

Compliments of a Friend

The Church's Centuries

(Continued From Page Twelve.)

social or political science, remember I say real advance, may be traced to it as to its source. Wipe out all that social or political reformers and philosophers have ever written on the subject of man's rights and dignity, blot out every charter of human right ever wrong from the unwilling hands of unbridled power and every declaration of that right ever made and we have still left in the great fundamental truth of Christianity the seed and source of all the real progress that has been or shall ever be made.

If the individual is no longer regarded as a mere atom which may be crushed at will by a colossus of society, if the lives of the weak or deformed of all who cannot be useful to society may not be destroyed; if abortion and infanticide may not be practiced not only without restraint but with the approval of the State; if the doctrine of the slavery of races has been abolished; if human reason by the lips of its philosophers, of its Platos and Aristotles, no longer counsels or defends such crimes, or would make them virtues—it is because that reason has been illuminated by the light which flows upon it from the mystery of the incarnation; the light which is in the very truth, "the life of men."

Indeed, all history attests that the so-called superior intelligence and refinement of nations gives no guarantee of the triumph of justice over force, of right over might. The story of the abuse of superiority of intelligence or strength, both by nations and individuals, if it could be told, would form a sad chapter in the history of the human race. Who, throughout the ages, has opposed that abuse with all the zeal and vigor that justice and prudence would permit? History makes answer, Christianity, and not disorganized, headless, fractional or factional Christianity, but organized Christianity, speaking by and with the voice of authority.

Capital Agent of Production.

A most powerful agent of production is capital. And by this term I mean capital that is invested and expected to bear interest not that which is shut up in a strong box and therefore dead and unproductive—such capital is not entitled to share in any product.

But the Socialist contends that even capital which is invested is unproductive. The laborer, so the Socialists argue, does indeed need the capital,

and to get it he is obliged to have recourse to the capitalist, but the capitalist, as such, does not work; the money which he lends produces nothing; all the produce is due to labor. The capitalist, therefore, receives all that is due to him if his loan, without interest, is paid back to him at the time agreed upon.

"Capital is that part of wealth which is devoted to the aid of production." On one page he asserts, "If all capitalists would pass down into the grave and bury their wealth in their tombs, the laborer would not only survive, but grow rich." And again, he says: "If we had no capital, labor would be compelled to make its own exchange, at a great loss of time and convenience. If we had no capital, labor could not co-operate with the same facility."

Capital Produces Wealth.

But now to our question: Does capital produce wealth? It does, although it does so with the aid of labor. Capital without labor does not produce, but does that prove that it is not an agent of production? I do not think so. Capital, from this point of view is like a magnificent musical instrument—valueless, unproductive, if it be put to no use, but under the hands of the expert performer it will give forth the most exquisite music. Who would deny that the instrument takes an active part in the production of music? It is certainly a necessary agent of production. So the capital without the laborer may be sterile; in the hands of labor it becomes an active—creative—being, creating labor and doubling and trebling the efficiency of labor. I once heard of a certain merchant who disposed of his goods below actual cost. When asked how he could do that and live, he replied: "True, I lose a little on the single article, but the quantity I sell make up for it." Although in this particular case quantity did not make up for loss, it certainly makes the business pay in many other cases. In ever so many manufacturing establishments, it is actually quantity which makes the business pay.

The profit on the single article is so small, so trifling, that, if an enormous quantity could not be manufactured the business could not be carried on because it would not pay. But what is the agent which makes the manufacture of large quantities possible? It is capital, without which it would be an impossibility. Capital provides the necessary buildings, tools and machinery; the necessary raw material, the necessary funds to carry on

the business for a length of time, when no money is coming in. Capital enables the merchant to seek foreign markets, to advertise on a large scale, and to create a demand for the products which he manufactures. Indeed, capital is an agent, a very powerful agent, of production; and if an agent, it is entitled to a fair share of the product.

Four Agents of Production.

We have, then, not only one but four agents of production—Land, Labor, Genius and Capital—and all four are entitled to a fair share in the results. All four of these agents may, and often do insist on a share which is absolutely unjust; on a share which is altogether out of proportion to what they have contributed in the production. The fact, however, that an act of injustice is committed, that an agent here and there demands too great a share, does not prove that the agent is entitled to no share at all. True social reform, therefore, must not and does not aim to deprive an agent of what is really due him; it merely has to provide that no agent can get more than what is in justice his fair share.

True social reform, in this respect, can have no other aim than to insist on the execution of that command given on Mount Sinai, which says, "Thou shalt not steal," and again, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house." * * * "nor anything that is his."—(Exod. xx. 17.) For if the laborer idles away the time which he agreed to spend in the service of his master he is stealing; if he does his work in a careless, slovenly manner, he is stealing; if he demand wages which are altogether out of proportion with the results of his labor, he is stealing. If the Socialist would deprive of his just share the owner of the land, the man who possesses the knowledge or ability to produce, the man who lends the capital for production, or perhaps deprive the owner entirely of his land or his capital, the Socialist is a thief. If, on the other hand, the merchant or the manufacturer adds to the actual cost price of the manufactured article such an amount that his clear gain per year amounts to twenty or more per cent., he is stealing; and if the laws of the country try to justify and to tolerate such a gain, these laws are unjust and should be abrogated. Capital is not entitled to such enormous profits. The capitalist, the merchant, the manufacturer must either sell cheaper, or pay more for the raw material or pay higher taxes or raise the wages of his workmen. In olden times, and even in the oft-maligned

Middle Ages, the taking of interest was forbidden by the Church. In these, our modern times, the commercial conditions of the world have changed; capital has become an agent of production; therefore, the Church permits interest, pays and receives interest, but usury, exorbitant interest, is a crime. True reform must demand that justice be done to everybody. Not Socialism, which is unfair and unjust to land, genius and capital, but true Christianity, which is just to these three and to labor alike, which teaches justice and charity, is alone able to bring about this necessary reform. If we, in private and public, teach and practice, and defend true Christian principles, then and then alone are we doing our share in solving the social difficulties of our times.—The Rev. Fr. Fintan, O. S. B.

POOR AND SICK, HE ASKS FOR HELP

We like to further the cause of the catechists, as they mean so much to the overworked apostle.

"Some time ago I pleaded for a little money to pay my twelve catechists," writes Fr. Brambilla, of North Honan, China, "but I received no response. As a result I have had to send the twelve back to their homes, and now the Canadian Presbyterian missionaries are sending their native teachers to the villages that my catechists have left, and are doing their best to undo the work I have been building up here for years. If they win out, then it practically means the destruction of the mission of this district."

"I am in poor health and I am so discouraged that I don't know what to do." It takes only twenty dollars to support one of these catechists for a whole year, and they would gladly come back and take up the work again if I could promise them this small amount. In my distress I appeal to twelve good friends of the missions who really are sincere in their desire to do something to help the spread of the Faith. If I could recall these twelve good helpers of mine, it would be the very best tonic I know of to bring back my health."

The new rector of the Capranica College in Rome, is Monsignor Camici, former professor of Liturgy at the Propaganda. He has also been made Consultor of the S. Congregation of Rites.

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