

THE CAPTIVITY OF IGNORANCE

The War Allotments.

During the Great War (1914-18) men and women of Britain were given access to land, and in their spare time cultivated allotments. Rent was paid according to the value of the rods of land occupied, and no one in the interests of self occupied more land than could be put to useful purpose. The destination of the rents, which could not be evaded, need not concern us at the moment.

The local authorities, who were empowered to allocate the holdings, made no inquiry as to whether the applicant possessed capital or skill. Bureaucratic "experts" were not appointed to "organise" or drill the allotment-holders, who in the majority of cases were quite ignorant of the science of tillage; but given the opportunity, the amateurs soon discovered for themselves all the secrets, and enjoyed learning the mysteries of vegetable culture.

The ground was frequently unpromising, sour, hard, uneven, and contained much rubbish. It often grew abundant nettles, thistles and many weeds of long tap-roots. In its undisturbed state it had become infested with wireworm and grubs, but in a pioneering spirit all difficulties were surmounted. There was no agitation set on foot for the purpose of regulating hours of labour or output, but each was free, and the pleasure of uninterfered-with private enterprise added pleasure to arduous toil. Self-interest was directed to the production of the best quality and the greatest quantity of produce.

A spirit of warmest fellowship sprang up among the allotment-holders, who voluntarily co-operated with each other in a multitude of ways. There were no fences between the plots, but it was immediately recognised that, in order to live in peace and security, it was only necessary to respect each other's rights.

In the summer a pleasing scene of happiness and plenty in miniature cheered the allotment-holders and their friends. The psychological effect was as beneficial as the material gain to the nation in diminishing the submarine menace.

While the institution of garden allotments will inevitably suffer that derangement which is due to enveloping hostile environment, it is symbolic of a stable civilisation, affording scope to progress and the pursuit of happiness.

The Civilised Struggle for Existence epitomised.

But let us suppose that the renting of land being unknown, as was the case not many centuries ago, and that the allotment-holders had been rated according to value of produce, for example, so much per pound of potatoes, so much per dozen cabbages and so forth, also that in addition they had been assessed, and asked to pay a fine annually for all cold frames, garden tools and sheds, what would have been the effect of such a rating system upon the production of food, and what direction would the potent force of self-interest have taken?

While it is impossible to foresee every development, it is obvious that in self-interest the compulsory taxes upon production would have been evaded where possible, because this method penalises the inherent desire to progress. Persons who scrupulously paid the dues would soon have found themselves at a disadvantage as compared with successful shirkers, especially when the taxes had been increased to make up short revenue.

In such an atmosphere, honesty tending to be regarded as folly, evasion would have had to be combated by the fears of pains and penalties for delinquents, who would have suffered reproach from neighbours only when found out. Says a high legal authority, "Every man is entitled to take advantage of any technical flaw in law": lawmaking in these circumstances would have required, therefore, the best brains of the allotment community. There would have been a multitude of local enactments, amendments and consolidations, in order to define forceful regulations and to prevent escape from imposition.

The costs of administration rising, there would have been a cumulative effect, which would have tended to push taxation towards the limit of inability to pay more. With

all these discouragements, it is impossible to imagine a similar scene of profusion to that exhibited under the system of renting. Instead, there would certainly have been niggardly production, and, unaware of the causes leading to this sad state of things, we might have expected to hear wise-sounding theories of "diminishing returns" and that "population tends to outrun subsistence."

It is possible that, as in ancient Sparta, and as in modern Russia by the Marxist Soviets when they "nationalised" the land, an equitable division of the land might have been attempted at the commencement. Many officials might have been occupied in maintaining the division and in restraining the buying and selling of land, but experience teaches that rent, resting upon natural law, cannot be abolished. Individuals will always exploit land-value, unless the community, which creates it by its presence, collects what is the only just source of public revenue. The motive of self-interest would, therefore, have impelled even the administrative officials to have succumbed to this form of profit-taking.

Disappointed cultivators would have readily disposed of their rights henceforward to be "unemployed," and the successful shirkers of taxes would have taken over the relinquished territory and have become larger landholders, cultivating inefficiently, employing little labour. Later, as the food shortage caused prices to rise, the inactive tillers out of necessity would have become compelled to return and compete with each other for allotments from the large holder, now a profiteer from no special fault of his own. The extreme necessity of the tenants might conceivably have caused them to regard the individual to whom they paid rent for permission to use the earth as a benefactor, and this curious delusion might have been expected to intensify as the rent-collector, in order to obtain higher rents, kept the land market short by withholding land from use.

The profiteer would soon have ceased to be a producer, and those who produced, having now to pay rent in addition to taxes, would have had to toil unceasingly. The rate of taxation would have been high, because the land-withholding would have resulted in so much less total production.

In this artificially evolved hostile environment, distinguished by profiteering and poverty, it is impossible to conceive that a spirit of goodwill would have existed between

the allotment-holders, nor would those unable to obtain land have been happy. The change having taken place slowly and almost imperceptibly, the steps leading up to the cumulative effects of what seemed at first a fair arrangement would have been obscured by a screen of collateral problems which would have pressed for solution.

The correct solution is one which must go to the root of things. It is not obvious, or at any rate would not have been disclosed for some time. Nevertheless, many proposals, harmful or temporary in their effect, might have been put forward in the meantime. Cliques might very well have been expected to arise favouring antagonistic methods, and much commotion might have taken place without those taking part understanding exactly what it was all about.

The Application to European History.

This hypothetical system upon which we have speculated is simply a small-scale rough model of the growing edifice of European civilisation, divested of some of its later developments.

In the psychology of captivity a common delusion exists to the effect that only a small proportion of mankind live on land, and that the greater proportion subsist in some other mysterious way. It is also vaguely imagined sometimes that cereals, vegetables and fruits only are produced upon the land, and that houses, machinery, ships, coal and oil have little or no connection with the land. There is a curious mental inertia in some people which requires much effort to overcome before they can get themselves to believe, with conviction, that all things, including ourselves, come from the land and go back again to it; that the sea and atmosphere rest upon the land, which in the language of political economy is a term including them in its meaning.

All that we call wealth comes from land, and wealth is the product of human labour of mind and body applied to natural resources. Even the active power of Nature, manifested in various forces, in growth and reproduction, requires labour to utilise it, exerted through materials grown upon or drawn from land. We can create nothing; we can only grow plants or animals, utilise natural forces, adapt natural products, or exchange so as to add to the general sum of wealth.

Man is a land animal, and any restraint to his use of

the source of wealth imperils his existence—is a denial of his right to live. Furthermore, if the reward of his labour is taken from him, without due and fair exchange, in proportion as it is so taken man is a slave and his life is in jeopardy.

It is easy, therefore, to understand that when in the early period of European history producers of wealth were expected to contribute larger and yet larger proportions of their harvest to patriarchal priests and rulers, without corresponding return, there was engendered in their minds, despite faith in the gods, a feeling of insecurity and a desire to find a safer environment.

The immediate effect, inevitably brought about by compulsorily taking "from each according to his means," was lessened production of wealth, not only by the independent husbandmen of the fertile plains on the Mediterranean seaboard, but also by the citizens of the coastal towns with whom they exchanged. In due course the "needs" of the peoples (consumers increasing at a greater rate than producers) exceeded their inadequate "means," and a scramble for existence ensued, which enlarged in intensity as time went on.

The Struggle for Supremacy in Italy.

The story of ancient Hellas, including the decline of Athens, the rise and fall of the harshly administered dominion of Sparta, the subsequent ascendancy of Thebes and the imperialist orgy of Macedonia, is closely similar in many respects to the squeezing, jostling and battling which eventuated in the supremacy of Rome in Italy and the inauguration of the Roman Empire.

We have previously commented upon what seems almost a rule, that when slavery, either of the person or through restricted environment, appears, the natural distinguishing marks due to differences in race, locality, climate, language or occupation become isolating cleavages, and classes and races are no longer merged gradually into each other. Instead, they become egoistical, insular and hate each other, any insignificant irritating incident being enough to endanger peaceful relations.

The fear and suspicion may be most apparent at any one time between peoples of differing races, but more fre-

quently the unfriendliness distinguishes inhabitants of the same or closely allied race, speaking different dialects or of different religious denomination. There is no permanence in these cleavages, which are due to mental blindness, and which may be between one set of "powers" at one time and another combination at a different time.

The motive which draws people having some common sympathy into close combinations of "power" is due to the feeling of insecurity caused by production of wealth being throttled at its source, and a desire to seek escape from an environment made dangerous unknowingly. Each egoism vainly believes that by subjugating the other security and happiness can be established again.

In ancient Egypt, Assyria and Greece, the egoisms generally centred round some deity or temple, and in Italy, in early times, the pivot was more commonly race or locality. While within each sphere of influence there was continual commotion, the principal struggles were between the Etruscans, the Greeks, the Apulians, the Romans, the Latins, the Samnites, the Lucanians and the Umbrians.

These blamed each other for unfair exchange, e.g. competition in trading, and each combination sought to regulate intercourse in such a way as would advantage themselves at the expense of the rest. The effect of these monopolies was to heighten the illusions which existed, and to give them apparent justification. Great numbers of the population were now engaged in the wars which followed, and in which Rome was finally supreme. Plunder and pillage did not encourage production, and the result was the further impoverishment of the people.

It was natural in these circumstances that Rome should turn her covetous attention to the conquering of her ally Carthage, which had abetted her to dominion in Italy. There is neither gratitude nor gracefulness in exaggerated self-interest, which aims only at the growth and acquisition of power and might. The violation of a treaty, "only a scrap of paper," was the match with which Rome lit the blaze. The circumstances were urgent. "Necessity knows no law" for a desperate Senate in the presence of revengeful bitterness of conquered neighbours and the discontent of famished communities, held together in a loose federation which might at any moment split into two opposing leagues.

There was no vision provided for the people which might have called forth patriotic endeavour to mutual aid. They had been following the shadow, their heads in the clouds, and they were unconscious of the substance upon which they stood. Living in the world of unreality, a mirage claimed their undivided attention only. Carthage possessed a highly developed slave-system, commercial monopolies and the "freedom of the seas." Would not such a venture weld the petty States into one patriotic subject nation? Surely, happiness and prosperity for all lay in the grasp of such a prize!

Imperial Rome.

The blaze, made white-hot by the hate and zeal of Hannibal, almost consumed Rome herself, but after a long and wasteful war there was ended the independent might of Carthage. "Even this, O Rome, must one day be thy fate!" lamented Scipio, as he gazed upon the smoking ruins of the fallen city.

The spoils of war, never approaching expectation, did not improve the economic situation in Italy. These, such as they were, advantaged the monopolists only; the people were subjected to greater burdens, especially the provincials who could not claim Roman citizenship.

The holders of the homestead plots, cultivators of the *ager publicus*—"the cornland that was of public right"—discouraged with heavy taxation and burdened with debt, forsook the mortgaged homes and entered the towns to engage in the consuming activities of war, or otherwise to swell the ranks of the idle proletariat.

There was now a dangerous reservoir of unemployed, and the Senate found it necessary to provide a new phantom for the demoralised mob to follow. The pretext that the Macedonians had favoured Carthage was the justification for further imperial brigandage, and economic necessity spurred the apathetic people to action.

Imperialism is like drug-taking, because the dope must be given in increasing quantities or collapse supervenes. The whole of Greece was therefore annexed, ostensibly to "protect" the Hellenes from the predatory Macedonians. The Balkan Peninsula thus became the first great tributary of the Roman Empire.

The Neurosis of Captivity.

Dominion was accompanied by the neurosis of captivity. Rome was filled with a credulous, irritable populace—insolent and idle—fed precariously by means of a corn supply exacted as indemnity from tributaries. The one-time gravity of the patricians was converted into censoriousness as they struggled and climbed upon each other. Family life deteriorated into incontinent self-indulgence. The dignity of the righteous Roman lady became a memory of the simpler manners of the past. She had aberrated into a self-assertive termagant, dreaded by the domestic slaves; or, pursuing sensual pleasure, striving to still the never-to-be-satisfied cravings for a happiness put out of reach, she sought new sensations in sybaritic orgies. The wanton was held in high honour in degenerate Rome.

Youth, born into a feverish environment, impatient of learning, was infected by the hectic vainglory of Boast and Pomp, and assisted the national insanity by adopting and extending the cruel sports and vices of the vanquished Carthaginians.

Accompanying the hard parasitic struggle for existence came gaunt famine, and thousands of the people, unaware they were "living dangerously," were carried off by starvation and pestilence.

The Gracchi.

But amid the alternating violence and depression of the scrambling, quarrelsome multitude there were those who attempted to discover and apply real remedies to the curing of the social ills which beset the Republic.

"Men of Rome," said Tiberius Gracchus, "you are called the lords of the world, yet have no right to a square foot of its soil! The wild beasts have their dens, but the soldiers of Italy have only water and air!"

The holdings of the once-free husbandmen had aggregated into the *latifundia* of senatorial families. Agriculture, so far as it was practised, was carried out by tribute-paying *coloni*, whose methods impoverished the soil. The great estates for the most part were given over to pasture, the shepherding being performed by gangs of slaves, locked up at night in underground prisons. The country-side was otherwise

almost depopulated, and in this wilderness wolves supplanted men.

The Gracchi, in the face of senatorial opposition, attempted to revive the ancient Roman virtue by restoring the Licinian Law and its subsequent divisions of the land. Outlawed as tyrants, undefended by the cowardly rabble, the patriots were killed by the profiteers, but the redistribution of the land, so far as it was carried out, saved the State temporarily from collapse.

The idea of absolute ownership was preserved by those who bought and sold land, and allotment-holders themselves, in time and on occasion, succumbed to the false philosophy, becoming petty landlords. Landholders everywhere, in a natural but vain desire to secure a durable tenure, asserted claim to dominion where they should have been content with usufruct.

Nevertheless, the check given to monopolistic spoliation at the commencement of the hundred years' revolution straightened the path to the further limitation of the power of the oligarchical Senate towards the end of that period. Before Julius Cæsar suffered the same fate at the hands of the reactionaries as the Gracchi, he made adjustments in taxation and representation which materially cut down privilege.

Had these partial reforms not taken place, there would have been no Roman Empire to endure fitfully five hundred years.

"The Children of this World, in their Generation, are Wiser than the Children of Light."

Those greatly desiring freedom frequently forget that nations are not kept in thrall by either oligarchies or tyrants. In the last resort, it is ignorance which alone is responsible for the perpetuation of slaveries.

But until the captives learn that the door opens inwardly they will continue to use force to push it outwards. Governments represent the reaction which results from the employment of wrongful means to obtain liberty. Government based upon force is the door devised by the "children of this world" to restrain indiscriminate anarchy, and government is made more frightful and ruthless as the subject nation becomes more tumultuous, in the hope forlorn that law and order may thus be preserved.

In this sense it may be said to be true that "A nation possesses the government it deserves."

But Power and Might endure for a brief season. Nature ordains that the inherent desire for freedom increases at a greater rate than the building up of any restraint invented by man.

From Paternalism to Subversion.

Cæsar Augustus, *pater patriæ*, provided food and amusements for the citizens of Rome, much as peevish children are pacified momentarily with lollipops and toys. Meanwhile, behind the screen of paternalism a new despotism was founded, mild at the commencement, but infernal in its consummation. The grasping power of the patricians was curbed, but an unbridled militarism developed which more than replaced the tyranny of the Senate.

The *latifundia*, which had been the curse of Carthage, also ruined Italy. In Sicily, Africa, Spain and Gaul also, great estates were carved out for the military conquerors, who became absentee landlords, employing tenants and slaves where once existed hardihood and sturdy independence.

Barbarians, living peaceably under a primitive organisation which allotted shares of cultivated ground and the common use of pasture, were pushed back by Roman legions, or they entered those legions against their own kin who were struggling to retain possession of the land.

It is the soldiers who are the first victims to be laid upon the altar of Injustice worshipped at by the community living in the paradise of fools. Organised warfare is believed to delay, for those left at home, the inevitable day of reckoning to account for social maladjustment. The brave men who sacrifice themselves are highly esteemed, especially when danger threatens, even by the meanest, who basely seize the time of grace as an opportunity in which to plunder their neighbours.

But soldiers, in common with all mankind, inherit the universal desire for freedom, which must outlast Power and Might or the human race perish. And so, as despotism deepened, indiscipline developed among the Roman cohorts. Power and Might then employed barbarian levies to preserve order at the rotten heart of Rome, and the Prætorian

Guard, who had sold the public offices, including the Imperial chair and purple, to the highest bidders, was finally abolished, the mutinous troops being banished to the borders of the empire.

The Roman Empire embraced the world, but it was merely a hollow shell of dominion. It was the resistance of the healthier life at the frontiers, where the green sap of liberty yet flowed, which delayed collapse. The heart was eaten out of the great empire, and this result was brought about by the operation of the false principle that "the State is entitled to take what it chooses." The inevitable anticlimax came; the dispossessed barbarians at length broke through.

"Rome perished from the failure of the crop of men." She had placed Property before Humanity and Culture before Justice.

The Chaos of the Middle Ages.

For several hundred years the fragments of the Roman Empire continued to struggle and fight with each other, unconsciously striving to establish a rule of the land. The subversion of the empire enabled the primitive allodial system of land-tenure to revive, the approximate justice of which is the reason for its persistent survival, in Russia beneath absolutism and serfdom, in Serbia in spite of Moslem oppression, and in India although cultivators have been under the heel of imperialists for centuries.

But the purely agricultural age in Europe had passed. Progress in the arts and in commerce necessitated closer associations between men, with greater numbers in selective voluntary co-operation at a given time. The allodial system and the frequent distributions of land in this and similar schemes of land-tenure disturb any but the most temporary improvements. The march of progress into wider and more complex undertakings than agriculture was hindered, and a strain was set up in human society which manifested itself in friction.

Evolution in credence takes place, and new ideas prevail, to become common property whether consciously advocated or opposed, though empires rise or perish. The institution of chattel slavery, relic of the pastoral age, reached a climax

in Europe at the subversion. During the Middle Ages dissimulation set in, and at the present day, although human life is conscripted into military slavery, the buying and selling of human flesh and blood is regarded with detestation.

During the dominion of the Romans the buying and selling of land, which was invariably associated with the slave traffic as a later ally, was stimulated by the operations of the usurious "publicans" or moneylenders. After the subversion of the Roman Empire, like the slavery of the person, the slavery of the private ownership of land received a serious set-back also, but that did not result in extinguishing it, because the feudal system, which came out of the melting-pot, and which was a great advance in land settlement, did not provide completely for advancement in the arts and in exchange. It early became obsolete; again there was a strain set up in human affairs and consequent commotion.

The Feudal System.

The feudal system—a blending of the idea of common rights in the soil with the idea of exclusive property—was born of the ruins of the Roman Empire.

The effect of the reactive migration of Teutonic tribes during the fall and collapse of Roman dominion is worth noticing. These tribes were carried by their impetus far beyond their ancient domain, to overlay the Romanised Ligurian or Gaulish tribes.

Demoralised and impoverished by the effects of the Roman culture, the Gauls were unable to absorb or to repel the virile franklins of the North, who were innocent of the evils of the *latifundia*. While in the South of Europe Roman law survived, in the centre a change took place in the platform of thought and custom which had lasting effects. The fusion of ideas held by the Franks, and represented by the allodial system of cultivation, with those of the Gauls, accustomed to the absolute ownership of the person and of land, resulted in what afterwards developed into the feudal system.

The more civilised but servile Gauls became the tenants of the uncultured Teutons, who showed, nevertheless, greater humanity towards them than their former masters. It is true that the Gaulish or Welsh prisoners of war were

enslaved as a reprisal, but only after great provocation and treachery; in general, and in accordance with the meaning which tradition attaches to their name, the Franks were peace-loving and ready to forgive.

Owing to the comparative isolation of Britain, the development of the feudal system took place more slowly there than on the Continent, but the island was subjected to many separate incursions or backwashes of Teutonic tribes, Saxons, Jutes, English and Danes, at different periods, caused by the fluxing circumstances on the mainland. Thus it happened that side by side with each other there existed for some centuries conditions of social life in England which marked the punctuation of each step taken in the development of the feudal system. In the north and middle of the country, franklins or freeholders brought the land back to cultivation, feeding the famine-stricken population thereby. In the south or Saxon England the feudal plan probably reached its most beneficial form in the time of the great King Alfred, who did so much to establish a system of local government and public service, the efficiency of which has not since been approached.

"Land was granted to individual possession, yet in its possession were involved duties, by which the enjoyer of its revenues was supposed to render back to the commonwealth an equivalent for the benefits which from the delegation of the common right he received." (Henry George.)

The changing of an absolute tenure, as in Roman law, into a conditional tenure upon the feudal plan was a rude approximation to a just Rule of the Land. The liberation of action it afforded was immediately reflected in the progress made in every direction that mattered.

The Crown lands supported public expenditures which are now included in the Civil List; the Church lands provided for education, the care of the sick, the fatherless and the widow; while the military tenures ensured the defence of the realm.

The Modern Equivalents of Feudal Services.

Misconception is inevitable if feudal services, because they were given as a condition of freehold, are understood to mean literally the equivalent of rent of land. It is more

correct to regard such fees as comparable more nearly with the modern income and other direct taxes.

Many students, who are under the impression that income taxes, death duties and the increment duty are of modern origin, will be interested to learn that all these devices for the legal plunder of the community by governments have their counterparts in the obligations of the feudal system. The change from feudal times resides in this fact, that those who pay the bulk of these taxes do not necessarily possess "a stake in the country," and that those who do possess a freehold do not pay as a condition of tenure.

Death duties are in effect the old fines for relief and primer seisin, and the exorbitant fine for a licence of alienation is the increment duty of the feudal system at the time of its decay.

It is obvious that there was a period, as, for example, in England before the payment of the Danegeld, when the feu approximated to the rent of land occupied by the landholder, and this was when the system existed in its most desirable form. But, as we have attempted to show in the economic sketches of Egypt, Chaldæa, Hellas and Rome, there is a fundamental injustice in the taxation according to ability to pay which becomes apparent in the culminating effects.

The Deterioration of the Feudal System of Land Tenure.

It is remarkable that deterioration was brought about in a manner reminiscent of that which caused the derangement of land settlements earlier in the world's history.

A fief was a trust in its inception, but gradually the principle of primogeniture and entail developed, and although feudal law required that there should always be some representative of a fief in wardship capable of discharging the duties as well as of receiving the benefits which were annexed to a landed estate, trusteeship became dominion, as the apprehension of the land as common property was compromised.

Nevertheless, since the process of infeudation consisted of bringing individual manorial dominion into subordination to the superior dominion, i.e. the crown, which represented the larger community or nation, it was held in English law,

centuries after the Conquest, as a changeless principle (according to Coke and Blackstone) that all land is holden mediately or immediately of the king. That is to say, possession is not ownership and no one can own land ; that all land is subject to old charges, services which transfer cannot remit.

In modern times, as in the days of the Roman Republic, the philosophy of ownership has been so falsified that freeholders not only think they can sell land to each other but even to the State itself, apart from the just compensation for improvements.

“ Pull Devil, pull Baker.”

It was to the interest of the Saxon thane, and in later times to the Norman baron, to obtain wherever possible increased dues in money, services and/or kind from the sub-tenant. While he resisted feudal dues to his superior, who was continually in need of funds for “ preparedness,” the crown tenant employed prisoners of war as slaves, and sought to lay greater burdens upon the peasant. In this way he contrived a margin for the increase of his own power and magnificence, and evaded giving corresponding services to anyone in return.

The peasant was willing to pay rent for the opportunity of tilling the lord’s domain, because the feudal estates were better lands than the commons, but he had no measure of his obligation. The dues for tenant and sub-tenant were arbitrarily fixed, roughly upon the basis of “ ability to pay.” Economic rent, that standard which everyone could recognise as just, arrived at by free competition conforming with the natural law of Equity, was unknown.

There being no Rule of the Land, it was “ pull devil, pull baker ” almost from the commencement. The tax tended to be pushed far beyond the economic rent for the sub-tenant, who, being the weakest, had to surrender, because, having no rule by which to measure the wrong, he could not protest effectively. The repressed rage of the peasant was given an outlet for expression in the feuds between the idle, quarrelling nobles, and it was vented upon other peasants similarly aggrieved. Their state was not improved, but worsened thereby.

While not engaged in private wars with each other, or

in league against the overlord, the nobles joined together whole-heartedly and made common cause against the peasants when they tried to get better terms by moving to other estates, or by joining the communities of yeomen and franklins who tilled the extensive commons, not then enclosed. It was then that Power and Might enacted that the cultivator might not leave without the lord's permission.

The atrocities which inevitably took place during the feuds and civil wars burnt into the minds of the partisans, who felt now they had a real justification for hating each other, though it became plain that formerly they had been misled into taking sides by lies cunningly told by interested gamblers. Disunited and blind to their own interests, they were serfs caught and bound by a "leaving certificate."

But while the married man with a family might be held in this way, it was otherwise with the enterprising young men, who began the exodus from the country to swell the growing towns as artisans, fishermen and traders.

Niggardly Production.

The peasant soon found by experience that any improvements in utensils, appliances or methods were watched with covetous eyes by the lord, who took every possible opportunity to absorb the increased production by increasing his tax. Indeed, the industrious peasant earned the dislike and contempt of his neighbours when he again plucked up courage and put forth increased effort. It was found that no one benefited save the lord.

The discouraged sub-tenants resorted to slovenly living and to restriction of output, and the growing poverty was intensified by the withdrawal of labour from healthy production to the activities which lead to war, pestilence and famine.

Early Enclosures.

The folk-land or commons, many millions of acres reserved for the yeomen, were secretly conspired against by the king's "wise men." The presence of these free lands made it difficult, despite feudal enactments, to force up tributes. In the South of England, therefore, land not parcelled into holdings was granted by the king to henchmen, thus putting up a barrier to the natural expansion of allodial communities, and the existing cultivators became subject to feudal dues.

But in the Danelaw the patriotic bishops braved the wrath of the nobles and supported the yeomen in asserting their independence. Comparative prosperity and peace reigned in the Danelaw.

War and Poverty.

All over Europe, even to Norway and Denmark, the same changes were taking place. Danish peasants, escaping from an environment made hostile by taxation according to "ability to pay," found sanctuary, along with refugees from Saxon England, among yeomen of the Danelaw, descendants of common ancestors.

On the other hand, the struggle for supremacy which was going on during the so-called Heptarchy in England was also proceeding on the Continent. The vikings or sea rovers of the tenth century, who raided the coasts of Germany, Gaul and the British Islands, were mostly dispossessed profiteers, who desired to repair their fortunes by plundering and possessing the "golden lands" settled formerly by their kith and kin of freer days. Niggardly production intensified by incessant civil war produced the Great Famine of A.D. 976.

Famine and Desolation.

The people were blind to the real cause of famine, and blamed each other for eating too much or for withholding supplies. The English and Saxons thought the food and clothing shortage was owing to the presence of the Danes living in their midst. In such a strained mental atmosphere the lying tale of King Æthelred, that the Danes were about to betray him and his wise men and take the kingdom, was all too readily believed by a suspicious people smarting under the attacks of the vikings. The terrible massacre of the Danes was the result.

Power and Might reign over Ignorance.

Chattel slavery throve again, because more left the country than could become freemen of the towns. The unemployed, compelled by the pangs of hunger, sold themselves or their children for food. Others, made desperate by extreme poverty owing to the rising cost of living due to niggardly production, became robbers, and were sold, when captured, into slavery along with other criminals. Crimes increased as oppression intensified.

In England a brisk traffic in slaves was carried on between Bristol and Ireland, London and Gaul.

Life and property were insecure, and in the dangerous environment which had developed it was natural, not tracing the cause clearly, that men should seek, for protection, the frank or peace-pledge of a lord. The barons, dukes and earls, in their turn, were either ruthlessly broken or came voluntarily into the great military trusts or combines of Power and Might, doing homage to head-kings or emperors.

It was not inordinate ambition which was the root motive for the acquisition and use of power. The people ardently desired peace, and thought that only by means of "strong" government could this be attained. It was for this reason that Cnut of Denmark, who was a modest man, was invited to England. When resistance was put in the way of his acceptance he fought, in order, as he thought, to rescue his friends.

The conduct of William of Normandy, who saw that success apparently crowned a centralisation of power, may seem more open to criticism, but doubtless even in his case ambition was secondary to the benevolent desire to confer a benefit on those round about him, embued as he was with the belief that he was the man of the moment. To prevent the disorderly natives of Britain from killing each other, was not a stern ruler necessary? Was it not plain that they were incapable of governing themselves?

It seemed to everyone living in those times that men could only be made virtuous by force, and the Church, in its solicitude for the welfare of the laity, made the saving of men's souls subordinate to the ruling of their bodies. Bishops often occupied the chairs of magistrates and abbots were great landowners; it was not long before churchmen were soldiers.

The Papacy, with its hierarchy of bishops, priests and deacons, had a universal hold upon the superstitious imagination of the people of Europe. It was at this time in a strong strategic position for European supremacy; the most democratic institution the world has ever seen was to head a league of chivalry—incongruous alliance of cross and sword.

All who were "living dangerously" were eager to do homage to the Pope. Blessed by the Church, there seemed security for those who wished to legitimise what had been the price of blood. Charlemagne contributed his temporal

power to the "spiritual" power of Rome, and received his crown as Emperor at the hands of the Holy Father, after the overthrow of the Lombards.

In a desire to secure a durable peace, an attempt was made, headed by the Pope and Charlemagne, to put an end to the private wars of the barons and free towns, but the Rule of Peace, like "the Truce of God" two hundred years later, proved a disappointing failure. War cannot be Christianised by conventions, even though imposed by a supreme archangel! It is the temptation of Satan in the wilderness!

It is said, alas! within a few years two archbishops and eight bishops died on the battle-fields, fighting to make an end of war!

The Cross and the Crescent.

The interests of the discordant elements of the Holy Roman Empire were in too great conflict for the tie of common superstition to hold except for a brief spell. The league of chivalry seemed on point of segregation when, almost miraculously, so it seemed, the objective appeared which should give dynamic stability and associate Christendom as one.

As parasitism sprang up, tending to choke the new gospel of liberty according to Mohammed, a competing egoism was created out of the ruins of the Eastern Empire which centred round the crescent as a symbol. The Saracens and Turks had undertaken to rid the world of idolatry at the edge of the scimitar about the same time that the powers of Christendom were engaged in trying to make it righteous at the point of the sword.

"Freedom" to exploit the trader using the Orient routes was one of the prizes competed for by the interests of each side, and commercial monopolies of Mediterranean seaports provided interesting sideplays during the crusades, as well as the opportunities for profiteering afforded in the supply of food and munitions to thousands of men journeying through Europe to the wars.

By an apparent coincidence, the objective which seemed so desirable to the league of chivalry also was acceptable to zealous Moslems, who welcomed the common danger as a means of drawing into closer association the three divided caliphates of Bagdad, Cairo and Cordova.

The mill of destruction was ready for the aberrated captives of ignorance; it only remained for it to be set in motion. Preaching at a great gathering in France, the Pope told the story of the injuries and insults accorded to pilgrims who visited the Holy City, and exhorted his hearers to "go and deliver the Sepulchre of the Lord." His sermon was received with shouts of "God wills it! We will go!" and thousands of all ranks, sewing a little cross on their left arm to attest their promise, vowed to go and fight to liberate the Holy Land from the infidel.

The Wages of Ignorance is Death.

For two hundred years the "overpopulation" of the East and West, each side feeling inspired with an exalted purpose, committed suicide in the crusades. Disillusionment came slowly. The Westerner found it difficult to believe that the dragons and monsters were the hallucinations of a diseased imagination and that atrocities were not the monopoly of the Mohammedan.

It was, nevertheless, a shock for the pious Crusaders to discover the nakedness of Rome and to realise that the Saracens could teach lessons in honour, courtesy and mercy. Nor was it easy to convey such an unwelcome truth to infatuated captives of superstition at home. But they eagerly learnt all that the enemy could teach in the arts of war. The barons, in possession of this knowledge, more securely underpinned their power by the construction of strong castles, and the whole of Europe became an armed camp, or series of strongholds from which oppression could radiate.

There is, however, no evil from which good does not emanate. It was by means of this channel of activity that a flickering revival of knowledge was made in mathematics, astronomy, medicine and engineering. The peasants, wage-earners and slaves had little share in this new knowledge. With everyone in conspiracy against them to take all that could be regarded as surplus wealth, there was no encouragement to progress. Their surroundings were indescribably filthy and insanitary—fever and famine accompanied each other through the land.

The rulers of Europe were in heavy debt to wealthy townsmen and to each other. Vassals were in arrears with their feudal dues and were also in the bonds of usury

to moneylenders. Many of these latter were Jews, and popular feeling was hostile at the thought of fighting for *their* country. Hundreds of the "Peculiar People" were therefore cruelly massacred, together with their friends and families.

The Revolt of the Vassals.

Feudal dues had been increased and augmented by tithes, fines and scutages to meet the abnormal expenses of the wars. Up to a point, the barons and knights had been able to pass on a proportion of these burdens to their tenants, but it was soon discovered that there was an economic limit to this process beyond which it was impossible to go. Taxation of the cultivators having reached the position of inability to pay more, the total value of the revenue diminished as imposts increased, because the production of wealth was increasingly discouraged.

From time to time hatred almost ceased to burn between the rival upholders of the Cross and the Crescent. All over Europe the high and pure ideal of the fraternity of men and nations was set aside and forgotten in new and more bitter class hatreds. In England, in Stephen's reign, the king's power was impotent, and the barons resumed their indiscriminate warfare, segregating into opposing unstable factions, either fighting to subjugate one another or combining against the king and his party to resist payment of fees to the crown.

During John's reign the nobles and commoners, finding for a brief period that their aims were identical, wrested from the king the Great Charter of the Liberties of England. In it, in addition to other limitations of power and a repudiation of debts, the feudal rights of the king over his vassals, and of these vassals over their tenants were limited and fixed.

In this way it transpired that the landholders became possessed of the value of land, in so far as it exceeded the feudal obligation of the Charter, and this increment increased proportionately as population increased. But this arrangement only remained stationary in the case of peasant holdings, the tenancy at will hardening into a tenancy by copy or custom. The crown tenants took an early opportunity to introduce indirect taxes upon production, and to evade altogether their direct feudal obligations. They

gradually assumed ownership of the estates they held and complete dominion over their tenantry.

Living More Dangerously.

We are supposed to have been oppressed in the past by tyrannical kings, but this supposition is far from being wholly true. The kings of England, for example, during the deterioration of the feudal system, struggling to bring the lawless nobles within the jurisdiction of the civil courts, have been frequently on the side of justice and liberty upon occasions when historians accuse them of the exact opposite.

When Edward I authorised his judges to inquire, under the writ called *Quo Warranto*, by what right the lords held the private jurisdiction which they claimed, the Earl of Warrenne pulled out a rusty sword, saying, "See, my lords, this is my warrant. My ancestors came over with William and won their lands with the sword, and with the sword I will keep the same against anyone that wishes to seize them. For the king did not overcome and win this country by himself, but our forefathers were with him as partners and helpers."

This "patriotic" outburst should be compared with the clarion call of Tiberius Gracchus to the men of Rome. There is the same note of feeling in each, but while the latter is honest currency, the former is spurious coin. The nobles, in fancied security in their strong castles, had now conveniently forgotten that they alone could neither win nor hold, and that they also had partners and helpers. The claim of Might over Right is a dangerous doctrine, and so it proved in actual practice.

In England the old nobility was practically extinguished in the continual private wars, culminating in the Wars of the Roses. The present nobility are mostly descendants of moneylending shopkeepers and bankers. In France a similar fratricidal struggle took place until the time of Louis XIV, and what remained of baronial power and might was ended by the guillotine during the Terror.

Any social institution which cannot be referred to the operation of free and equal opportunity for all will not stand the test of time. The fundamental inequality in any approximation to Equity culminates and is multiplied, until the whole structure of society stands upon an unstable foundation of injustice.