

BLACKFRIARS

who despised 'Sewers End' was laid to rest in an island cemetery lapped by the murky waters which are the only sewers of the crowded island slums in which he starved to a moral and physical death.

If the dispassionate record which Mr. Symons has so carefully compiled can help the 'normal' to understand the 'abnormal,' it will have served a useful purpose. If it can help the abnormal to arrest the 'play' which ends as Proust says (*Sodome et Gontorrhe*) in 'the day of disgrace when the tamers of wild beasts are devoured by them,' it will be a God-send.

The Quest for Corvo is a serious presentation of a moral problem which is but too often discussed with contempt or ribaldry. We hope that two classes of readers who need enlightenment will not miss the point.

IFOR HAEL.

CORRESPONDENCE

THE POLITICS OF INDUSTRIALISM.

To the Editor of **BLACKFRIARS.**

SIR,—Industrialism has reduced the majority of the workers to 'a sub-human condition of intellectual irresponsibility.' The phrase is Father Martin D'Arcy's. Such a state of things is intolerable to the Catholic Church.

Mr. P. D. Foster, writing in your March number, says that 'men will soon cease to occupy positions subordinate to machines, for as these become more competent and completely automatic, design, organization and control will be the human tasks.' There are about 1,400 millions of men and women in the world, about 40 millions in England and Wales. Take England and Wales alone and call it **five** million male workers. Is it possible to achieve such a perfecting of industrialism that every one of these five millions will be engaged in design, organization or control?

Sir, it's a giraffe!—I don't believe it.

Take, for example, the 'assembling' of mass-produced motor cars. You can imagine a completely automatic machine for

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producing, packing and distributing bolts ; but you can't imagine a machine as cheap and efficient as a man for tightening them up. Can you?

But, without abandoning our beloved Industrialism, there is another and much more practicable solution of the problem of human responsibility, namely : conscription of labour. 'There is, as the Russians say, a war on—a war against human misery and insufficiency, against human selfishness and greed. In Russia there is at present real material insufficiency. In England, America, France and Germany there is insufficiency of purchasing power and maldistribution of industrial labour. The former can only be remedied by financial reform; the latter can only be remedied by labour conscription.

The Industrial system of production necessarily involves many operations which reduce the workers to a sub-human condition of intellectual irresponsibility. Let us *voluntarily* impose on ourselves a sharing out of these jobs. Let the idle rich combine with the idle poor (the unemployed) to relieve 'the working classes' of this burden.

Counting the idle rich and the idle poor together, there must be at least five million idle men in the country alone. Probably the present eight-hour day could be reduced by half if these men were conscripted. Both religion and piety (patriotism) demand that all men shall help to produce what all men need.

Is there anything contrary to Catholicism in conscription? I think not. Conscript labour sounds bad? Call it National labour. Let everyone do his bit of drudgery. On what grounds will anyone refuse?

Some will say 'Britons shan't be slaves,' that conscription of labour destroys freedom. But, Sir, these are pre-industrial notions. There is no 'freedom' in factories, except freedom to be obedient. What with Trade Union regulations and Masters' Federation regulations, Factory Act regulations, the Police, Sanitary Inspectors and Health Visitors, and the inexorable requirements of the machines, all other freedoms are gone.

But you can't reduce hours of work without reducing pay unless you have a different finance (accountancy) from what we have at present. The solution of this difficulty is possible, but it is not my present business. I will only say this : If a country produces sufficient for all its people's needs (including, of course, what it obtains by exchange from other countries), and yet only employs half of its population, it is clear that it could produce the same amount in half the time if everyone were employed. It is obvious that the difficulty is one of distribution, not of production. Distribution involves money ; there is something wrong with our money system. The problem of money is now more

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urgent than any other. Ought we not to be growing a little suspicious of those who say that the present money system can neither be altered nor bettered?

Yours faithfully,

ERIC GILL.

DISTRIBUTISM AND PRIMITIVISM

To the Editor of **BLACKFRIARS**.

SIR,—There are two references to Distributism in the March issue of **BLACKFRIARS**, and in both cases a popular and erroneous meaning is applied to the term. The first reference is made by *Jacobin* in the course of his *Remarks*, and the second is made in the course of a review by one whose initials are ‘V.W.’

Jacobin deplores that Distributism ‘equates Catholic civilization and primitiveness,’ which is both unjust and untrue: ‘V.W.’ deplores that Distributism has given rise to a ‘widespread misunderstanding of the social philosophy of Saint Thomas,’ which is not untrue and is therefore probably not unjust. It is not untrue, because much has come to be associated with Distributism that is not Distributism; because the creed is sometimes as ill-served by its friends as by its foes.

Its name was coined by Mr. Hilaire Belloc,¹ and it was chosen as providing an antithesis to a word less frequently heard to-day, ‘collectivism.’ It was intended essentially to denote a social philosophy which should be based on a true and Thomist conception of human nature, a personalism to combat the impersonalism of collectivism. Indeed, an excellent introduction to Distributism is provided by Fr. Gerald Vann’s recent Essay in Order, although the author would probably at once repudiate the suggestion. He would repudiate it for the same reason which led Mr. Belloc to avoid any use of his term in a series of articles which he wrote last year for *The English Review*, in which he outlined an immediate and practical policy for a Distributist government. Many of those who have been the friends of Distributism have been impressed, no doubt with some reason, with the necessity of an agricultural revival; and, not unnaturally, they have described how this counter-revolution might be achieved on Distributist lines. So loudly and often have they described it, however, that an agricultural revolution and Distributism are now regarded by many as inseparable, and the original Thomism of Mr. Belloc is now dubbed ‘Homespun

¹ Vide the supplement to the *New Oxford Dictionary*.