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## NOTES ON NEWS.

WITHIN two or three days of each other, Lord Salisbury has received two deputations, one asking him to consider the state of the London poor, and one to consider that of the Irish landlords. At first sight this would seem like a practical joke played upon the Most Noble by people with a sense of grim humour. However, that does not seem to have been the case, and both deputations put forward their cases with great gravity—even that sent by the Irish landlords.

The contrast between the reception of the two was, however, remarkable. The parliamentary sovereign of Britain let the first deputation see that, to his mind, the condition of the poor had nothing to do with him, whereas there was an air of cordial and affectionate sympathy in his address to the delegates of the landlords which must have warmed their hearts and made them think it the next best thing to a Bill passed by both houses to make the whole public compensate them to the full for their falling off in rents. In fact, his enthusiasm for the useless class quite carried him away, and made him optimistic as to the future of these poor sufferers; whereas he was pessimistic to the last degree as to the possibility of the "Society" which he represented finding work for those willing to work, whom competition has thrust out of the labour market.

It must be said that he was right in his pessimism, and wrong in his optimism. It would be preposterous for the head of a bourgeois government to pretend to be able even to consider any scheme for benefitting the classes on whom his class—the class whose servant he is—lives; and scarcely less preposterous for any set of persons to ask him to consider it; unless, indeed, they were Socialists wanting to show him up for what he is. Yet on the other hand he cannot do much for his dear landlords, seeking rent where there is no rent. Even they in the long-run must come on the Socialists for "compensation"; only the "compensation" will not mean giving them back again the ownership of the natural resources of the country which has been so ruinous to us all, and which is beginning to slip through their fingers, but assuring to them a position in which they will be able to exercise their capacities and earn themselves a non-precarious livelihood.

Meantime it is instructive to note the irresistible instinct which forces Lord Salisbury to exhibit himself in his real position, the head of a committee governing the country for the welfare of the proprietary classes. To Lord Salisbury, as to all who are not either consciously or unconsciously Socialists, it is only the members of these latter classes who are men and women with feelings to be considered and real lives to live: all others are only parts of the great machine, to be thought of only as a general thinks about his army: food for profit instead of food for powder: beings without property, of whom no account need be taken but as occasion calls on you to manipulate their votes.

The debate in the German Reichstag on the new anti-Socialist Bill, produced a remarkable exposure, from our friends Singer and Bebel, of the secret police system of Bismark. It is good that not only the German public but the public of England also should know what the cost of suppression is and must be; and that a part of it must necessarily be the keeping up a system of espionage and provocation to deeds of violence which is absolutely sickening to think of, is a disgrace to human nature—even absolutist human nature.

One thing is clear, that in spite of Herr Puttkammer's rage and indignant denials, the statements of the Socialist deputies are believed by everybody. It is a common middle class trick in this country to pooh-poo all statements of this kind, and to assume that everything is managed in "respectable" modern Governments if in a stiff and business-like, yet in an open and above-board manner. The reception even by the English public of these revelations of the "frankness" of Herr Bismark, show how conventional this way of taking the subject is. The road of repression is a foul one, Bismark has doubtless long been callous to its worst quagmires; but our own rulers seem to have a taste for dirt, and if they go on as they have begun they will doubtless before long rival the "Great Chancellor" in his disgraces.

He has been speaking once more to listening Europe, and people can make pretty much what they please of his speech as to the hopes

of peace and war; but whatever he wanted various sets of people to think he meant by it, one thing is certain and may console those who are afraid of a coming war, and that is that war is the last thing he wants, and that he will go any lengths to avoid it. The German army is too useful an instrument for the repression of the German people to be wasted in foreign wars if they can be avoided.

I can imagine some of our friends grinning rather bitterly at the title of an article in the current number of the *Nineteenth Century*, "How to live on £700 a-year," and thinking that they would like to try the experiment. It should be explained that the title ought to run, "How to live in the upper ranks of the shabby-genteel on £700 a-year." This is a different problem, and a sufficiently tough one to those who are compelled to live in this group of curs. The receipt for it is much as follows: give away nothing; let your hospitality be merely conventional; take no pleasure except for the sake of gentility; never buy a book; look very sharp after your servants; in short, repress every instinct towards kindness and generosity, and you may cut quite a good figure in the ranks of gentility, and be in fact a fine specimen of the genus "snob." W. M.

Mr. J. R. Cox, M.P., was furnished on Thursday, February 2nd, by the governor of Limerick prison with a new suit of jail clothes, and he offered no objection to attiring himself in them. Mr. Cox had expressed disapproval of the resistance offered by Mr. O'Brien and others to the jail authorities, and so it was expected that he would not indulge in the "heroic" resistance that has, one is compelled to say, just a taste of the snob about it. He was engaged in chopping wood with the ordinary prisoners in the jail-yard the same day, and in all ways conforming to the treatment accorded the "ordinary criminals" made by law.

Very cheering also was the blunt, bold way in which the sailor Mayor of Waterford spoke out before Lord Ripon and Mr. Morley at Dublin. "Rebels we are born," said he, "rebels we remain, and rebels we shall die, if we must, against the infernal despotism of Dublin Castle!" Here, at least, is one man who can say what he means without hiding it in the frippery of affected reverence for the tender ears of Mrs. Grundy.

Was the verdict of the Edinburgh jury in the trial of crofters last week different from the one before rendered by reason of less challenging of the jury by the defence? Or was it the natural "pawkiness" of Scotchmen, intensified by their being tradesmen, that made this jury see so clearly that sheep were property while deer were not? Or the craven legality of the bourgeois mind that blindly followed the mere law?

They may also have been influenced by the natural class-feeling that would regard sheep as worthy of protection as matter for trading and appertaining to their own class, while deer are objects of "sport" and appendages of aristocratic privilege.

Of course, they forgot that it was for the sake of sheep that the Highlands have been cleared and so much land laid waste. But then one hardly expects a bourgeois jury to give weight to such a consideration.

How proud the law-abiding Englishman must be this week! After careful and long deliberation, the great financial council at the Vatican has decided that the Bank of England is the one secure place in the world for the deposit of Peter's pence, and so the gigantic monopoly which controls the whole machinery of exchange in this country is to have another large sum to make interest on.

Ever since the *Star* began to throw light upon the hidden places of the London vestries, there has been a mighty squealing in the dark recesses where corruption reigned supreme. A great deal of good is done by such exposures—for the time—but after a while, even if the glare of publicity is not allowed to die out, new ways of evading discovery will be found. Full reform will never be achieved but by Socialism.

Everybody just now seems to be in danger of allowing the great services rendered by the *Pall Mall Gazette* to be eclipsed by the newer light of the *Star*. This latter is doing good work, although it is hardly as advanced as it gave promise of being; but even in view of all it is

doing, it is hardly fair to talk, as some are doing, as though there were "great men before Agamemnon."

When speaking of papers, one might also put in a word for our own. It is to be hoped that none of our members and friends will be so mean as to speak of the *Commonweal* for sake of the *Link*. I am anxious that the *Link* should have all done for it that is possible, but to me at least, if to none other, the *Commonweal* is the paper, and must be considered and worked for first over all.

S.

## THE NEW ETHIC.

(Continued from p 36.)

LET US now take the theologico-metaphysical hypothesis that the *telos*, end, or purpose of the self, the individual, or the personality, is realisable not *per se*, but in the Divinity between whom and his personality there is a mystical connection. It is recognised here that the form of the personality is inadequate to its content. Morality, duty, religion, are the expression of this inadequacy of form to content. But the theologian or the dogmatic metaphysician seeks to attain the adequacy *per saltum*. The *saltum* proves a *saltum mortale*, since it removes him altogether from the sphere of the real world. He creates an ideal sphere in which the soul shall find its satisfaction, in which that element within him which proclaims himself inadequate to himself, and therewith his entire personality, shall reach its completion and perfection. But in this theory the principle of Individualism, while *formally* surrendered is *really* maintained. It is felt that there is a permanent contradiction involved in the individual when viewed abstractly, or as a thing existing by itself. So far, so good. But how is the contradiction dealt with? By the attempted suppression of one of its terms. Speculatively, the natural personality is absorbed as its end and object in a supernatural being. Practically, the natural personality as such is repressed. But, meanwhile, it has passed unnoticed that the contradiction is not only not resolved, but that the term which was thought to be suppressed is not suppressed, but stands more firmly than ever. The personality is on these grounds, as "the air invulnerable, and our vain blows malicious mocking." The attention of the individual is now more firmly than ever rivetted on self. The attempt of Mysticism to transcend Individualism at a stroke has recoiled upon itself. The individual and his God, though *formally* and *professedly* distinct, are really one and the same. That this is so as regards the actual world is obvious, since it is admitted by the theologian that all that goes on is in the "heart" of the individual, and relates to a spiritual world *revealed* to his own soul. The renunciation of the theologian or mystic is therefore a double-dyed egoism. His personality continued, under higher conditions, and on a higher plane. The moral basis or principle of Supernaturalism is an Individualism screwed up, so to speak, a degree higher than that of the ordinary worldly theory. To the worldly selfishness of the one it opposes an other-worldly selfishness. From the point of view of the natural or real world, the divine nature in which the imperfect natural individual fancied he was realising his higher perfection has shown itself but as the reflex of his own nature with its natural tendencies, in some cases inverted, in others exaggerated.

We have as yet dealt with the two current fundamental ethical theories, so to speak, statically. It now remains to show their origin, meaning, and connection in the Dynamic side of Human Evolution. The particular view of the moral relation obtaining is, as we said before, conditioned by the social forms of which it is the outcome. The empirical Utilitarian theory of the English school, it is quite clear, is but the speculative formulation of the principle obtaining under the competitive capitalistic system, which reached its earliest development in the Anglo-Saxon race, but the basis of which (*viz.*, property), and consequently the tendency towards which, has been more or less present since the dawn of civilisation. The theologico-metaphysical theory, though not so obviously the outcome of social conditions having this same basis, is none the less really so. But to understand this clearly we must consider the original nature, object, and meaning of the ethical consciousness; its meaning, that is, in those earliest forms of society wherein its manifestations were so different to what they are in the world of to-day. We have first of all to remember, then, that morality affirmed itself in the ancient world or society as the solidarity of the individual with his kin, his gens, his tribe, his "people." Illustration is needless, since this is a fact universally admitted in the present day. There was then no opposing interest between individual and community, the interest of the individual was absolutely identified with that of the race; he had not as yet drawn the distinction between himself and the society to which he belonged; his personal *telos* was identified with that of the social whole into which he entered.

But at the same time that he had no interests independent of his race, yet neither had he any duties outside that race. Society and therefore ethics existed on the basis of *kinship*, and of kinship alone. Within the charmed circle all was sacred, without it all was profane. The primitive society of kinship was a self-contained organism, apart from which the constituent units, the individuals composing it, had no significance. The individual, the personality, therefore, unconsciously recognised his *telos* in the society. The incompatibility of the form of the individual to the content of individuality had not as yet become explicit, since the individual had not as yet been thrown back upon himself. His life was an objective one; objectivised in the society. But now mark the gradual change which took place a change of the process, of which the typical illustrations are

to be found in the early annals of Greece and Rome. The *society* by the very fact of its own development merged into the *state*. With the growth of the state, *property* tended more and more to supplant *kinship* as the basis of things. For a long time the two principles continued to exist side by side; but it was long before the personal nature of property was fully realised. But no sooner was this the case, no sooner had personal property become the basis of social order, than the naive ethical sentiment of early society was at an end, and an individualistic ethic took its place. This individualistic ethic was of a two-fold kind. On the one side it was an attempt to realise happiness or the end of individuality within the limits of the natural individual, on the other it was an attempt to realise the *end* of individuality on a supernatural plane. In the one as in the other the individual becomes, so to speak, the centre of attention. Man awoke to a consciousness of himself as *formally* distinct from the society. It was not long before this formal distinction became converted into a real separation, consequent on which the society came to be regarded as a mere appendage to the individual life or soul. The problem of morality henceforth becomes how to reconcile individual interest with the exigencies of a social existence. In the later classical period we find the Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics, all attempting to solve this problem of the greatest possible happiness for the individual on an empirical basis, that is, within the limits of the life of the individual. Duty was by these sought to be explained by some abstract formula, or by the "enlightened self-interest" assumption of our modern Empiricists, *viz.*, by the somewhat daring assumption that morality in the long run coincided with self-interest as such. These schools assumed that the individual was self-sufficient, that he was an independent *entity*, having only casual relations with the community; in other words, that the meaning of personality and therewith of morality was exhausted within the bounds of the individual's epidermis.

The other school spoken of, on the other hand, of which the later Stoics, the Neo-Platonists, Gnostics, and other theosophic sects, are the classical types, recognised the fact that the empirical self implied something more than it expressed—that its content was not exhausted in its form. The old feeling of duty, of the *ought*, still survived, but without its old social object, and without its old basis. It wandered through dry places seeking rest and finding none. By-and-by, as man came to reflect, and distinguish his being from the universe, and his thinking self from his corporeal self, a solution of the enigma and an object for the moral consciousness seemed to offer itself. Was not the material universe, like his body, the outward manifestation of a soul or self? Assuredly, as he thought, nothing could be more obvious. Further, was not the personality of the universe the immeasurably higher counterpart of his own personality, his source and end? No less assuredly, as he thought. He, the feeble reflection of the Divinity had as his chief end the fulfilment of the Divine Will, preparatory to his ultimate union with the Divinity. Morality, duty towards his fellow men, was a part of the divine system of things, and conscience, the moral impulse, was a spark of the Divine flame. Still, mere morality, duty to man, was only a means to an end. The only sanction of morality was the will of God. His chief end was not to be found in any relation between his individual self and society, which was only incidental and by the way, but in a relation between this self and the divinity. It was by careful searching of his own heart, by careful self-introspection and solitary musing, that the divine will might be discovered. The great end of all morality was to purify his highest self from the gross taint of material desires. He must negate and subdue his inferior part, his body, which was only an unimportant part of himself, and of which he was really independent, just as the deity was independent of the created physical universe. The result was that the great aim of moral action became the negation of bodily desire—asceticism.<sup>1</sup>

It is to this moment or stage in the evolution of the moral consciousness that the conceptions of Sin and Holiness, with the derivative ones of chastity, purity, etc., belong. The highest and most complete expression of this phase is to be found in Christianity, though it is embodied also in its essential features in all the great ethical religions, as well as in the later philosophies of the Pagan world. The way of the ancient morality was broad and clear; duty had not to be sought for in the mysterious depths of the individual's conscience. But this broad highway to moral justification did not satisfy the new individualist Ethic. The broad way led to destruction. Now, it was the task of every man as Christian to search out by the narrow, tortuous labyrinthine paths of personal introspection his moral goal. In the same way Gautama, the Buddha, had proclaimed the eight-fold path of duty, and enjoined his followers to walk therein. The great negative characteristic of this movement was the definitive abolition of racial morality. The moral relation being a personal one between the individual soul and the Divinity revealing himself thereto, it is quite clear that the notions of "Greek, Barbarian, bond or free" had lost all meaning. The Barbarian and the slave must as a personality be equal before God with the man of nobler race or with the free citizen, provided he "walked humbly with his God." All men were equal in the sight of God so far as race or lineage was concerned, since every case rested on its individual merits alone. The test of a man was no longer one of kinship or of blood, but of personality. The Supreme Power of the universe could take no account of the tribal distinctions among men,

<sup>1</sup> It may perhaps be said that the Cynics evolved an ascetic Ethic out of an empirical basis. This is quite true. The mere egoism which delights to show power of course tends to asceticism. But this does not alter the fact that ascetic ethic is in the main the offspring of a mystical attitude of mind.