance and Commerce are not unconscious of the existence of "services." They covet and absorb them as and when they become profitable and therefore covetable.

Let us take, as a convenient illustration, the distribution of milk. Two generations ago all milkmen were either farmers delivering their own milk, or small men delivering on their own round.

A relatively small number of bigger concerns had made their appearance a generation later. From then on, events converged to assist a policy of concentration, and made that concentration profitable. Farms became larger, and preferred wholesale customers. The process of legislation, begun in good faith and continued as a ramp, made the small milkman's position more and more precarious. Pasteurisation was the penultimate stage of the ramp. The Perry Report was its pledge of victory. We are witnessing the last stage to-day. Small men of military age are being forced by a succession of tribunals into the armed forces. They are in some cases, to our knowledge, obligingly supplied with the name of a Combine by the tribunal.

They sell their round as a preliminary to enlistment. The Combine suggests employment with them in the meantime. After some months they are told that no more milk roundsmen are being called up.

This is happening. In the face of so disgraceful a plot it is absurd for Mr. Clark to suppose that the small "services" men can hold out against the Combines, once the Combines have decided to swallow them.

He must reconcile himself to two things. The problem is one. It includes Industrialism, and the remedy must consist of primary rounded independent production, capable of replacing Industrialism.

The one way of overcoming Industrialism is by constructing a full alternative. For this reason close communities of land-owning peasants, supported by a full complement of village craftsmen, must begin the Return.

The devil is in possession. This sort is not driven out by the incantations of roadside garages; it needs the Bell, Book and Candle of Pius XII.

THE OTHER SIX

By CAPT. H. S. D. WENT

In October, 1941, Miss Dorothy Sayers gave an address to the Public Morality Council on the Seven Deadly Sins. Her audience must have had an intellectual treat, and I suspect that some of them also had a considerable shock, for they were reminded that what is commonly called "immorality" is only one—and by no means the worst—of the Seven and that our Lord reserved His most violent vituperations for the cold-blooded or respectable sins, which Caesar and the Pharisees are in a conspiracy to call virtues. The address has now been published by Methuen under the title of *"The Other Six Deadly Sins,"* price 1/-.

While the readers of *The Cross and The Plough* would probably have been less shocked by Miss Sayers' statements than the Public Morality Council, there were many points in her address that we should do well to take to heart. She dealt very faithfully with the Machine Age and Mass Production, but made the point that "whether or not it is desirable to keep up this fearful whirligig of industrial finance based on gluttonous consumption, it could not be kept up for a single moment without the co-operative gluttony of the consumer"—and *we* are the consumer. She asks if, when denouncing the economic mess that we are in, "we always lay the blame on wicked financiers, wicked profiteers, wicked employers, wicked bankers—or do we sometimes ask ourselves how far *we* have contributed to make the mess?" Again, she warns us that Envy is the sin of the Have-Nots—and most of us are Have-Nots!

When dealing with the master-sin of Pride, Miss Sayers points out that its favourite guise at present is "the Perfectibility of Man, or the doctrine of Progress; and its speciality is the making of blue-prints for Utopia and establishing the Kingdom of Man on Earth." She also warns us that while the road to hell is paved with good intentions, those intentions are not only those we weakly abandon, but also those we obstinately pursue, making them ends-in-themselves and deifying them. "Human happiness is a by-product, thrown off in man's service of God."