

Mr. Scott fails to see anything but a "dislocation of the social order," providing opportunities "for the soul to squander and spill itself." Mr. Russell's observations on the laws regulating marriage furnish one of the rare occasions when Mr. Scott condescends to be particular and concrete. Mr. Russell thinks that if divorce were made easier for ill-mated couples, fewer lives would be permanently embittered, and there would be fewer adulterous escapades. Mr. Scott thinks that, to put it bluntly, the parties should accept the transaction as final and settle down to making the best of a bad job. Let them eschew "the weak dreaming, the habitual looking over the wall into the next person's vineyard, the miserable, furtive, half-hearted imaginings of escape that will never allow the bracing sense of finality to come."

This contrast is typical of Mr. Scott's attitude throughout. He does, indeed, bestow a passing benediction on "those rebels of the rarer sort, clear-eyed and broken-hearted," who, in unwillingly upsetting the established order, really continue the creative process to which all order is due. But he has clearly no mind to be himself a rebel of this sort, because, at bottom, he will not admit that in the world as it is now established, there is any need even for this sort of rebelliousness. Let your bonds be your sinews, is his advice; let your disadvantages be opportunities. Learn to love the bars of your prison like the walls of your home, and behold you will find in your prison all you need to make a paradise of spiritual graces. Eschew revolt and self-pity, and peace of mind will be yours. His receipt for happiness is to cultivate an "intensive realization of life," which, translated, means: cease endlessly criticizing and desiring; accept things as they are and seek your "progress" in adjusting yourself to them, for thus will you be "perpetually attaining." Only religion can help you do this, for it will show you "in the established institutions of civilized humanity traces of the presence of a Deity."

Verily, blessed are they who worship the God-State, and are content to be underpaid and overworked.

R. F. A. H.

## The Birthright of Esau

*The Abolition of Inheritance, by Harlan Eugene Read. New York: The Macmillan Co.*

A TEACHER of ethics who wanted to warn his class against the dangers of answering foolish casuistical questions according to their folly, recently asked why it was wrong of Esau to sell his birthright for a mess of pottage. The members of the class were somewhat mature, urban college students. Many of them called themselves radicals. Yet not one of them thought of suggesting that the ethical blame, if any, should rest on the tricky exploiting Jacob. Instead they ingeniously invented all sorts of reasons why Esau should be condemned for preferring to be saved from immediate exhaustion even at the expense of a future interest in a presumably large amount of property. The reason which found most favor with members of this class was, that it was Esau's duty to accumulate as much property as possible to leave to his children. This incident, perfectly authentic, is characteristic of the large extent to which primitive tribalism still dominates the prevailing moral attitude in such questions as those of inheritance. Generations of Bible readers have evinced no moral indignation at the atrocious way in which Joseph

used his control of the food market to acquire all the money, cattle, land and bodies of the Egyptians. He did not do it to his own people but to the Egyptians, and for that he deserved a double portion of his father's inheritance.

There can be no doubt that our inheritance laws date back to the tribal organization of society, and are largely supported today by sentiments which put family loyalty above public good. The fact that this tribalism is largely ingrained and unavowed, does not diminish its potency, a potency which makes Mr. Read's attempt to discuss the question on purely rational grounds seem pathetically futile. On purely rational grounds Mr. Read proves his case beyond a shadow of a doubt. The inheritance of wealth means the rule of the living by the dead. The substance inherited consists for the most part, not of goods for the protection of the young, but of legal power whereby the favored heirs may forever continue to tax the labor of the rest of the community, (in the form of dividends and interest charges). Inherited wealth, therefore, involves inherited poverty. The unconscionable sophistries by which this is supported are here mercilessly refuted, but without any perception of the fact that all the arguments usually adduced in justification of our inheritance system are just intellectual exercises in the realm of apologetics, and have nothing to do with the real origin and maintenance of the system. In view also of the fact that relatively few large fortunes pass by the laws of intestate succession, the author is unwise to devote so little space as he does to the question of the disposal of property by last wills and testaments. He shows himself more worldly wise in stressing taxation rather than escheat, as a practical method of abolishing economic oppression of the living by the will of the dead.

While books of arguments, like Mr. Read's, cannot directly overthrow a system based on established habits and prejudices, they are none the less useful in knocking off the protective paint of moral and intellectual respectability which always covers the vile features of reigning iniquities. As the pressure from increasing taxation grows it will become more and more easy to show the people the desirability of steeply graduated inheritance taxes. Such taxes are not only most just, but offer the least disturbance to business. By limiting each heir to \$10,000, over four billion dollars would annually accrue to the state. One can easily compute the relief which this would bring to the fourteen million workers who at the last census earned on the average five hundred and twenty-one dollars per year. Would anybody be really harmed by such a measure? Even if a favored few were to suffer, the harm and numbers would be insignificant compared with the millions whose growth is now stunted, because they have to go to work early and thus support the vicious circle of ignorance and oppression. How long will humanity suffer the tortures of its daily crucifixion for the sake of silly fictions such as that no one will work unless actuated by the hope of leaving a fortune?

M. R. C.

*After the Whirlwind, by Charles Edward Russell. New York: George H. Doran Co.*

MR. RUSSELL'S excommunication from the Socialist party is no more an indication that he has surrendered his belief in socialism than the excommunication of a sincere, free-thinking Christian from the organized church ought to be considered an indication of spiritual apostasy. Mr. Russell, with no other testimony than this latest book of his, is still a socialist, though among the

orthodox socialists his name is taboo as that of a political apostate. It is unfortunate that the American Socialist party, the self-professed champion of minorities, should have denied comradeship to the minority within its own ranks.

The orthodox socialist has been to a great degree upheld in his theories concerning the bourgeois democratic-capitalistic state—fortunately for his theories, unfortunately for the peace of the world—as against those socialists who, like Russell, Walling, Spargo, had trusted—with how little efficacy?—in the democratic intentions of the Allies, in their willingness to carve out a just and democratic peace. Germany has eaten of the bitter dust of defeat, but the Allies have not carved out a just and democratic peace. Rather, they have justified the worst that their radical enemies have said of them and have made ridiculous those who trusted in them.

And how naively Mr. Russell trusted in them. How keen must be his disappointment now. How easy a matter for the orthodox socialist to mock him with an "I told you so." How bluntly, for instance, do current events contradict such dogmatisms as this: "War is a King's game; when we are through with Kings, we shall be through with war."

And yet he speaks in a noble strain in his plea for the restoration of that spiritual attitude which, to a greater degree than now, obtained before the war, the attitude that would make a repetition of "the late unpleasantness" improbable, if not impossible. Today, that plea sounds almost fantastic, and yet in how many hearts has it not been uttered, and how often—it is to be hoped not insincerely—expressed as the purpose of "the democratic Allies."

He writes: "The sober fact is that so far as is humanly possible, in spite of all the great difficulties that attend, nationally, if not individually, these hurts must be healed and these wrongs forgiven if the world is not to be an intolerable place of wranglings, janglings, spites and bickerings leading to more and still worse wars; if it is not to be a series of huge camps wherein every nation is ceaselessly on guard against every other nation, reading into its every act only secret aggression, centering all thought, all energy, all invention, all initiative upon readiness for the next fight."

"There is no profit in hate," he says later on. "There is only profit in love. Viewed in the most practical, prosaic, commonplace way the forward motive power in this world is goodwill, not enmity, love, not hate. Hate merely throws the lever to reverse while the engine is going full-speed ahead."

It is a pity that such men as Mr. Russell should have been mocked by events. It is not improbable that he may seek to rejoin the Socialist party (unless he has been too deeply humiliated by the orthodox Socialist press). For the value of Mr. Russell as a propagandist can hardly be gainsaid. Mr. Russell was a journalist before he became a socialist and the non-socialist will read his interpretations of events with that tribute of interest which he would give to very few other socialist expositors.

HARRY SALPETER.

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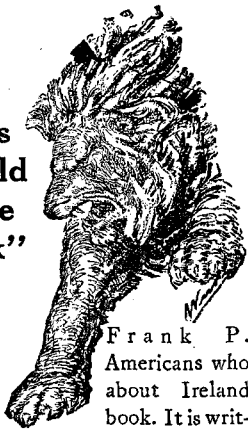
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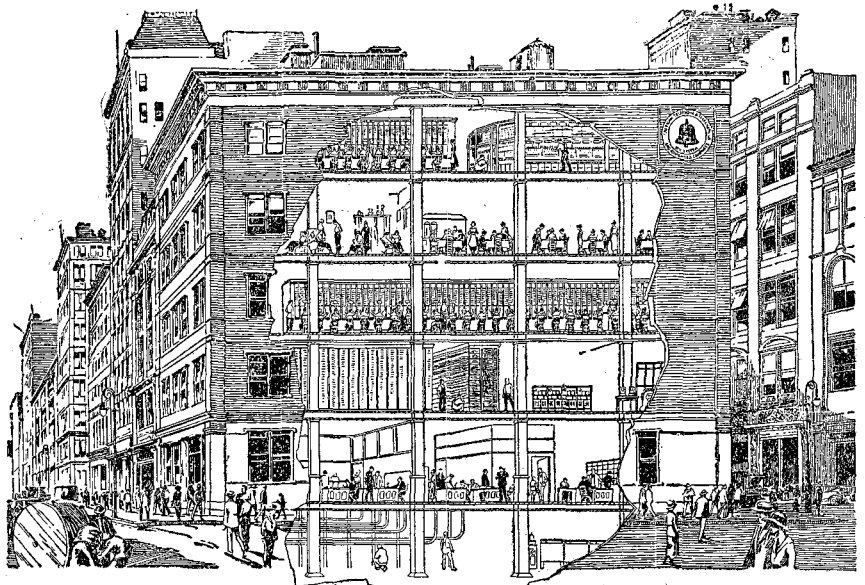
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