

antry formed from our present land workers and from those townsmen who are not quite lost to the realities of the soil. Let the workers become owners. Give the craftsman security and apprenticeship. Let the squire and the parson return to a functional responsibility. Restore the 'just price.' Turn from the metropolitan to the regional. And, we may add, remember the words of the reigning Pope: 'Of all the goods that can be the object of private property, none is more conformable to nature than the land, the holding in which the family lives and from whose products it draws its subsistence in whole or part. It is in the spirit of *Rerum Novarum* to declare that, as a rule, only that stability which is rooted in one's own holding makes of the family the vital and most perfect cell of society.'

WALTER SHEWRING.

### GILL'S LAST ESSAYS

OF these nine essays,<sup>1</sup> two are now seen for the first time, and one, the longest, is new to the present writer. *Secular and Sacred in Modern Industry* takes up the last twenty pages. Two full-size reproductions and three or four 'colophons' from his hand make the little volume more intimate and precious to his old friends and the war-economy standard of production seems to enhance rather than impair the attractiveness. The little volume contains a lot of close reasoning, many aphorisms of price, and much true intense loyalty to the Papal Encyclicals on Labour and Social Reform. We speak feelingly, having had to defend the faith of Eric Gill against those who never retain a single word of those earth-shaking documents even if they ever heeded one. On p. 13, l. 7, occurs a sentence with one *that too* many.

Who wants an antidote to the Daily Bane and other touting booby-traps for Democracy and the Proletarianisation (his word) of all things? Who wants to hear that 'the labourer's point of view is necessarily radically different from any other'? Who swallows all the second-hand sops of Midas without any rumination? Who but everyone who does not read Eric Gill.

He does indeed get down to the bases of our maladies and does it in an everyday familiar medium more deadly-undermining than

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<sup>1</sup> 'Last Essays.' Eric Gill. With an introduction by his wife. (Cape; 5s.).

even that Communist Propaganda so dreaded of comfortable man. Only the absurdly overblown and overgrown Industrial Capitalism made Karl Marx and Co. seem clever and insidious. Here is one who reveals those simple things hidden in the foundations of reality, and all the shams of the earth shake themselves to pieces. Gill never let a proposition pass unquestioned. He would sit on the bed all night to get to the bottom of some theorem that was new to him.

He was still wearing a red tie when the present writer first made his acquaintance. He had, in his own words, invented the Catholic religion for himself, and had not many years then, begun to try it out. Daily Communion whenever he could, devotion to the Rosary, recitation of the Little Office of Our Lady as nearly as possible punctual to the Canonical Hours were sanctifying his labours and his thoughts, as they did to the end. He never sat lightly to his religion or to anything, so far as personal contact and observation could verify this unique feature of an unique personality. His Socialism had been strained through the fine sieve of his Catholicism until he could be called a good blend of William Morris and Michael Davitt. All the gentleness and more than the culture of Michael and the taste without the luxuriance of William. He was wont to say (and this would have improved the work of Morris) that austerity, frugality, was an essential element in beauty. Sensuality was the enemy.

He saw things *and* persons in the nude, and, realist that he was, he apprehended the danger of not seeing them so at all or of too persistently seeing them so. Therefore he was no amateur moralist, and his attack on 'clothes' was a defence of their use and their necessity, and a demonstration of the ill effects of worshipping mere fashion in dress. Nudity in the human race destroys civilisation, runs to cannibalism, but stupidity of costume is itself a kind of immodesty which drags culture down. Hence he still incurs the scandal of the Pharisees, and of those little ones who have never grown to the knowledge of interior restraint but rely on external compulsion.

Seeking and ensuing simplicity in the tangles and jungles of the world's unweeded gardens, and having, as he says, invented the Catholic Faith, he broadly states the need of implicit faith, consciously and resolutely implicit (and this is a great mystery in Christ and in the Church); for merely explicit faith has often turned out to be but heresy fast asleep.

So instead of shouting the battle-cry of freedom as, for example, abolition of income-tax, state-control of armament-makers and in-

ventors; instead of adding to Herbert Paul's list of the dreary things that wear out our springtime, he merely enters a plea that nobody should talk about art, but that anyone who possesses any kind of art should even so share it with all likely comrades. So, he says: Let Art Education rip. As for instruction, let it be moral rather than intellectual. Tell them to be careful and keep their pencils sharp. Not to smudge. To put down on paper what they really mean, and not to scribble: And let their subject be as difficult as you like. Nothing is too difficult for the innocent. Tell them to draw the Blessed Trinity . . . But Art must be abolished. It must. It must. It must.

*Five Hundred Years of Printing* forms a light sketch of the Devil's Handicap, or how to squander ill-gotten gains without any sense of loss, and leads on to *The Leisure State*, showing how Industrialism is surely leading us through the very Hell of a wilderness, but into a Promised Land where the curse of Adam shall fall away and the world's inextricable welter of pain and filth be justified by the glorious end outshining all the means.

But, he says, the world is not like that, and Angelism is a rare feature even among the sublimest sensualists, so what among the pearl-sodden swine?

Last Essay, *Secular and Sacred in Modern Industry*, sets out with a passing notice of the length and brutality of the war to cheapen hirelings, ending in making them worthless but not cheap and certainly never less necessary. How 'Art' was dragged in to trick out hireling works after the divorce of Art from Industry had left even money-hounds aghast at their own triumph. Foreign trade was falling flat. But the divorce was far wider than the merchant wist: business had long been a stranger to ethics, to metaphysics, to any kind of goodness, beauty, wisdom. WHEREAS: Man is a child of God. So he gravitates to beauty, for beauty is holiness made sensible. Now poverty is part of holiness. Not Penury, but Holy Poverty. Study this and ensue it for that alone will be firm in the Deluge.

JOHN O'CONNOR.