

ST. BERNADETTE SOUBIROUS

To the end she was what she had been at the beginning, Bernadette, the poor child of Lourdes, doing always with her might what her hand found to do, little enough though that was. And now, by the infallible verdict of the Church, she is ranked as in her own right among the Shining Ones of the Company of Christ.

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ART AND LEISURE

WHEN I go to the pictures my object is usually to avoid thought rather than to induce it; but on most occasions it is difficult to escape one reflection at any rate: that there is an inevitable connection between money and art, just as there is between money and religion; and that the connection does not always work out fortunately.

In its dealings with art, the Money Power is just as greedy and unintelligent as with everything else. When a really good picture comes out of Hollywood, as it sometimes does, one feels that the producer has managed to do it, in spite of, not because of, his financial managers. They say that Mr. Montagu Norman has a pretty taste in antiques or old masters or whatever it is, and rumours of striking and original sculpture on the Bank's new buildings have reached even my Philistine ears. That may be so. Nevertheless, in its relation to culture in general the banking system is more stupid and boorish than the ox that sets his uncaring hoof on the first cluster of primroses. If there are too many cinemas and not enough schools, if living musicians starve and tinned music assails the tortured ear, if villages of bungalows are built on the skyline of the downs, if new slums are being built under pretence of slum clearing, if the English countryside is laid waste by ruthless industrialism — where is the ultimate blame if not on the credit-system which 'finds the money' for such developments and insists on 'getting it back'?

Yet strange to say, there are artists who look forward without enthusiasm to the reform of finance. Take, for in-

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stance, Mr. Eric Gill, who has lately written much on the topic, especially in his book, *Beauty looks after Herself*. Being an intelligent and humane person, he perceives the insanity of the present money-system and takes for granted that it will soon be changed. But in this prospect he sees no hope for the true artist. For him, the true artist means the perfect workman doing necessary work; the age of plenty means the triumph of the machine and the extinction of responsible craftsmanship; the age of leisure means a populace machine-fed, machine-clothed, with minds standardised and mass-produced opinions, spending their time in travel, sport, and the more frivolous kinds of 'love'-making, while art dwindles to a mere matter of water-colour-painting and fancy-work. 'God save us,' says Mr. Gill piously, 'from all the arts and crafts which are the product of leisure.'

On the other hand, there is Mr. Will Dyson, cartoonist and author of *Artist among the Bankers*. He sees modern life as a gigantic confusion of frustration and tyranny, with the stupid and obsolete money-system as the villain of the piece. Unemployment to him is the workman not being allowed to use his tools, being forbidden by Finance.

As for modern art and literature, Mr. Dyson scorns them for occupying themselves with unreal trivialities, escaping from life rather than facing it. Even the supposed virtues of our literature, such as Humour, come under his condemnation. 'Humour and good humour are virtues in the private sphere, but elsewhere they are a cowardice and a thinness of the blood . . . The world is too huge a joke to be laughed off. Laughter has lost its virtue, it is not a cure to-day, it is the neurosis itself.' Something personal in this remark can perhaps be guessed at by those whose memories go back far enough to compare Dyson's good-humoured drawings of to-day with the blistering ferocity of his pre-war cartoons, say at the time of the Dublin transport strike.

Business men, the so-called Practical men, having now made a complete muddle of human life, Mr. Dyson thinks it is time the Artist began to sit up and do something

about it. An epochal fight is on, and the artist cannot stay out of it and keep his soul intact.

‘Artists,’ he says, ‘are the stewards of a thing higher than themselves—the art element in man—almost the religious element.’ They know in their hearts that the business machine is a monstrous tyranny, and they must not fear to say so. ‘It is time this Art Element took the offensive . . . There is no other pre-occupation for leisured men but the art habits. These are the activities of leisure. The art of the world is the product of the leisure of the world—of time snatched from the toil of the world—the toil dedicated to the needs of the belly and the back.’

I think Mr. Dyson is right, also that he and Mr. Eric Gill are in fundamental agreement. Nobody really wants to abolish work, and nobody could. How many men, for instance, can resist the urge to work if they have a house and garden of their own? We should distinguish carefully between work and drudgery, defining drudgery as work which one is compelled to do without being somehow interested in it. The nearer we can come to abolishing drudgery the better; and this does not necessarily mean abolishing digging or even machine-tending, both of which can be undertaken with interest by some people.

Perhaps the New Economics in the early stages of its preaching has received a slightly too mechanical bent owing to the fact that Major Douglas is an engineer. To those who share the fears of Mr. Eric Gill, may I commend the following from a letter by John Rimmer in *New Britain*:

‘There is an assumption that financial reform will achieve the mass consumption of mass production . . . But what if it destroys mass production? Terrifying statistics are given of the potentialities of the machine. Mr. Kenrick informs us that England can make two and a quarter pairs of boots or shoes for every inhabitant of the globe. But what happens if we distribute increased incomes on the strength of this and similar potentialities? To date, machinery, applied to boots and shoes has meant mainly the mass production of corns and bunions. We have put up with the wholesale crippling for reasons of the economy enforced upon us by non-co-operating finance, but increase our incomes sufficiently, and we will insist on respect for pedegra-

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phic peculiarities and order our hand-made pair. So with **our** clothing. At £2 per week we wear ready-mades. At £5 we are beginning to employ the cutter and hand finisher. Thus labour saved at one end of the process of production is balanced at the other end for the ensuring of a more individualized product. Every man aches for the full expression of his individuality, and individualized consumption can only mean individualized production. Ask the women if any machine-made jumper compares with the product of a skilled hand-knitter.

This principle applies to all branches of production. For food increased income means a demand for pedigree fruits and cereals, and thus the revival of agricultural art and the personal attention of the gardener, instead of agricultural industrialization. For the building of houses the architect and building craftsmen come into the picture once more, and the jerry builder exits. And so it is with the services. The present compulsory mass-production in education will give way to a vast number of private schools, and even individual tutelage ; wholesale medical treatment in the hospitals will yield to a great increase of private doctors and nurses. All this resulting from the consumer, allowed an increased income by the financial reform, more freely expressing his individual choice when making his purchases.

So, in New Britain, I prophesy that the artist-craftsman will revive after his temporary eclipse, and the engineer will be— not quite so important.'

F. H. DRINKWATER.