

## THE NEW SETTLERS

THERE exists in England at the present time a state of affairs which seems to me to call for the close attention of all Catholics.

It is a commonplace to decry the faults of one's own time. Everyone is in some degree a *laudator temporis acti*; and hope causes most men to look to the future for remedy of present ills. Yet, when due account has been taken of this human tendency, England to-day does present to the most casual observer some terribly alarming symptoms. Such things as the vast disorganisation of labour, the growing inability of the Government to find money for the payment of their colossal liabilities, the complete failure of compulsory State education to produce any sort of useful result, the despairing abandonment of the land are evident for all to see.

There has surely never been a period of history when the very machinery of living was so obviously breaking down. In crises due to some temporary stress perhaps the immediate outlook has been as black; but at such times there has always been the expectation of relief from the particular stress to buoy men up.

To-day—which makes matters so serious—the stress is not extrinsic: it is of our own making: it is the culmination of a deliberately planned way of life.

To anyone who has been taught to go to first principles this should be abundantly clear. He should recognise that the cause of this bankruptcy of life at the present time lies in a total disregard for the natural rules of living. He should be able to see that man ought to come before money; that the family is the unit and *raison d'être* of the State; that the land is for the provision of all, not the exploitation of the few;

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that ingenuity should be subservient to well-being. These are simple truths, but they have all been long allowed to fall into disuse.

If anyone doubts this, let him test it with a concrete instance from almost anywhere in the country. Is it, for example, for the provision of all that fruit should be allowed to rot on the trees and that potatoes should be made into bonfires? Is ingenuity subservient to well-being in the perfection of bombs and poison gas—to say nothing of mass-production machinery and ‘talkies’? Is the family the unit of the State when all parents who fall short of a certain income are compelled by the State to send their children through the soulless routine that passes for education; or where a certain section of them only escape by a hair’s breadth from having their children removed from them entirely, against their will, during the years that they are at school? Finally, is man being considered before money in any of the machine-run factories of this twentieth century, or in the great towns which are the expression of it?

But it is not only in these general ways that the rules of right and natural living are being abandoned. In every detail of life the same poison is at work, so that it is becoming daily more and more impossible to live simply and naturally. Commerce—which is now another name for artificial selling and financial corruption—is the mainspring of human effort. Profits and fictitious profits are fast taking the place in men’s minds of an honest livelihood. Wild palliatives succeed one another, but all assume the current false values, and most are calculated to intensify them. Progress is the war-cry; and indeed swift progress is being made in the direction I have described.

Into such a country are coming new settlers, ill-equipped—for they are often almost penniless—to take part in the unnatural scramble, and, owing to the

code that they have learned, conscious that it is contrary to right principles. These settlers are those people who year by year in increasing numbers have been given the Divine grace to recognise the universal truth of the Catholic Church. They are indeed settlers, for they are beginning life afresh in what is for them a new country: their old landmarks have been swept away, and their means of livelihood have usually gone with them. They are confronted with the struggle for existence in what has become a different and unsympathetic land. Even if they would, they are precluded by the new light they have received from continuing in their old ways of life.

What is to be done for these new settlers? For it is the duty of Catholics already established in the country to help them. Otherwise through the bitterness of the struggle they run the risk of losing their faith.

But, apart from the duty of giving such assistance, there appears to me to be a very positive opportunity for those who wish to live the Faith in England. The help which they give to these new settlers may be turned into something much wider than mere personal assistance; it may, with God's help, become the beginning of natural life in England: life in which first things come first, and the complication and abnormality of the modern world are eliminated.

Can this be done? I have neither the space nor the ability to draw up a detailed scheme; but, given the will to live the Faith day by day, I believe it can. And even if it seems to fail, yet are we not bound as Catholics to go on making the attempt? To do otherwise is to profess to follow the teaching of our Blessed Lord while blinding ourselves to conditions, almost every one of which is in direct antagonism to it.

In the merest outline, then, my proposal would be this: in the country, with a church and the Blessed Sacrament as centre, settlements should be formed,

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whose object should be to make a self-supporting life, derived directly from the land, a reality. It is needless to say that it would be of the simplest kind and would entail hard work of various sorts. In the early stages, at all events, certain compromises would seem to be inevitable. Such things as tools, materials, stock, etc., would have to be bought. Training and practice in essential work and crafts would have to be given. But these things in time would grow from the original tree.

The essentials of human life are comparatively few : food, clothing, shelter, education, and the care of the sick are the elements. Life can be supported on these. Thus, farming of various sorts, spinning, weaving and bootmaking, building, the production of books and the cultivation of the arts, and a knowledge of medicine would all have to be undertaken by the settlers. There would be scope for all sorts of men and women, the life would be a natural one, it would be free from the tortuous uncertainties of finance, but it would be definitely one of utter devotion and selflessness ; otherwise it would be doomed from the start.

There would have to be human independence, too : the family a really independent entity, co-operating, it is true, with the rest of the settlement, but a free agent living its own life in its own way.

Are the difficulties insuperable? They are certainly numerous. They could not be overcome except by the common incentive of the Faith—by the fact that this is a life consonant in its material aspects with the Faith. It is putting first things first in the natural order, and thus removing obstacles from our growth in the supernatural order.

And what of the alternative? If we do not do something definitely constructive to make a foothold in the social swamp around us, the ground will certainly

sooner or later subside beneath our feet, and civilisation will be lost in the quagmire.

Is it not, then, rather a pressing necessity than a choice with which we are confronted?

REGINALD JEBB.

### CANDLES

THE gravest courtesy of light,  
To all sweet loneliness a friend :  
Upon the scholar's book at night  
Thy beam, his brooding blend.

Nothing except thy rays may shine  
To gild the missal's page at dawn,  
As mass is chanted line by line  
Ere night be quite withdrawn.

When the font gives eternal life  
Thy light rests on the infant's head ;  
Thy wick burns as the happy wife  
Comes from her childing bed.

And when I vanish out of mind,  
Candles around me as I lie  
Deaf even to the dirge, and blind  
To all except the sky.

May I fix eyes on Him Who stands  
Among the candlesticks aflame,  
The seven stars within His hands,  
And on His lips my name.

THEODORE MAYNARD.