

VIEW FROM THE TOWER.

THE BISHOP OF LONDON ARRAIGNS THE CHURCH FOR UNFAITHFULNESS TO THE CAUSE OF LABOR, AND VOLUNTARILY GIVING UP HIS BISHOPRIC, HIS PALACE, HIS SEAT IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS, AND AN ANNUAL SALARY OF 10,000 POUNDS, HE PROPOSES HENCEFORTH TO DEVOTE HIMSELF TO THE CAUSE OF SUFFERING HUMANITY.

TEXT. – "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Behold the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just, and he doth not resist you." – James 5:1,4,5,6.

Fellow Citizens – The text which I have just read you, and from which I shall preach the last sermon as bishop that I shall ever deliver from this pulpit, is one which is probably as unfamiliar to you comfortable well-to-do people as it is familiar to all those who since it was originally penned, have toiled and suffered for humanity. Although it is read sometimes in the ordinary course of our church service, yet judging by your conduct, your ears have been deaf to its terrible denunciations. From the days when I was an humble curate until now, I have had a large and varied experience of cathedrals, churches, preachers and sermons, but I have never yet heard a discourse based on these words, and I cannot learn from any of my brother bishops or priests that they have used them, or heard them so used.

I can see by your uneasy demeanor that you are asking yourselves why, on this Christmas day, when, in accordance with custom, I should be preaching smooth things to you, I should be mad enough to offend

your delicate susceptibilities by quoting the saying of one of the common people – words written eighteen centuries ago – which might have done very well then, but which cannot possibly be applied to you and your class to-day; you who come here, clad in purple and fine linen, who, some of you, live in king's houses, who fare delicately every day, and who consider that you have fulfilled every moral obligation when you have dropped a coin into the collection box, before you step into your carriages to be driven to your luxurious home. It is because I believe that not only James, but Jesus Christ himself, if he could stand in my place to-day, would hurl these words at you with a force and a passion of which we, in the nineteenth century, have but little conception. Not as a bishop, but as a man, I repeat them to you, hardly hoping that they may touch your hearts, but more as a justification for my new and strange position.

For years I have been one of you. My home has been not where Christ's home was, with the masses, but with the classes. I have an abundance of this world's goods. I have been a dignitary of a church which is the church of the rich, and not the church of the poor. Without a protest I have mixed in society with men and women whom Christ would have denounced as bitterly as he denounced the scribes and pharisees. In the house of lords, I have sat silently side by side with whoremongers and adulterers, and silently have I welcomed as my personal friends, high-born women – some of whom I see before me to-day – with whom no decent working man would allow his wife or daughter to associate.

I have seen among you, spreading like a canker, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life, and instead of reproving you, as Christ would have done, I have taken refuge in generalities, and have not dared to denounce your individual sins. All this time there has been going on around me, in this huge city and throughout the land, the surging, toiling life of humanity – the sorrow, the suffering, the poverty, the disease, the sin and the shame which I realized but dimly, as something altogether apart from my own existence, but for which, I at last see

clearly, you and I have been up to the present time mostly to blame. We and our class have kept back by fraud the hire of the laborers who have reaped our fields, we have lived in pleasure on the earth and been wanton, we have nourished our own hearts while we have starved the bodies of those to whom we owe the very bread we eat and the clothes we wear, and now we are condemning and killing at our own very gates the people whose inarticulate cry is entering into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, whose faithful servants we pretend to be.

My fellow citizens, I know not how it may be with you, but for me this careless, selfish life is ended. Little by little I have awakened to the fact that all my days I have entirely neglected my real duty to my fellow men, and at last I have come to know that my proper place is not here, as a well paid bishop of a church which, in its present condition is utterly opposed to every thing which Christ taught, but among the poor, to whom he declared that the gospel should be preached; among the laborers whose hire we have kept back by fraud.

Too long have I neglected the miserable social facts of our so-called Christian civilization. Too long have I spoken to you smooth things and cried peace when there was no peace. I have known by repute that there was misery among our people, starvation in our midst, and prostitution on our streets. But hitherto I have taken these as something for which you and I were not responsible, but which were really due to the inherent wickedness of nature.

But now I have learned that our pleasures and our wantonness have been built upon this hideous foundation, and having learned this – as you may also learn if you will – I have resolved that from this Christmas **[R1032 : page 2]** day my new life shall begin. To-day I lay down my robes, I give up my bishoprick, my palace and my income; I give up my seat in the house of lords; I give up my pleasures of society and of the world, and at last I take my place as a MAN among MEN.

It is, I know, a bold step that I have taken, but I have fully counted the cost. Resolved no longer to live on the labors of others, I shall

probably have to join the great army of the unemployed. Tomorrow I shall attempt to preach my first sermon to them in Trafalgar square, from the same text that I have used here to-day, and it is likely that I shall pass tomorrow night in a police cell. But there I shall be no worse off than Jesus Christ would be, if he attempted to enter this abbey (Westminster) now, for he would be arrested and locked up as a vagabond without visible means of subsistence. To you and your class he would simply be a laborer whose subsistence you have kept by fraud. To the abolition of that fraud, and of the misery and degradation which result from it, I shall henceforth devote my life. It will be no easy task, not near so easy as being Bishop of London, but the reward of a good conscience and of noble work well done, is better far than a palace and ten thousand pounds (\$48,000) a year.

In this place I shall probably never speak again. But when freedom shall have opened out her arms and gathered all men into her wide embrace, when justice and truth shall have taken the place of oppression and fraud, some man of the people shall stand in this temple of the dead, and inspired by the best traditions of past, the noble aspirations of the present, and the ideal hopes of the future, shall send ringing through these lofty aisles that living Christmas message which, till then can never have its full significance – "Peace on Earth, and Good Will to Men."

– From *London Justice*.

The above clipping sent us by one of the brethren came just too late for our April issue. It is rather remarkable that an event of so great moment, should have been kept quiet so long.

So far as we can learn, at this great distance, the above discourse gives only too true a picture not only of the state of society in Great Britain, but throughout the old world. Even the moral and conscientiously disposed of the Aristocratic Class, live often in idleness as well as luxury upon the labors of the middle and lower classes, – including the trades-people, small manufacturers, mechanics

and day-laborers; all of whom are indirectly *forced* to supply this extravagant luxury, waste and idleness, out of their unceasing toil and often pitiful wages.

The aristocratic class referred to are really social parasites, who as a rule never have given any equivalent for the extravagant favors they enjoy, and never intend to do so; nor to permit the favors which they regard as their *lawful rights* to slip from their grasp. The incomes of this class, amounting often to millions of dollars yearly, are generally derived as rentals for the lands held by them for centuries. If it could be shown that the parents of the present owners *ever* gave an equivalent of any sort for these lands, and that their tenants or their parents once had as [R1033 : page 2] good a chance of owning their natural proportion of the soil, but had wasted their time and energies in idleness, foolishness, or dissipation, then the case would be different; though that would not make proper the *everlasting* perpetuity of a land-lord system, found to be grievously oppressive to all except the very few.

But except in a very few cases there is not the slightest show of equity. The parents of present land-lord aristocrats in the remote past obtained control of the land by force, without giving any equivalent. And, of keener intellects than the masses, they framed laws which recognize their titles thus obtained. These laws the common people have heretofore consented to, being for most part ignorant of their own rights, and easily swayed by the plausible arguments or liberal patronage of those whose mental superiority to many of them they recognize – especially when among these aristocrats stood the highest representatives of the church, teaching by word and example that this arrangement, as it stands, is *the will of God*.

No doubt many of the royal and aristocratic families, and many of the bishop-princes of Great Britain, at heart are really benevolent, and have never thought of this matter in its true light, – that instead of being very merciful and benevolent, they are not even *just*; that

they *owe* much to those who for years they have deprived of the rights and privileges which God provided for them equally. We believe the bishop above quoted, is one of the few among the aristocratic class, whose eyes have been opened to see these matters in their true light. But, under the enlightening influences of the new age now dawning, the eyes of the "common people" are opening much more rapidly. Self-interest tends to open the eyes of the one class, as it tends to close those of the other. By reason of the inventions, etc., of this "Day of preparation" the common people have gotten a taste of education and of the comforts and luxuries of life, which the aristocratic class could not have prevented if they would. Now the thinking process has begun; knowledge is being increased, and they are beginning to see that it is not by God's decree that the land which he provided for humanity as a whole, has been unjustly *seized by the few* to the lasting injury of the vast majority.

What is the remedy? It is the recognition of the wrong, and the righting of it. Because few of the aristocracy will allow themselves to see the right, or to in *any measure* release their hold upon their assumed rights, therefore the remedy, which must come, will come from the common people demanding and taking their rights. They are not fully awake yet, but it will not be long until they are. And the danger will be, that in the frenzy of the revolution which must come, (the great "time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation"), many of them will ungenerously exact a *fearful interest* – such as was illustrated in the French Revolution.

In the United States, though we have no such inequitable land-lord system as that of the old world, while there are still millions of acres of public domain held for actual settlers, yet we see nevertheless, in the sale of large bodies of the public lands to individuals and corporations, the beginning of a system which in the end would work injury to the masses. The people of to-day have no right to dispose of public lands to speculators, which their own and their neighbors' children will sooner or later need for *use*. Yet this is what they are doing through

their governmental representatives. We see here too, a principle at work which is contrary to God's design – that the earth should be for the *people*, each in proportion as he can and will use the same; not to be made a matter of speculation whereby one person or family may in the future collect a toll or rent from others for the use of God's gift – the land. Improvements, representing labor, are proper investments; but land, representing God's generous gift to all, should not be appropriated by the few to be held from the many, – *not even by common consent*.

It would be wise for all possessing large holdings of land to dispose of the surplus speedily; and not only in this but in every matter let us see to it that our lives and deeds conform to righteousness – justice. This should be the action of the righteous, from *principle* and from a desire to conform their lives in all things to the will of God. It might well be followed by others who care only for self-interest; for we are coming into the days of retribution when every deed shall receive a *just* recompense, whether it be good or evil.
