

Land and Freedom

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Comment and Reflection

WE have just glanced through a recent work by Canon J. A. R. Brookes entitled "Murder in Fact and Fiction." The book itself need not concern us; it is the prefatory note by the Canon that gives us pause, and to which we draw attention. This prefatory note is an intellectual curiosity.

IT is perhaps impossible for any of us to enter the mind of a Canon of the Church of England. What can we know of the intellectual processes of a man so elevated above his fellows, to whom orthodoxy—that comfortable latitudinarian orthodoxy that asks no questions and that is part and parcel of the economic and social privilege which is its main support—has become a settled conviction and who lives remote from the rushing torrent of challenges, important and unimportant, with which the fixed standards of civilization must be more and more assailed? Enthroned in a serene complacency a Canon is a Canon with little chance of having his philosophy of life disturbed or modified by influences that beat upon the charmed citadel of his religious, social and economic beliefs.

LET us take the mental measure of the Canon in the page which precedes the recital of famous murders:

"The secret spring of Bolshevism is to be found in the inferiority complex, which causes the ignorant and the incompetent to envy and dislike their superiors * * * Any one who praises the inferior or mediocre, and affects to despise the beautiful and good is a conscious or unconscious Bolshevik * * * To prefer the ethical standards of Ibsen or Shaw to those of Moses or Christ is a still more dangerous form of Bolshevism * * * Alike in Ethics and Art there must be certain fixed standards, and those who prefer the ugly, the bizarre and the vulgar are helping to overthrow those standards, forms and traditions upon which our Christian civilization rests. Bolshevism objects to fixed standards because it knows that its inferiority will thereby be rendered manifest, therefore it seeks either to enter upon side tracks where competition is evaded, or to throw scorn upon the great geniuses of the Past, whom they have to acknowledge as their superiors."

THIS insistence upon "fixed standards" in Art and Ethics extends of course to the civilization we know which it is not obvious to the Canon is constantly in process of

change. Had he lived in the days when chattel slavery was an established institution he could have contemned assaults upon that system as endangering certain "fixed standards." According to Canon Brookes one may not prefer Ibsen and Shaw to Tennyson, or even hold that both hold a message for this generation, without being classed as a political Bolshevik.

AS one who places Tennyson above Shaw as a poet, Shaw not being a poet at all, and Shaw above Tennyson as a dramatist, Tennyson being a great poet and hardly a dramatist though he wrote poetic dramas, we protest against this confusion of "standards," ethical or artistic, with political institutions which cannot be submitted to the same criteria as ethics or art. And we insist that notions of "fixed standards" are dangerous notions whether in art, ethics or politics.

AND the preposterous notion that Bolshevism is a manifestation of the "inferiority complex," and not a blind reaction from an unjust social system, is of a piece with the rest of this prefatory note lugged into a volume dealing with famous murder cases. It appears not to have occurred to the Canon that the teachings of both Moses and Jesus were assaults upon the "fixed" ethical economic and political institutions of the time, that neither one nor the other has been put to the test by either Church or State, and that every step in progress is an interference with "fixed standards", which are never really fixed. But such is the reasoning of the Canon, and how can a Canon, unless an exceptional and courageous one, reason otherwise?

SOCIOLOGY is a term supplied us by Comte, which at other times he called Social Physics. He would have dignified it as a science and taught that "social phenomena are subject to natural laws, admittedly of natural prevision." (Martineau's Positive Philosophy.) He held that the natural laws of progress can be ascertained. It is needless to say such speculations mark an epoch in social and economic philosophy, though no serious attempt outside of George has been made to ascertain the nature and consequence of such laws. This work remains to be done and may yet form the subject matter of a great and enduring work.

IF order reigns in the universe—and it seems obvious to us that it does—we may find it supreme in the realm of economics. Because disorder and not order reigns, we may look here for the secret of the failure of civilization, the one we live in as well as the innumerable civilizations of the past. It must be a law of the economic world that what a man produces shall be his; the result of depriving him of this must bring certain consequences, certain disorders in the place of order.

THOSE who deplore the wide-spread modern skepticism, the weakening faith in the natural order may find here the answer to the riddle that perplexes them. Asa Grey has said: "I confidently expect that in the future, even more than in the past, faith in an order, which is the basis of science, will not be dissevered from faith in an Ordainer, which is the basis of religion."

IT is because of this, among other reasons, that every earnest minded thinker and philosopher, should be interested in demonstrating the natural order, in discovering first what it is, and secondly in getting rid of conditions that interfere with its free operation. That there is such a natural order cannot be demonstrated by any single experiment, but it is not to be ignored in any rational system of social or economic philosophy.

AND this leads us to another thought. The aim of the movement begun by Henry George is not to give man more wealth, more things, nor even merely to make it more easy for him to earn a living, though that is a great deal. But it is to establish that order of progress in civilization which in conformity with the natural law will assure a beneficent future for mankind, and make of the food-grubbing, house-building animal a religious man on whom a new power will be conferred to raise the curtain revealing his immortal destiny. These are the supreme heights for his attainment, which Henry George, in completing the task he had set himself of outlining his great reform, has foreshadowed in immortal prose.

The Land and the Race Question in South Africa

IN a recent issue of the *Missionary Herald* Ray E. Phillips, of Johannesburg, South Africa, begins a series of articles on "The Social Gospel and Interracial Relationships."

Mr. Phillips says that "the two outstanding factors that must be spoken of in any discussion of interracial matters as between these two great racial groups (black and white) are (1) the land problem and (2) the industrial situation in the big cities."

The writer tells us that the early white settlers of South Africa were land hungry, and that the whole land was eventually appropriated by the newcomers.

"And much of this land is not producing. There is no tax on land, and hence no inducement either to improve it or sell it. So there it lies in big holdings; tied up and much of it useless. This explains the fact that there is a land famine. For the large native population there is no land available for expansion. Although the natives constitute four-fifths of the population of the country, they own only one-thirteenth of the land, and they are now overflowing the meager allotments of past years. Thousands of natives of the younger generation are now finding themselves without land and faced with the choice between becoming serfs on white farms, or going to the big cities to work."

Mr. Phillips tells us that there is this difference between the black and white landless city dwellers: "While white men have the vote and are recognized a factor in South African politics, the natives are largely voteless and practically impotent politically. This means that political parties must provide for the whites even at the expense of the natives."

We quote the following:

"Second, there is no land which can be freed without serious trouble. A recent investigation by a Government Commission found no considerable areas free for occupancy by the blacks. White farmers stand solidly against any appropriation of good land for native settlement. Some scheme whereby natives can buy land in so-called "neutral zones" where either black or white may buy, but with safeguards to protect native interest, may relieve the situation. This is urged by certain thinking white men.

The recently enacted Color Bar Bill, which we have just mentioned, and which legislated natives out of employment in certain lines, makes the natives suspicious of the good faith of the present South African Government. They feel, and many thinking whites admit, that the segregation policy of the Government is dictated by fear—fear of the economic competition of the natives. And the natives, in their turn, are afraid that even though land is made available, and the line drawn about it, this line will not keep the white man from coming into their black territory if there is something in their area that the white man wants. A story reports an old native chief as saying to General Hertzog, the present Prime Minister, "Do you think, Sir, that you are better than God?"

"Why, no, certainly not," said General Hertzog.

"Well," said the chief, "God put a whole sea between you white men and us black men, and yet you white men crossed the ocean because there was wealth in the land of the black man. Do you think you can keep your white men from coming and taking possession of the black man's land merely by drawing a line down the country? Do you think you are better than God?"

Of course these conditions of grave injustice must cause deep resentment among the blacks, and Mr. Phillips says:

"They see themselves legislated against because of their skin color; they are embittered over the land situation, the low rates of wages existing in spite of increase of living costs; they rebel against the slum housing conditions in the big cities. They are becoming anxious and uneasy. It is not to be wondered at that there is a rapid growth of nationalist feeling quite comparable with that found in India and China."