

WHAT IS WEALTH.

(For the Review.)

BY W. D. LAMB.

Before great progress can be made in the way of bettering the social condition of the masses, people must know exactly what wealth is, and what wealth is not. And those who see the necessity of popular education in economics cannot do better than use the means at their disposal to teach the world what this term "Wealth" means. Henry George, in *Progress and Poverty*, emphasized the necessity of a clear understanding of this term. Adam Smith, the father of political economy, had a clear idea of what "Wealth" is, but he did not make that idea clear to others. The title of his book was, "On The Nature And Causes of The Wealth of Nations." The "Nation" is that part of the earth enclosed within certain boundary lines.

The "People" is something different from the "Nation." Solomon had these two distinct ideas in mind when he wrote: "One generation cometh and another goeth, but the earth abideth forever."

The result of the labor of the people is wealth, and nothing can be classed as wealth that has not in it an element of human labor. Trees are not wealth, but are wealth when labor cuts them down. Wild game is not wealth, but becomes wealth as soon as labor secures it. Minerals in the earth are not wealth, but become wealth as soon as labor brings them to the surface. Earth, air, seasons, climate, soil fertility, land values, franchise values, are not wealth, because they are not products of human labor. Crops, cattle, horses, etc., are wealth, because they are the result of human effort. But wild cattle, or wild horses, or wild turkeys, or wild fruits, are not wealth till they are procured by human effort. Buildings, whether valuable or in ruins, are wealth, because there is in them this element of humanity. Anything, valuable or not, that has in it an element of human effort is wealth. People are not wealth, but it is their labor that produces wealth from nature.

The foregoing statements may appear

very trivial but they are all important. A proper understanding of what wealth is, has been the bane of political economy. Ask the masses of people, even the educated and intelligent, and the replies they give indicate clearly that they do not know what the term means. But they must know before they can understand the problem of wealth distribution. The writer once put the question, "What is wealth," and "What is not wealth," to a late candidate for Governor on the Socialist ticket, and, sure enough, he had to admit that he didn't know exactly. And he had read George's works, too.

Carl Marx, nor Proudhon, nor any other writer that we know of, except Henry George, ever defined this term "wealth."

Money of itself is not wealth, but only represents wealth. Money is only the means that enables people to exchange wealth for wealth. That is, it is the modern way of exchanging work with our neighbors. Dollars are only "labor certificates." If a person gets a thousand dollars that he does not earn, then other people must earn a thousand dollars that they do not get. The object of government should be to "protect" each person in the enjoyment of his just rights. And the most important right is the right to enjoy the fruits of our own labors; or, as Lincoln used to say, "the right to put into our own mouths the bread earned by our own hands." This is the kind of protection that we are entitled to from governments, but it is just the kind of protection that we do not get. And we cannot get this right until the masses clearly realize what wealth is and what it is not. Ours should be a campaign of education. People cannot do right till they know what is right. And a campaign of education on "wealth," what it is, the nature of it, what makes anything wealth, etc., would go a long way toward showing people their way out of the economic wilderness.

Mr. Daniel Kiefer, Commercial Tribune Building, Cincinnati, Ohio, will be glad to communicate with any one having and willing to sell complete bound volumes of Henry George's *Standard*.