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COMPARATIVE ECONOMIC HISTORY AND THE ENGLISH LANDLORD.¹

It is now some thirty years since I began to interest myself in economic history, under the converging influence of three very different men—Stubbs, Toynbee, and Schmoller. And, looking back, I am conscious of a great change in the academic atmosphere. I should not like to speak for Germany or France or Russia, or the other countries of the European continent; but for England and America this much can safely be said: that the study of specifically economic history is no longer an individual eccentricity, calling almost for apology; it is now a recognised and respectable scholarly pursuit. And this is evidenced by a circumstance the very mention of which may cause our foreign friends to smile, but which is quite significant in British circumstances: economic history has been given a place in our university examinations. At the Universities of Cambridge and London, and at most of the newer Universities, examination papers are every year set in the subject, and some hundreds of students do their best to answer them. Consequently there is now something like an academic career opening before scholars who devote themselves to this particular study.

But there is another and perhaps as significant a sign of the times, about which our foreign friends may like to be informed. During the last few years there has come into existence in Great Britain an extensive organisation called the Workers' Educational Association. It is an association of trade unions, co-operative societies, adult schools, and other working-class bodies, in alliance with the universities, to provide for working men and women an education worthy of citizens. The expenses

¹ Presidential Address at the Economic History Section of the International Congress of Historical Studies in London, April 3, 1913.

are met, in large measure, by grants from the Board of Education, *i.e.*, from the general taxation of the country. Now it is a remarkable fact that the subject most generally studied by these classes of working people is Economic History. Out of some 102 systematic courses of lectures and tutorial classes in the session 1911-12, almost half, *viz.*, 49, were on Economic History. Economics or Economic Theory came far behind, with 29; and no other subject brought together more than four or five classes. In many cases the classes proceed, in a subsequent year, from economic history to economic theory; in others they advance from a more general to a more intensive study of economic history itself, or go on to some other aspect of history—for instance, the constitutional.

This noteworthy state of affairs would seem to have arisen, at the outset, partly from accident, and partly from the free choice of the working men responsible for the first “tutorial classes.” What these working men wanted was, naturally, some light on the pressing social problems of the day; but they felt, as one of them has told me, that to approach them historically would give “a sense of proportion and perspective,” and would make it easier to tackle more controversial questions afterwards in an unpartisan spirit. The example thus set has since been followed, simply because the policy has justified itself in experience. It would seem, also, that by many working men economic history has been welcomed not only as a preparation for political economy, but also for its own sake: because it seems to come nearer to answering the questions in which they are interested than the particular kind of economic theory that is presented to them by most English economists.

The serious study of economic questions, whether historically or not, by the *élite* of the working classes is bound to have large consequences. So far the Workers’ Educational Association has been able without difficulty to maintain an independent and unpartisan position. In this respect it has been more fortunate than the only contemporary working-class educational movement with which, for extent, it can be compared, namely, the network of popular lecture courses organised in Germany by the Socialist party. The educational work of the German Socialist party—and by that I mean not so much its propagandist activity, which naturally stands in the forefront, as its zeal to awaken working men and women to intellectual interests generally, whether through natural science or art or history—this work has hardly attracted as much attention as it deserves. Yet party zeal is

hardly separable from party narrowness; and the Workers' Educational Association gains something from its freedom from entangling connections.

All this increasing attention to economic history, alike in working class and in undergraduate circles, makes it imperative there should go on, side by side with it, the keenest and most critical scientific research in every part of the field. The danger of over-hasty formulation, the danger of undue emphasis on particular facts, are certainly not less in these days of social politics than they were in the days when ecclesiastical history, or in those later days when constitutional history, led the way in becoming a subject for specialised teaching. *Quis custodiet*, it may be objected, *custodes ipsos*? Professors themselves have their bias and their passions, the more dangerous because they are commonly unconscious. We greatly deceive ourselves if we suppose that historical, political, legal, and economic subjects attract attention, even in our calmest seats of learning, merely on account of, or in proportion to, their scientific sociological interest; that the typical scholar is objective and detached from contemporary motives. As a matter of fact, the bulk of the important work done at the universities in these fields has always been inspired by interest in the problems of the day; and "tendency" is only a matter of degree. So far as a remedy is possible, it is to be sought in a consciousness of the danger. The way to overcome bias is to realise what our own individual bias is likely to be, and to suspect ourselves accordingly. Help also will be given by a multiplication of investigators, so that no dubious conclusion shall long remain uncriticised by a brother scholar of differing "tendency." And if the critic comes from another nationality, there is even more chance that he will see the common subject-matter with fresher eyes, and eyes that, if prejudiced at all, are prejudiced in a different direction.

This thought brings me to a theme on which it may not be inappropriate that I should dwell for a few minutes on this occasion: the strikingly international character of recent investigation in this particular subject. It is surprising how large a part of the best work—certainly this is true of English economic history—has proceeded from foreign scholars. This has been the result of their essentially practical purpose. They have turned with interest to the social history of a land not their own because it preceded their country in its development, and might therefore indicate dangers to avoid or precedents to follow. Thus Marx and Brentano and Held and Schulze-Gävernitz and Levy

have examined the industrial history of England, because England preceded Germany in passing through "the Industrial Revolution." And while Germans have led the way in the scrutiny of manufacturing development, Russian scholars, in more recent days, have thrown themselves with eagerness upon agrarian history. I need but mention such names as Karéiew and Douthisky and Kovalevsky for their French inquiries, Vinogradoff and Savine for their English. The obvious reason is that Russia has been confronted of late with the prospect of a vast agrarian transformation, and her patriotic scholars crave for every possible glimmer of light upon their path that the experience of other countries can be made to furnish. That they may find such light we must all hope; but, in any case, their keen curiosity is of great service to the history of the countries they turn their attention to.

I am aware I am entering upon a somewhat perilous topic if I attempt now to illustrate the international character of our study from a subject that engages just now a good deal of attention in this country, viz., the ownership and tenure of land. I realise that the whole group of problems which it includes is still full of obscurities; but it may be possible to state the present position of historical investigation in a way to command the assent of scholars. In what I shall have to say I shall have England chiefly in mind. But it is certain that in the Middle Ages there was a substantial similarity of social conditions over a large part of Western Europe; and it is from that fact, as we shall see, that we get sometimes the greatest assistance and sometimes the greatest hindrance in our inquiries.

It is evident, to begin with, that the historian of English land has no longer the same clear and well-defined starting-place as his predecessor set out from, forty years ago. Then the historian could assume that he knew with what conditions the development began at the outset of English history, as surely as he knew in what conditions it has ended; his task was to fill in the intermediate stages. What that starting-place was it is hardly necessary that I should give time to describing: it was "the farmer commonwealths," displayed with all the emotion of admiration in the opening pages of Green, and clearly discernible beneath the cautious phrases of Stubbs. These occupied the centre of the picture: differences of rank and wealth and status all fell into a dim and easily-forgotten background; and the problems for the historian were conceived to be these: how did the freeman sink

into serfdom ; how did landowning communities fall into subjection to manorial lords?

Now it is significant that nothing of all this had suggested itself to English historians so long as they confined themselves to English evidence ; no trace of it is to be found, for instance, in the pages of Hallam. It was imported into English history by Kemble, as a result of his German studies : he assumed, with entire good faith, that what was apparently proved for Teutons at home must have existed among Teutonic peoples in Britain, and he looked round for English evidence which would fit into the construction. It was imported again, and with more authority, by Stubbs. No one can look at the footnotes of his earlier chapters without seeing that he builds on the foundations assumed to be laid for Germany by Maurer and Waitz.

The reputation of German scholarship was deservedly so high that, so long as German historians were unanimous, no criticism from outside carried much weight. And for a time the Maurer-Waitz tradition went on establishing itself only the more imposingly, in the economic histories of Inama and Lamprecht, and in the legal history of Brunner. The acute criticism by Fustel of the whole range of Roman, Merovingian, and Carolingian evidence, the essays of Denman Ross, the realistic treatment of the English material by Seebohm, were alike waived on one side. Instead of asking how room was to be found in the picture for the facts called attention to by Fustel and Seebohm, it was common to characterise these scholars summarily as isolated advocates of a rival theory—the theory that the manor grew out of the Roman country estate. And the more we realised from Hanssen and Meitzen and from Seebohm himself the system of cultivation in the Middle Ages, with its open fields and intermixed holdings and rotation of crops and common pasture, the more obvious it seemed that the Roman *villa* could hardly by itself account for *Grundherrschaft*, *seigneurie*, and *manor*.

No fresh advance was possible until a new movement took place among German scholars themselves. It is notorious that since 1896 such a movement has made its appearance. I need but mention the names of Hildebrand and Wittich and Knapp. These writers have compelled a reconsideration of the accepted interpretation of Tacitus and the Barbarian laws and the early land charters and the capitularies. Moreover, it is no longer plausible to say that the Waitz-Brunner interpretation of the period A.D. 400-800 must be correct, inasmuch as it fits in with their interpretation of the period A.D. 800-1000 ; since Dopsch is now

showing the extreme insecurity of some of the apparently most firmly established propositions even as to Carolingian institutions.

The authors I have just named are by no means as yet in possession of the field; the old positions are still being defended; and we must certainly not be in a hurry to proclaim any large new generalisations. If I venture to sum up what seem to me the conclusions suggested so far, it is only in the most tentative way. They would be these: That from the earliest historical times, in Gaul and Germany, very much land was owned individually, and that wealth on the one side and slavery and personal dependence on the other were always very important factors in the situation; that in Neustria and the other more completely Romanised parts of the Celto-Germanic world, the Roman *villa* was very generally one of the main elements, perhaps the dominant element, in the development; and that the seigneurial structure of the western side of the Carolingian Empire had a considerable influence on the somewhat subsequent development of the eastern side; that, even in Germany, communal ownership of land was never a fundamental or generally pervasive social institution; that there was something very much like large private estates, worked by dependents and slaves, from the very earliest days of Teutonic settlement; and that "the common freeman," though probably in a sense the basis of the legal system, was neither so peasant-like, nor so uniform, nor so communal, as we used to suppose. There is much to be done before the different parts of the puzzle can be satisfactorily fitted together; possibly there were large differences, not only as between Neustria and Austrasia, but also within the purely German territory itself. Moreover, the whole specifically agricultural side—the intermixed strips and all they involve—has still to be brought into relation to the legal side of the problem. We cannot fail to be struck by its omission even in so substantial a treatise on the lines of Fustel as that of Sée. As to England, I am afraid that, in spite of the labours of Maitland and Vinogradoff, we must wait for the solution of our local problem until a solution has been reached of the larger Continental problem. But this much is already highly probable, viz., that we shall not find anything that can fairly be called a general communal system of landowning, combined with a substantial equality among the majority of the people, under conditions of settled agriculture. To find it in any sense we shall have to go back to an earlier and "tribal" condition; if, indeed, we shall find it there.

For some time to come it will probably be advisable for

economic historians, in their popular expositions of agrarian development, to content themselves with starting with the *manor* (*Grundherrschaft*, *seigneurie*) as we find it over a large part of England, France, and Germany in, let us say, the thirteenth century, without committing themselves to any very confident assertions as to how it came into existence. It is true we have been warned by Maitland not to speak too freely of the "typical" or "normal" manor; he has pointed out how rich a diversity of conditions is to be found existing contemporaneously even among English villages and hamlets, so that it is not at all difficult to find abundant cases quite irreconcilable with each of our usual generalisations. Yet certain features are so commonly found in mediæval village life—features sufficiently indicated by such terms as *demesne* and *yardland* (*hufe*) and *week work*—as to be typical of the greater part of rural existence over a large portion of Western Europe. Everywhere half or more of the tilled land was in the hands of small peasant cultivators. The terms on which most of them occupied their holdings were, indeed, onerous; and we must take care not to depict their condition in colours too rosy. Yet there they were, alike in Central and Northern France, in Southern and Middle England, in Western and Central Germany. But to-day we find, of course, by no means the same uniformity on comparing the three countries. Over a large part of Germany and France the place of the serf cultivators of the Middle Ages has been taken by peasant proprietors. Agricultural statistics are everywhere curiously defective; but it is pretty safe to say that in France somewhere about one-half, and in Germany about two-thirds of the land is now in the hands of peasant proprietors. Such large properties as are now found in France seem to be pretty widely distributed over the whole country; in Germany, on the other hand, there are considerable provinces, such as Bavaria, where there are practically, over great stretches of territory, no large properties at all. But when we pass over to England we find to-day exceedingly few peasant properties. The great bulk of the English land belongs to large landowners, not cultivating their land themselves or through a bailiff, as is the usual practice with such large landowners as there may be in Germany or France, but letting out almost all of it to comparatively large tenant farmers, who employ agricultural labourers dependent on wages. The question to which I now turn is the explanation of this striking singularity in English development.

I do not propose to estimate the relative merits of the English and Continental systems. It is noticeable that writers on agri-

cultural economics in Germany usually assume that a system of peasant proprietorship—especially when it is so diversified that the landless labourer, if he exists at all, has a good chance of rising to be a small landowner himself—is obviously the more desirable, on general social grounds; though they throw in, by way of concession, the observation that a certain number of large landowners may possibly be of use in leading the way in the improvement of agricultural methods. Writers in England are wont to take the opposite point of view: to assume that the English system is the better as regards economy of agricultural production; though they in their turn may throw in an observation, by way of concession, as to the social benefits of peasant proprietorship. I leave all these questions on one side, and confine myself to the purely historical problem, how the difference between England and the Continent actually came about.

On the external facts of the development in England we are much better informed to-day than we were even twenty years ago. The works, for the earlier centuries, of Page and Gay and Savine and Tawney; for the later centuries, of Hasbach, Slater, Johnson, Prothero, Gonner, and the Hammonds have made tolerably clear almost every one of the processes involved. The first two of the names I have recited—Page and Gay—are American scholars; the third, Savine, a Russian scholar; and the large positive additions these three have made to our knowledge illustrate what I have already said as to the value of a foreigner's freshness of vision. Thanks to these, and to the others I have mentioned, while there are still some outstanding obscurities as to copyhold and leasehold, in the main we know what happened. We must agree with recent writers in describing the modern reorganisation of rural England on the lines with which we are now familiar as the work of "the governing class that ruled England during the last century of the old *régime*." We might add that this class commonly believed that what was for their personal advantage was also for the advantage of the community; that by far the greater part of the rearrangement of ownership and tenure took place under legal forms; that it involved on the part of "the governing class" both enterprise and expenditure; and that the more obviously injured interests received some pecuniary or other compensation. Whatever additions, however, we may think fit to make, it is still true that it was "the governing class" that was responsible. But this is no answer to the question why it was in England that this singular transformation took place. For, at the period from which we start, other countries had an upper class

of much the same sort as England; and there is no reason to believe that the English upper class was by nature either more selfish or more enterprising.

Let us see if any light is cast upon the matter by the experience of other countries. And let us begin with the explanation of the introduction of the present English system which seems to lie on the surface. No one can read eighteenth-century history without being continually reminded of the widespread zeal in England among the upper classes for the improvement of agricultural methods. We learn all about Arthur Young, his eulogy of "spirited" landowners, and his abhorrence of open fields and commons. But when these facts are adduced to "explain" the English development, it should at once occur to us that there was a precisely similar movement in France, the same enthusiasm for agricultural science, the same formation of agricultural societies. In France, as in England, it was deemed enlightened in governmental circles to abolish common rights and carry through enclosures; and the French edicts for these purposes were the direct outcome of the representations of the agricultural societies. Yet the "agronomes" had nothing like the same influence in France as is sometimes ascribed to them in England.

Writers who have gone beyond this first and most plausible explanation have sometimes been inclined to lay stress on the influence of the economists, at any rate on the final stages of the movement in England. With the one striking exception of John Mill, the economists of the first half of last century favoured both large ownership and large farming. We know how Bentham "thought the spectacle of an enclosure one of the most reassuring of all the evidences of improvement and happiness"; we know how McCulloch described the agricultural system of his day as "the powerful spring which has contributed more perhaps than any other to carry our commercial and manufacturing prosperity to its present unexampled height," and how he warned the people of his generation not to give "the smallest countenance to any scheme either for dividing estates or for building cottages on wastes"; we may recall how Porter, the statistician of Free Trade, condemned Goldsmith off-hand for "so ignorantly" deploring the disappearance of the peasantry. Such encouragement from the economists in one generation, like the encouragement from the agronomes in the preceding generation, must have given additional momentum to the forces of change: a modest landowner, who took his economics from its accredited exponents, would carry through enclosures and buy out small owners and

put farms together with a glow of moral satisfaction. And yet we can attribute as little primary importance to Political Economy as to Agricultural Science; for the plain reason that its voice was heard as distinctly and much earlier in France. It was, I need hardly say, the French *Économistes* of the eighteenth century who supplied the postulates and sketched the ground-plan of the later orthodox Political Economy of England: and one of the services of the Russian scholar Karéïew has been to remind his readers that the whole trend of thought of the *Économistes* was opposed to peasant farming. Quesnay, in his famous *Maxims*, had laid down that "lands devoted to corn crops should be brought together, as far as possible, in large farms, managed by well-to-do agriculturists," since "it is not so much men as capital that needs to be attracted to the country." The tripartite division of the agricultural population into landlords, capitalist tenant-farmers and wage-earning labourers, which we find assumed by Adam Smith and Ricardo, and which we are wont to explain as the unconscious reflex of contemporary conditions, appears just as clearly in the much-read writings of the *Économistes*. There it is presented as the obviously best arrangement, inasmuch as it promoted the greatest net produce: and this was at a time when the large tenant-farmer, though here and there he could be found, was by no means so characteristic of France as he was fast becoming of this country. When the princes of Savoy were carrying through that expropriation of the *seigneurs* which afterwards served as a potent example for France, "physiocratic" argument did what little it could to stay their hands. Read the *Reflections* of the "godlike" Turgot, with their dogmatic assertion of the need for "capitalistes entrepreneurs de culture," and of the parallelism of manufacture and agriculture, both requiring the separation of "entrepreneurs" from "simples salariés"; and one will realise that the essential principles of English "high-farming" received their earliest and quite conscious formulation not in England but in France. And yet, again, the doctrine had obviously nothing like the same effect in France as might plausibly be attributed to it in England.

The explanation of the difference between England and other countries is sometimes sought for in heroic acts of continental legislation. In particular, two episodes have engaged admiring attention: the land legislation of the French Revolution and the legislation in Germany of Stein and Hardenberg. But as to France, recent research has confirmed in substance the view of de Tocqueville, and has shown that the Revolution made no funda-

mental material change in the general position of affairs. The long and heated controversy on the subject finds its explanation in the ambiguous word "proprietor." Probably not much more land was held after the Revolution by peasant "proprietors" than was held before by "censitaires" and other classes of customary tenants under their respective *seigneurs*. Their position was substantially the same—with all the complicated technical and practical diversities and obscurities—as that of copyholders in England. Who was the "owner" of their land was a question which could not have been answered in the feudal ages in the modern sense, since ownership in the modern sense did not generally exist. The *seigneur* himself in legal theory was a "tenant" of the land, holding it of the King or of some other superior lord. But when the feudal theory died away, and it came to be held that there must somewhere be an "owner" for each piece of land, the question who owned the *censitaire's* or copyholder's land might be answered in two opposite ways. Ownership might be said to be vested in the lord, subject to the rights of the *censitaire*, or in the *censitaire*, subject to the rights of the lord. If we take the former view—possibly the view most generally current among lawyers—the French Revolution, by abolishing the lord's claim to certain dues, converted tenancy into ownership, and so created peasant proprietorship. But the latter view was so natural even before the Revolution that those *censitaires* who could not be dispossessed so long as they paid their dues, and who could dispose of their holdings practically as they pleased—and of these there were many—were already commonly spoken of, in popular parlance, in administrative reports and even in some of the law books, as "proprietors." The rough-and-ready estimate of Arthur Young that small owners held one-third of the land is confirmed by the most recent statistical researches based on the tax-rolls. Thus, according to Louchisky, peasant "proprietors" held 30 per cent. of the land of the Laon district before the Revolution; while the similar researches of Bloch assigns to them as large a share in the Orléans district as 44 per cent.

What the legislation of the Legislative Assembly and the Convention did for these "proprietors" was to put them into an easier position by freeing them completely from seigneurial dues, and so to enable them the more successfully to maintain themselves during the coming century. At the same time it converted into proprietors a good many occupiers of land whose tenant-right had not hitherto approached so nearly to ownership; like the holders of the terminable leaseholds characteristic of Brittany.

As to the effect of the sale of the confiscated lands of the church and of the *émigrés*, that is a question which cannot be regarded as so nearly approaching definite solution. Recent investigations seem to show that, though the lion's share went to the *bourgeoisie*, a good many of the peasants, and even of the mere cottagers, were able to acquire small portions. So that the net effect of the Revolution was both to strengthen and also somewhat to increase peasant proprietorship. But it would not have been able to do this if a population of peasants, whether small owners or customary tenants, had not still remained on the soil. The contrast with England where, by this time, according to Arthur Young, "small properties" were "exceedingly rare," is unmistakable.

The Stein-Hardenberg legislation is commonly thought of in England as having created a peasant proprietary in Prussia; and a desire is sometimes expressed that a statesman would arise in this country strong enough to follow their example. But, when we look into it, we discover that it effected, in a much more limited way, what was effected in France: it improved the position of many peasants already planted on the soil; it did not place them there. The really "epoch-making" book of Knapp makes it very clear that the Prussian measures were "very far from being models of social legislation." We might already have guessed this if we had reflected that the provinces concerned were part of that "Ostelbien," where—from the point of view of admirers of peasant proprietorship—conditions have for some time been very markedly inferior to those in any other part of Germany. Those peasants who were converted by the measures of Stein and Hardenberg into independent proprietors had to surrender from a third to a half of their holdings in order to compensate their lords for the loss of their labour services; and the privilege of enfranchisement was limited to "peasants" (*Bauern*) in the narrowest provincial sense of the word, viz., to those whose holdings were worked with a yoke of oxen. It was limited, that is to say, to the larger holders; to those who in mediæval England were called "full villeins" and "yardlings." Smaller customary tenants—from "half-yardlings" (to use an English term again) down to the various grades of cottiers—were disregarded. These—from the operation of economic forces and the exercise of the legal rights of their landlords—soon fell into the position of landless labourers, compelled, in order to secure a livelihood, to work on the *Rittergüter* (or gentlemen's estates). Knapp does not hesitate to say that the exclusion of small holders

from the opportunity of enfranchisement, and the contemporary withdrawal of the protection they had previously received from the government (to this I shall return) constituted the compensation, insisted upon by the landlords, for the sacrifice of their previous legal claims upon the larger holders. The estates of the *Junker* were enlarged; and at the same time they were enabled to dispense with the services of their larger tenants by having this new class of landless labourers put at their disposal. The class whose ill-fortunes in England have lately been set so poignantly before us—the class represented by the agricultural labourer—was precisely the class that came off worst in Prussia also.

The case of Prussia does, however, throw some light on the historical problem as it presents itself in England. How came it that in 1807–11 there were still so many peasant tenants in Prussia? The answer is to be found in large measure in the policy of "Protection of Peasant Land," pursued by the rulers of Prussia, as by the rulers of Austria and other paternal princes of the eighteenth century. The edicts issued by the Prussian rulers, almost as soon as they had freed themselves from the control of their provincial parliaments, and actually enforced from 1749 to 1808, prohibited any decrease in the extent of land held by the peasants. They said nothing of any legal rights the peasants might possess, for the obvious reason that the majority of them possessed at most only a life interest. So far as the Government was concerned, the lord might put in whom he pleased as tenant, but he must not add a peasant holding to his demesne. The policy, which was undoubtedly successful in achieving its object, was based not on humanitarian grounds but on reasons of State: a decrease in the number or size of peasant holdings was believed by the Government to be bad for the revenue and bad for the army. It gives one a curious sensation, after reading the careful expositions which Knapp has written of Hohenzollern policy in the eighteenth century with his eye fixed exclusively on Prussia, to turn to the agrarian troubles in England of the Tudor and Stuart times. Listen to Lord Bacon, writing a century and a half before Frederick the Great. "When," he says, "enclosures began to be more frequent, whereby . . . tenancies for years, lives, and at will, whereupon much of the yeomanry lived, were turned into demesnes . . . the king (Henry VII.) knew full well . . . that there ensued withal upon this a decay and diminution of subsidies and taxes; for the more gentlemen ever the lower books of subsidies." Moreover, Bacon continues, "the principal strength of an army consisteth in the infantry"; and "if a state

run most to noblemen and gentlemen, and the husbandmen and ploughmen be but as their workfolks and labourers . . . you may have a good cavalry but never good stable bands of foot." The Tudor and Stuart legislation, prohibiting "the letting-down of houses of husbandry," was of precisely the same character as the legislation of enlightened autocrats on the Continent a century and a half later; like that, it disregarded the legal question of the husbandman's tenure, and probably for the same reasons: that his legal right was either weak in itself, or afforded scant protection against social or economic pressure. It came earlier than the parallel legislation abroad, because the growth of the woollen industry furnished in certain districts of England a powerful motive for the incorporation of peasant holdings into estates managed on capitalistic lines long before a like temptation presented itself in Germany. Tawney, the most recent investigator of the period, concludes that the efforts of the English government did "mitigate the harshness" of the earlier enclosing movement. I should myself be inclined to conclude that the destruction of the old agricultural system would have gone much further even in the Tudor period but for the check imposed by the executive. And it is significant that the last serious attempt to enforce this check was made by the Stuart Council in the very period when, for the last time, it was able to carry on government free from the control of Parliament (1629-1640).

This last reflection brings us to the heart of the matter. All the freshly-acquired information as to the course of events in England and abroad confirms by additional considerations what Toynbee said as long ago as 1881: "the present distribution of landed property in England is in the main due to the system of political government which made us a free people"; in other words, to the establishment of parliamentary government in the seventeenth century. Parliamentary government, in the circumstances of the time, could only mean the rule of the landed gentry; and these were led, by the strongest motives of political zeal and personal interest combined, to widen and tighten their hold upon the land. And the local authority of the squires as justices of the peace, which Gneist so oddly christened "Self-government" in order to contrast it with bureaucracy, was but the reverse of the medal of which parliamentary Self-government was the obverse. Those who think that England could have had the one without the other might be referred to the impartial pages of the French publicist Boutmy.

The growth of the mercantile and monied interest gave additional impetus to the transformation of rural life by adding enormously to the wealth available directly, and indirectly through marriage, for the rounding-off of country estates. There were wealthy city men in France also; but the movement of capital countrywards was less than in England because the inducement was less. The withdrawal from the country gentry in France of all powers of local administration went on *pari passu* with their loss of influence upon the central government: both losses made the position of a country gentleman less desirable. And the very characteristic of our social system of which we have been most proud, the fact that England has no close caste of *noblesse*, operated in practice to strengthen landlordship, by adding to its pecuniary resources and commercialising its spirit.

The triumph of Whig principles in 1689, by placing the legislative and executive authority in the hands of the squires, put an end in England to the policy of Peasant Protection. It is to be noticed, also, that parliamentary government was associated with an actual increase of the geographical area over which landlord forces could operate. In reading the works of Knapp and his school on the Liberation of the Peasants in the several States of Germany, we are constantly reminded of the importance of the sovereign's own Domain. It was there that the benevolent autocratic princes of the eighteenth century could most readily convert, if they so chose—and they commonly did choose—a population of peasant tenants into one of peasant proprietors. Thus, soon after 1776, Maria Theresa not only freed the serfs on the royal manors in Bohemia and Moravia, but actually divided up the large demesne farms found in each manor into small hereditary holdings at moderate quit-rents. Frederick William III. of Prussia in 1799–1805 did not go as far as this, but he did at any rate convert the peasant tenants into owners. Even more significant, perhaps, is the present aspect of Mecklenburg. That province is sharply divided to-day between, on the one hand, the land of noble estates with their day labourers, and, on the other, the Domanium, covered with peasant farms of all grades, from cottages with small hereditary plots attached up to small and large peasant properties. The Government could set about establishing a state of things like this as late as 1846 simply because it had kept its hold on the Crown lands. But in England the Crown lands, which in 1660 still brought in an income of more than a quarter of a million pounds, produced not a sixth of that sum at the accession of Anne. In forty years they

had almost all been granted away. Exactly to what extent this happened under the last two Stuarts, to what extent under William III., it is not easy to discover. The matter was bitterly fought over between Whigs and Tories in the reign of William of Orange. But it is evident that the final destruction of the Royal Domain took place under the first Parliamentary sovereign; and also that the Whig doctrine of the Parliamentary Power of the Purse necessarily involved the disappearance of the Domain as a substantial source of royal income.

I have but one more foreign lesson, but that most significant. Brentano has written an illuminating essay on the question, "To what is due the preponderance in Bavaria of peasant proprietorship?" His answer, in brief, is this: Rather more than half the land of the duchy belonged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to the church, *i.e.*, to various ecclesiastical bodies. The management of these estates and of the peasant holdings of which they were for the greater part composed—like the management, as Brentano remarks, of church property in Europe generally—was considerate but conservative: it introduced no large reforms, but allowed things to go on unchanged; so that even serfdom (*Leibeigenschaft*) continued here and there to exist in name, though in the course of time it had become merely nominal. The main point is that the peasants actually remained on the land, down to the time (1803) when the church lands were at last secularised and passed into the possession of the State. Only less important were the political results of the retention by the church of its landed property. Both for reasons of self-interest, and also from gratitude towards princes who championed the Catholic cause, the church was ready to make large grants to the sovereign; and its territorial wealth gave it the means. Rendered by such grants independent of their nobility, the princes of Bavaria were able to dispense with parliament (*Landtag*). There was no provincial parliament between 1612 and 1669, and no parliament at all from that date till the close of the eighteenth century. The gentry might wish to exact heavier services from their tenants or to enforce a preferential claim on the labour of their younger sons, but the prince was free to disregard their desires. And as the lay lords could not annex peasant holdings to their demesne farms without a larger command of labour, they had no alternative but to leave them as they were. Thus Bavaria remained a country of peasants, both on church lands and on noble lands, right into the nineteenth century. When the government finally, in 1848, took the matter in hand,

enfranchised the peasants, and took measures to convert them into proprietors, there was no powerful landlord interest, as in Prussia, to insist upon the surrender of a large part of each peasant's holding in return for the abolition of seigniorial rights, and redemption was effected on extraordinarily easy terms.

It is hardly possible thus to learn the reasons why peasant ownership predominates in Bavaria without drawing some pretty obvious conclusions for England. We know, of course, that the confiscation of the monastic estates in 1536-9, and the passage, by gift or easy terms of sale, of this additional fifth of the land of the country into the hands of lay lords and gentry, did much both to create the great Whig houses of the eighteenth century, and also to enrich those substantial gentry, like the Cromwell family, who formed the strength of the Puritan party in the century previous. This, Hallam long ago told us, "was of no slight advantage to our civil constitution, strengthening and infusing new blood into the territorial aristocracy who were to withstand the prerogative of the crown." But on the other side of the account must be set the fact that it increased the area of land subject to the influence of lay landlords, and by contributing to make the king dependant on a parliament of landed gentry, it put it out of his power to protect the peasantry like his German contemporaries.

And now perhaps we can answer the question why the English land system differs from that of France or Germany. England owes its present land system, with all its merits and demerits, to the operation on the upper classes of the ordinary motives of self-interest. These classes were enlarged and strengthened by the growth of trade: and they were set free to carry out their will—and this, after all, was the main thing—by the triumph of the Reformation and the victory of Parliament.

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