

The Good Work Moves Forward

By J. W. GRAHAM PEACE

IN THE VILLAGE SCHOOL

B---- is one of the slowly dying villages on the 45,000-acre estate of the Earl of Pembroke, in the landlord-ridden English county of Wiltshire.

The parson, who is by way of being a canon, holds one of the twelve "livings" in the Church of England owned by the Earl, to whom he is indebted for a position of comfortable economic security for life, provided he does not outrage the conventions.

Prior to the founding by Henry VIII of the Established Church—and the Divorce Court—the Herbert of that day did not hold an acre. He made himself useful in some way to Henry, who rewarded his services by an immense "grant" of stolen lands formerly held in trust for the people by the Monasteries. This grant was the foundation of the "noble" family of Pembroke, the name of whose seat—Wilton Abbey—is a perpetual reminder of the source of their "landed" position in the realm.

The village of B---- is, as I have said, slowly dying. The deliberate policy of de-population continues unrestricted; small holdings are being discouraged and, wherever possible, these holdings are merged in the large farms, the laborers being steadily driven off the soil. For the schoolmaster and his teacher wife, this is a serious problem. At the moment the population figure just warrants a master and a mistress in the school; it needs only a slight further decline in that figure for the managers to cut down the staff to a single teacher, and so the threat of unemployment hangs over the heads of two devoted and very efficient instructors of youth.

Taking a quiet stroll through the pleasant countryside one morning the parson approached the village school and, as a chairman of school managers should do, he turned in to see how the young ones were being trained. A curt "good morning" to teachers and class was followed by an act of patronizing condescension on the visitor's part. Said he: "Now children: what if you were to ask me some questions this morning?" The invitation was accepted with alacrity by a bright little fellow near seven, who fired the first—and last!—shot.

"Please, sir, Why does my father have to pay rent to Lord Pembroke?"

At this the canon went off! He decided to leave it to the school-teachers to explain and, as they both read *Commonweal** understandingly, we were quite content to leave it at that!

IN THE FACTORY

In one of the largest munitions factories in Britain, the exact location of which may not, for very obvious reasons, be revealed at the moment, there was some excitement, confined to departmental heads only, at the approaching visit of the Chairman of the company which owns the works, a man of international reputation in the world of the biggest of "big business." His purpose was, by an address to the thousands of "workers" assembled in the vast dining hall of the works, to sustain the morale of those workers and to increase their productivity by a talk in the "pudding course" of the lunch-time break.

Two unfounded assumptions lie behind this "war-time" effort: (a) that the workers' morale needs to be sustained; and (b) that the string of threadbare platitudes and the impertinent patronizing flattery of their hearers, which forms the stock-in-trade of the majority of these high-pressure orators, could have any other effect than seriously to depress that morale, but for the fact of its very obstinate refusal to be depressed.

On arrival at the factory the great man was met by an obsequious works manager and introduced to the several heads gathered to welcome him. He made a personally conducted tour of the place, passing from shop to shop until finally arriving at the vast dining hall, where the stage was set for a strong dose of morale uplift.

The works manager presided and, like the Irishman, when he opened his mouth to speak put his foot right into it—both feet, in fact! By way, we suppose, of properly impressing "the workers," he said: "This is Sir ----- . He is the gentleman who gives you your pay-envelope each week."

An awkward silence ensued, broken only by a very faint attempt at applause, so faint, in fact, that it died at birth. Then up spake a firm, resolute voice tinged with a strong shade of very proper resentment at the insulting patronage. Said that voice: "He *gives* us nothing. Nobody *gives* us anything. We earn all that we get, and we put money into his pocket doing so!"

The heavens did not fall. The acres of glass roof overhead remained quite unaffected. But the program was shattered. A hurried consultation at the platform end of the hall. Some more or less relevant remarks by a speaker very obviously disturbed at the turn events had taken, and then a hurried departure with still over half of the allotted time to go.

The owner of "the voice that breathed o'er" is the spokesman for the workers there, and has his economics on straight, as my American friends aptly express it. He reads

**Commonweal* is the paper edited by Mr. Peace.—Ed.

Commonweal, and when colleagues come to him with their troubles, never fails to point out the truth of the matter, *viz.*, that nothing will go right with them until they have recovered their lost rights in the land, and that not by purchase, taxation, or other form of "appeasement," but by the collection in full from all holders of the annual rent of what they hold.

IN THE PARK

A large crowd surrounded the platform of a Ministry in one of London's parks. The speaker, a Tory M. P., knighted for some (unnamed) "public services," was engaged in the task of maintaining the morale of a people who have shown beyond all possibility of doubt (except to official minds in high places) that their morale is "Quite well, thank you!"

It was interesting to those who possessed the necessary political background to the scene, to hear from a former "big navy" man that "we could feed all our people from our own soil."

This was not allowed to pass unquestioned. Several voices broke in to deny the possibility, but one expressed pleasure at finding the speaker now in line with such authorities as Kropotkin, Professor Long, of Reading Agricultural College, and Sir Charles Fielding, himself a practical farmer, sometime Food Controller in the last war, all of whom were positive on the point.

Said one Voice: "Sir—, if we are to feed our people from our own soil, you will agree that we shall first need to have access to it?"

Sir—: "But we have access to it."

Voice: "How do you make that out? Are you not aware that less than 40,000 of us now hold over three-quarters of Britain and can, and do keep the rest of us off—until we come to their terms? How can we produce any food if we are not allowed to get to the one source of supply?"

Sir—: "Ah, now you are going into politics, and we must not do that on this platform."

Voice: "Pardon me, surely this is an economic question, and you would not suggest that the laws of economics know anything of our miserable party squabbles? You spoke of our own land. Did you mean that the land is our property?"

Sir—: "Yes, of course; but we must respect the rights of the owners."

Voice: "But we are the owners, according to you."

Sir—: "I am afraid I cannot go into that, sir."

Voice: "If we own the land ought not we to collect our rent?"

Sir—: "I must rule that out. We cannot go into a debate on taxation of land here."

Voice: "I protest, Sir—, I am not talking of taxation of land values, or of any other values. I am opposed to all taxation, and want the rent of our land collected for the

people of that land, and all forms of taxation—State theft—abolished."

Sir—: "Ah. That sounds very nice, and I should be happy on some other occasion to discuss the matter fully with you, but it is now ten o'clock, and the police like us to close down at that hour, and besides, I have a train to catch. Good night!"

So he got out. But the crowd remained for over an hour, split up into groups all discussing keenly the main question of the land.

Sir— was wrong in the matter of the police; they do not close meetings at that spot, some of which go on until midnight.

Yes. The good work moves forward. And the pace accelerates!

Of Dogs and Men

By HORATIO

IT is the biggest dog that gets the bone:
 Throw out another—he will want that too!
 Throw out a dozen and he will pursue
 Them all, as if he thought them all his own.
 He cannot understand, when *he* is grown,
 What business little dogs can have to do
 With any bones at all. He takes the view
 That bones were made for him, and him alone.

And that same cast of mind is in some men,
 Who want the surface of the Earth for theirs!
 Else why should farmers be sharecroppers when
 Rich virgin soil uncultivated stares
 Them in the face? O, for some gifted pen
 To show what semblance man to doghood bears!

Why Hesitate Today?

FIFTY years ago (Jan. 10, 1891), the *New York Times* had this to say editorially: "We have no hesitation in declaring our belief that the ideal taxation lies in the single tax, laid exclusively on the rental value of land, independent of improvements."

. . .

AS we go to press we are in receipt of the first number (October, 1941) of *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, published quarterly under a grant from the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation and devoted to a constructive synthesis of the social sciences. It is confidently hoped that the quarterly will be well received in scholastic circles. Will Lissner is the editor. The first issue contains articles by outstanding men in the academic world.