

## GROANS FROM THE PADDED CELL

(The Minority Report of the Editorial Rooms.)

IN the days of the military clan, men were more or less free and equal. An ordeal was necessary for the attainment of manhood; a regular ceremony which was far from a joke. Only the strong and clever could hope to attain the privileges of manhood. There was no specialization of labor. A man had to be able to hunt and fight; a woman to cook and to do the work of agriculture. There was hardly room for anyone but what might be called the normal human being. One particularly lazy fellow, well skilled in flattery, might get a job as tribal bard; but otherwise he would have to work like the rest. As a man got old, beyond the period when skill and experience failed to compensate for lack of strength, he might become an elder by virtue of his wisdom; and, of course, the best all-round man had a good chance of becoming King. But there really was something like equality of opportunity.

TO-DAY all this is absolutely changed. Every important branch of work is so specialized that a man must give his whole life to his particular job for 40 years or more before he is capable of holding his own in it. Such a man must obviously be chosen from the start on the ground of inclination and capacity. He must be allowed ample leisure. He must be secured freedom from all worries and anxiety, or he will never arrive at competence. A university education is not nearly enough. It is only a general ground-work. When a man leaves a university he wants at least 10 years uninterrupted work in his particular line before he even begins to succeed in it. In other words, the complexity of civilization demands an elaborate caste system. For one thing, the *habitus of authority* is absolutely necessary to any one who is to fill a position of responsibility. Put a man who has done menial work all his life into an important position. He inevitably becomes a "Jack in office," harsh, overbearing and tyrannical. On the other hand, if you take a boy and give him well trained servants, he will, when he becomes a man, get things done with perfect suavity and good feeling and absence of fiction. That is why you can take a boy from Eton or Winchester and send him out to rule a province in India. The "Competition<sup>4</sup> wallah," the boy of no birth or breeding who obtains a position in the Indian Civil Service by intellectual merit, is a disastrous failure.

THERE must however, be an end to all this talk of equality of opportunity. It will always be necessary to have a great majority of the population engaged in mechanical tasks. It is evidently quite impossible to give every man and woman even a university education. Most people have to earn their living by the time they are sixteen. Even if this experiment were possible, it would be absurd, because the university education would unfit the average individual for the necessary work of life. It is no good to teach a man political economy and Greek, and then set him to make rivets in a boiler factory for the rest of his life.

HOW then are we to make an intelligent selection? The answer is perfectly obvious. Men are not by any means born equal in the matter of intellectual capacity. Take the extreme case of

the Hottentot. No amount of teaching will get him to count beyond the number five, owing to the limitations imposed upon him by nature in the matter of fingers. The same holds true to a limited extent even with Caucasians. It is quite true that occasionally nature, in her merry mood, produces a genius from very unlikely material. It may sometimes happen, for example, that a stock which has never exhibited any intellectual distinction at all may get tangled up matrimonially with a lunatic, and by some lucky combination produce a genius.

BUT we do not know enough about genius to take any practical steps along these lines. We are bound to deal with averages; and there is nothing more certain than this, that ordinary talent, as opposed to genius, is to a very large extent inherited. The main objection to the hereditary principle is that families, after a long series of generations of distinguished men, take to producing degenerates and imbeciles. It is the ordinary biological curve. Now undoubtedly much mischief is wrought by having a caste which is hereditary and nothing more, because the said degenerates and imbeciles interfere with the working of the social machine. Our business is to get the right man in the right place; and the hard and fast rule of primogeniture has in many cases worked badly. One may concede that ultimately it is bound to work badly in all cases.

IT seems to me that it would be easy enough to guard against this difficulty. We must have a leisured class, we must have a privileged class, or we can never get good men at all. The most likely candidates are those whose fathers and mothers have achieved distinction. This principle has been recognized in England by the practice of raising distinguished men to the peerage. The idea has been greatly abused by confirming nobility upon the mere plutocrat. Yet when particularly undesirable people have bought these titles, care has taken to make the seat in the House of Lords end with the life of the ennobled bag of money.

BUT how are we to prevent degenerates and imbeciles from sitting in the highest councils of the nation? By the simple process of clearing them out. It would be easy to arrange for a test of manhood, a public test subject to public criticism, so that no man could assume hereditary privileges without proving by ordeal his right to it. These tests could and should be both physical and mental. These ideas are not opposed to democracy in its true sense. We want the normal man to govern, and the normal man means a man very far above the average, almost the ideal man, just as normal eyesight is the kind of eyesight that only a very few very lucky people possess.

THE socialistic idea that every man is as good as every other man is comic. A great deal of rubbish has been written lately about "secret diplomacy." How can the ordinary man expect to give a sound opinion on the affairs of foreign countries, when the very best men, specially trained for all their lives, are constantly making the most