

## Workshop Theories on Equal Rights.

(Concluded.)

The Christian naturally looks for light from the words and actions of Christ. He commenced a new dispensation, a new order of things, a reparation for the original fall of human nature. The new Christian law inculcated charity and mercy, it was a restoration of the gifts of grace and glory, it re-created the soul and spiritual life, but only indirectly touched the social order. From the lips of Our Lord nothing is heard about re-distribution of property, ownership of land, forms of civil government, equality in social life. He speaks of the difficulty and danger of riches, but does not hint at the abolition of rich men, on the other hand, He tells us that the poor are always with us. He inculcates obedience to authority. He gives to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. He takes the inequality for granted in His illustrations or parables of the labourers in the vineyard, the prodigal son, the marriage supper, the debts of ten thousand talents, the distribution of the ten, five, and one talents, and He pointedly defers the difference between Dives and Lazarus to be adjusted in the next world. Our Lord supposes the inequalities in social life to continue, He knows that the passions and weaknesses of human nature will remain, and His new era gives peace and supernatural help to overcome the deficiencies of nature.

The theorists of any form of universal equality completely overlook the effect of the passions of men on their scheme. Suppose that any of these theories obtained a fair start, suppose a social democracy established, private ownership abolished, all wealth equally distributed, all compelled to contribute their share of labour, and all proclaimed to be equal in condition. The passions of men would immediately begin to work: ambition, luxury, indolence, greed, lust, self interest, are not dead, and the ferment would simmer through the whole of society. Men would still steal and overreach each other, anger and violence and bloodshed would still prevail, there would be a set who refuse to work, a set to barter their birthright for a mess of pottage: there would be scheming for power and place, and it would inevitably end in inequality, in wealth and poverty. But the Government being the Government of the people would be strong. Who shall keep the keepers? Will they be more devoid of passions than previous rulers? In lesser things the Government of the people has not shown itself free from human weakness. In any association of workmen with leaders elected by themselves, do they trust their leaders, have they confidence in one another? The frailties of human nature develop jealousy, envy, mistrust, and struggle for power. If this occurs in small associations, will matters be improved in the management of a general Commonwealth? Moreover, social equality, removes the natural spurs to industry and exertion. The establishment of a family, the accumulation of wealth, the wielding of large capital, a position of leisure, are motives, not perhaps the highest, but still motives that prompt activity, continued labour, and sacrifice. They have been the rewards and the inducements that have led to invention, discovery, great achievements, mental effort. When all are reduced to a dead level, receive a common wage, have no prospect of bettering themselves, how many, taking human nature as it is known, would care to slave and exert themselves for the vague idea of bettering the general community? Given a thousand people, would any single individual by extra effort and labour care to earn £1,000 that all might have a pound apiece? Such a Commonwealth, from repeated analogy in history, would result in a one man

rule and reversion to despotism from the natural working of the passions and weaknesses of human nature.

It may be urged that the Church sets forth a conspicuous example of the success of Socialistic organization in her Religious Orders. They have been in active operation for ages with social equality, property in common, labour for the common good, without capitalists, or landlords, or rich men, or class differences. A better illustration of the weakness of Socialistic theories could not be adduced, for the conditions that make the Religious Orders possible as a schema of social life are impossible in the Socialistic theories. In the first place, the members of a Religious Order enter it entirely at their own choice, they do not commit themselves until they have mastered the conditions, and then their adopting them is their own free act. No Socialistic theory contemplates a voluntary system in which a redistribution of property would become impossible. Next, each member on admission solemnly swears to give up his own will and to place himself at the disposal of another, which could find no place in the proposed Socialism. Furthermore, there are no families in Religious Orders, children are abolished—an impossible condition in a Socialistic state. Lastly, besides the three vows, each Religious is bound to tend to perfection; that is, to strive not only to keep the Ten Commandments, but to conquer his passions and weaknesses, and to aim at rendering himself perfect. This meets the fundamental difficulty of a Socialistic state, namely, the interference of the passions and weaknesses of human nature. Imagine a Religious Order compulsory, without the vow of obedience, with an accumulation of wives and children, and without any obligation to curb the passions, and it is not difficult to forecast that it could not survive until the arrival of grandchildren.

These general considerations suffice to expose the dreaminess of theories of equal rights and equal conditions. The history of mankind establishes the existence of inequality in every place, time and condition, and suggests something inherent in human nature to account for its diffusion; a Catholic sees in it the design of an all ruling Providence, and is confirmed in his opinion by the analogy of nature and the silence of Our Lord on any scheme of equality; and, furthermore, the passions and weaknesses of human nature which cause the present evils of society would also prevent the success of any scheme of social organization. Besides the general reflections that apply to all Socialistic theories each one of the schemes has its fallacies and its innate weakness. Take the nationalization of the land and the abolition of private property in land. It is assumed that land differs from property in manufactured goods; that what man made man can own, what no man made no man can claim as exclusively his. If man owned only what he made he could not own a horse or a dog, a rose or an apple. In what does land differ from manufactured goods? The value of land consists mainly in the labour that man has put into it. As soon as man's labour has made it productive it becomes valuable, and in this way does not differ from iron ore, coal, cotton, or the wood of the forest. These are not made by man, and are of little use to man until they acquire a value from man's labour. The State does not own all steel rails because God made the iron ore, nor does it claim chairs and tables because nature grew the wood, so that land has two aspects, its original uncultured condition at what is called prairie value, and its condition after it has been rendered productive by the labor of man. The value of the latter usually exceeds the prairie value, and the nationalization of the land implies

that the State takes over not only the original uncultivated condition (raw material) but also the labour of man that has made it productive (manufactured article). The grievances and wrongs of private ownership in land would still continue in the ownership of the State, for they mainly arise from the labour (manufactured) value of the land, the tenants' and labourers' interests. Take some of the evils described by the graphic pen of one of the modern prophets, Annie Besant. "A landlord lets a farm at a low rental. The land is overgrown with weeds, covered with stones. Hedges are neglected, buildings decayed. An energetic farmer takes it. He grubbs up the old hedges and plants new ones, he pays labourers to clear off the weeds, to gather the stones. He builds strong sheds for the cattle, warm shelter for the stock. Manure repairs the losses of the soil, careful husbandry tends it. The crops become heavier, the flocks and herds more fruitful, capital, science and labour have trodden the value of the land. The landlord rides by with a bailiff. 'Smith, that farm's worth more than it was ten years ago. You must have it revalued.' Why? The landlord has not wrought and toiled, and spent thought and money on it. Why should he share a profit he has not helped to make? The added value of the land is the tenant's interest on his capital and his labour: to raise the rent, i.e., to take a share of the profit, is to rob the farmer of the interest of that which he has invested." Now, substitute in this example of Annie Besant's the State for the landlord and a Government official for the bailiff, and would it be any more just for the State to raise the rent? If the State secures to the farmer the benefit of his labor and improvements, this happens, that the ownership of the land is divided, three parts of its value belong to the farmer and one to State. This practically is private ownership, for the farmer could then sell his share of the value, or sublet it, subject to the payment to the State or ground rent, and any difficulty or trouble that induced the State to part with the ground rent to raise money restores freehold tenure.

For the State to take over the land justice requires compensation, at least, for the labor and improvements. To whom shall the compensation be made, and who shall estimate it? The amount would be enormous. Having bought up the land, in order to prevent reversion to private ownership, the State must cultivate it. If it allowed others to put their own capital and labour into it, private ownership would arise in the increased value. So that the State would employ the whole of the agricultural labour—a gigantic undertaking—to the exclusion of individual enterprise and personal interest. Then, building sites have to be considered, and, there, too, the State must either erect all the houses or impose a ground rent, and where the value of the houses far exceeds the value of the site the ownership of the ground rent becomes proportionately insignificant. So that the nationalization of the land is really only a part of the Socialistic dream, in which the State manages everything.

Is, then, the workman to regard his wrongs and his hard lot as inevitable? By no means; the remedy is to be sought in practical measures and not in impracticable socialistic dreams. The legislation of the past half century, by attacking one point after the other, has proved that the greed of capitalists and their power of oppression can be restrained. Factory Acts, Mines Regulation Acts, Truck Acts, Adulteration Acts, all point to substantial gains in the social condition of the working-man. All industrial functions are registered, inspected, and controlled. In the more important industrial occu-

pations the Government prescribes the age of the worker, the hours of work, the amount of air, light, cubic space, heat, lavatory accommodation, holidays, and meal times, when, where, and how wages shall be paid, how machinery, staircases, lifts, holes, mines and quarries are to be fixed and guarded, how and when the plant shall be cleaned, repaired, and worked. Water, drainage, education, compensation for injury, and other matters are provided for. If existing grievances are tellingly represented and practical remedies suggested there is every disposition to redress them, and, failing this, the working class has now a large share of political power, and can insist by their votes. To advocate the wholesale upset of society by fanciful Socialistic schemes that are impracticable would alienate sympathy, provoke opposition, delay reforms, and must result in failure and probably in a worse state of affairs.

## Wolfe Tone's Chambers.

A bit of old London which has a peculiar interest to Irishmen will soon disappear. When Wolfe Tone was in London as a law student during some years before 1780, he resided at No. 4 Hare Court, Temple, with his friend George Knox, gaining a rather precarious livelihood by hack literary work. He was at that time the intimate friend of a number of other Irish students in London, some of whom found their way to the bench and others to the scaffold. Thomas Addis Emmet was then a student of medicine at Guy's Hospital. He had indeed been appointed jointly with his father state physician in Ireland before he abandoned medicine for law. Plunkett, who afterwards as a stage in his progress to the chancellorship prosecuted Emmet's brother with such unnecessary malignity, was also one of the same group of friends, and probably from time to time they all met at Tone's chambers in Hare Court, unconscious of the widely different fates in store for them. From that day to this Hare Court has remained unchanged. A little dingy, a little picturesque, a quiet nook within fifty yards of Temple Bar, it has somehow lain rather outside the range of legal business, and is occupied more by residential than by professional chambers. The benchers of the Inner and Middle Temples, anxious to turn the land to profitable account, intend to remove the old buildings during the long vacation, and an Irishman who wishes to see Tone's chambers must go to Hare Court at once. I wonder, by the way (says the London correspondent of the Irish News and Belfast Morning News) whether there is anything to mark Wolfe Tone's residence in Dublin? In 1790 he lived at 5 Great Longford street. While speaking of these memorials of the past I may mention that the Dublin Young Ireland Society intends to pay a visit to the burial place of Owen Roe O'Neill and Myles the Slasher, in the old Franciscan burial ground at Cavan. There is no commemorative tablet over the grave of Owen Roe. Would it not be a grateful act if Northern Nationalists were to combine to place a simple Celtic cross over the burial place of one of the greatest of Ulstermen? I commend the idea to the Belfast Young Ireland Society. The tomb of the Earls in the Eternal City has been better cared for than the resting place of Owen Roe, who was buried in his own province, and among his kith and kin.

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