

once seen, can never more forget—and which even a Premier might be expected to know.

Thank God, the worker can now live humanly and hold his head up in the manly independence that becomes the primeval and perennial nobility of labor. But it is a mistake to suppose that his rise to better things is the conquest of a new right, the capture of a new height, achieved in our day. In great part it is the re-conquest of rights which were won under the ægis of the Catholic Church, which were recognised four centuries ago, which were trampled upon and covered up during the great religious revolution of the sixteenth century, and which the worker has been slowly winning back once more in our time. The learned Anglican Bishop Stubbs, writing of the condition of the poor in the Middle Ages, states that 'there is very little evidence to show that our forefathers in the middle ranks of life desired to set any impassable boundary between class and class. . . . Even the villain, by learning and craft, might set his foot on the ladder of promotion. The most certain rise was furnished by education, and by the law of the land "every man or woman, of what state or condition that he be, shall be free to set their son or daughter to take learning at any school that pleaseth him within the realm."' That first-rank authority on such questions, Professor Thorold Rogers, describes the thriving condition of labor in England during the century and a half which preceded the Reformation. The last decades of Catholic England were (he declares) 'the golden age' of the British worker. In *The Economic Interpretation of History* (p. 63) he says: 'In the age which I have attempted to describe, and in describing which I have accumulated and condensed a vast amount of unquestionable facts, the rate of production was small, the conditions of health unsatisfactory, and the duration of life short. But, on the whole, there were none of those extremes of poverty and wealth which have excited the astonishment of philanthropists and are exciting the indignation of workmen. The age, it is true, had its discontents, and these discontents were expressed forcibly and in a startling manner. But of poverty which perishes unheeded, of a willingness to work and a lack of opportunity, there was little or none. The essence of life in England during the days of the Plantagenets and Tudors was that every one knew his neighbor, and that every one was his brother's keeper.'

In those days the British artisan was protected by his guild against arbitrary dismissal; he was insured against sickness and the ordinary accidents of life; work at night, on Saturdays, and on the eves of feasts was forbidden; Sunday closing was rigidly enforced; low fixed rents contributed to his prosperity; and for a considerable period his working day was only eight hours. The eight-hours' day of our time is simply a reconquest of a privilege that grew up in the middle ages, under the protecting eye of the Church. The rights of the craft-workers were effectively protected by fines and otherwise. Thus, in 1466, we read that the London Pinners' (pin-makers') Guild fined a man two shillings (equal to £2 of our present currency) for setting a child to work before he had been fully apprenticed; another was mulcted in the same amount for having worked after seven o'clock on a winter's night, a third for keeping a shop before he was a 'freeman' of the society, and yet another 'for that he sold Flaundes pyennes for English pynnes.' Professor Thorold Rogers says of the law of Henry VII., cap. 22 (of the year 1486): 'A schedule of wages is given, which, considering the cheapness of the times, is exceedingly liberal. At no time in English history have the earnings of laborers, interpreted by their purchasing power, been so considerable as those which this Act acknowledges.'

We will conclude with a few remarks about German workers. As in England, so in Germany, the generation that preceded the Reformation was the workers' golden age. Belfort Bax is no friend of the Catholic Church. Yet in his *German Society at the Close of the Middle Ages* he shows how the peasant of those days had his abundance of flesh-meat of various kinds, fish, bread, fruit, and wine. Such, indeed, were the prosperity and reputed extravagance of the working classes of the decades preceding the Reformation that a sumptuary law, passed in the Reichstag held at Lindau in 1497, provides that the common peasant man and the laborer in the towns or in the fields 'shall neither make nor wear cloth that costs more than half a gulden the ell, neither shall they wear gold, pearls, velvet, silk, nor embroidered cloths, nor shall they permit their wives or children to wear such.' In England, as in Germany, the middle ages had their drawbacks, their big and little tyrannies, their manifold hardships and discontents. But they were the times when the Church, in the face of many social and political difficulties, did so much

to place the worker upon a pedestal. The religious revolution of the sixteenth century 'downed' him into the dust. And he is still toilsomely winning back his way to some of his olden rights once more. If Mr. Fisher had possessed even an elementary knowledge of social and industrial history, he would never have launched out in his crude generalisations about the Church and the worker.

Notes

Better than a 'Dreadnought'

A 'Dreadnought' is a handy bit of argument when others fail. But (as the Catholic Bishop of Goulburn recently put it) a true religious education is the best foundation for a nation's real strength and greatness, and therefore for its defence. 'The evils of secularism,' said he, 'were to be found in France, which was already on the down-grade, and the opposite effect could be seen in Germany, where four hours every week were devoted to directing the school children in either the Catholic or Lutheran religion. That was the difference between the two nations. France was a decaying one, and Germany a rising one, that could afford to build Dreadnoughts as she was doing.'

Is the Queen a 'Papist'?

The Protestant Alliance has dressed up a new bogey and is busy scaring itself out of the few battered fragments of sanity that are left to it. Briefly, the Alliance insinuates that Queen Alexandra is a 'Papist'—or has at least moved far towards 'Popery.' This fearsome 'discovery' has been keeping it awake o' nights, and it has communicated its fears to its votaries in the *Vanguard* (one of the Alliance class of periodicals) in an article bearing the scare-head title: 'Queen Alexandra's Religion: Is she a Roman Catholic?' The date of the publication (it may be stated) was the first of April—a singularly appropriate and auspicious day for the publication of the article in question. The text of it is before us in full in the *Glasgow Observer* of April 17. 'The furnishing of her [the Queen's] bedroom,' says the *Vanguard*, 'as revealed by the photograph, is pointed to as evidence of Queen Alexandra's leaning towards Roman Catholicism. The central place in this rather crowded room is occupied by her Majesty's bed, a beautiful piece of furniture of the Louis XVI. period. . . . The first object that strikes the eye is a crucifix, the figure of Christ, life-size, beautifully carved in ivory.' [The *virtuosi* will, no doubt, be extremely curious to see the piece or pieces of ivory that were large enough to make a 'life-size' figure of Christ.] 'This significant object,' adds the *Vanguard*, 'is hung at the head of the Royal bed, under the canopy, just where it would be hung by the Mother Superior of a convent.' [Mother Superiors will, no doubt, be interested to learn that they take their brief hours of slumber in canopied beds.]

There are still other horrors in store. 'To the right of the bed,' continues the alarmed *Vanguard*, 'is a collection of religious objects to which those who assert that the Queen is leaning towards Rome point as evidence of their assertions. High on the wall hangs a sixteenth century painting of the Virgin Mary in its original frame, with wonderfully chased and pierced brass doors. Over the head of this picture, and set in the framework, is a reliquary or box intended to contain a relic of some saint who is the object of special devotion by the owner. British debaters point out that the little holy-water font, of the same period, placed underneath this picture, is just where it would be placed by a pious Catholic, who on going to bed and rising, blesses herself with fingers which have been immersed in the font. To the left of the sixteenth century picture of the Madonna containing the reliquary is a very fine copy of the famous Dresden Madonna. On a line with this, again to the left, is another sixteenth century triptych, containing another beautiful painting of the Virgin Mary, with St. Joseph and St. Elizabeth on the wings. This also is a wonderfully valuable work of art, in a perfect state of preservation, not having sustained the faintest injury in the three hundred years of its existence. Underneath this is a very fine marble statuette of Christ preaching the Sermon on the Mount, also a reproduction of a famous masterpiece. Underneath the Dresden Madonna is a water-color showing the Shepherds being led to the stable at Bethlehem, and underneath this again is a reproduction of Guido Reni's wonderful head of Christ with the Crown of Thorns—that well-known example of what is called by the purists, meretricious art, for when you gaze on it the eyes seem some-