

and Aristotle, Spinoza and Rousseau, are but some of the enlightened minds who may be cited as witnesses against private property in land. Why do the bourgeoisie not listen to the voice of these men whom they profess to honor so much? And the pious people, who deem every verse in the Bible to be divinely inspired, why do they pass over just this very verse which forbids so solemnly the sale of the earth?

Is it because to them Science is but a servant of their greed, Learning but a cloak to cover their covetousness, Religion but a mantle beneath which to hide their evil-doings, their fine words about Liberty and Justice but the veriest hypocrisy, and all their sermons on Brotherly Love but pleasant sounding lies?

(To be continued.)

LITTLE ESSAYS ON A BIG SUBJECT

(For The Review.)

By J. W. BENGOUGH.

(Continued.)

XII.

GENTLE READER, GO GENTLY!

I am flattering myself that the reader has been so courteous and so patient as to have followed me through the preceding eleven Little Essays. At the close of the eleventh, however, both courtesy and patience have given way, and there has been an explosion of "Pshaw! More wild, meaningless anarchy! This writer, too, would denounce our land laws, and abolish private ownership of land, thereby removing the basis on which society rests, and converting civilization into chaos and confusion!"

Gentle Reader, go gently. Have you already forgotten the vast distinction between Ownership and Possession? Society needs no ampler basis than that individual men shall be defended in the peaceable possession of the portions of land they now have possession of. This the law must certainly provide for; it is the first condition of civilization. A man's right to hold and enjoy his land, to keep it or part with it, to pass it on to his heirs, and to be protected in this right by the whole force of the Government, must be held sacred. But the law must be based on justice all around, not merely to the man who holds the land in his possession, but to the other man who thereby is excluded from it, as well. And this justice requires, therefore, that the land possessor shall render an equivalent to the non-possessor, that is, to the public Treasury, as representing all; for only by the payment of such equivalent can the equal right of all which is thus foregone, be acknowledged and vindicated.

Why then cry out against the abolishment of the "private ownership of land" when due provision is made for the "private possession of land?" The former scheme differs from the latter in leaving out the equivalent; that is to say, in being unjust. Gentle Reader, wherefore then your explosion? Are we to suppose that in your view Civilization must fall into "chaos and confusion" unless it have a basis of injustice and monopoly?

Perhaps it is not clear to you yet that the private monopoly of land legalized among men, is the sufficient explanation of the curious failure in Distribution. Then please observe these considerations: We have the means of production by which abundance is secured. This abundance is the fruit of labor only—the labor of just three forces: first, of the community, whose mere existence gives rise to land value; second, of labor, whose active exertion gives rise to wealth; and third, of capital, whose active employment assists in the production of wealth. Distribution should be to these three only. Land value to the community, in the form of rent; wages to labor, in the form of wealth; interest to capital, in the form of wealth. This completes the operation, which is just and equitable all around. There is no reward or recompense to the Idler provided for, except the fitting one of going hungry and naked, on the sound principle "whoso does not produce shall not enjoy."

But do you not clearly see that a law which ordains that a man may *own* land and accordingly, by virtue of such ownership, collect for his own purse the land-value created by the community, at once dislocates this whole just arrangement of Distribution? For, of course, if what the community creates does not go to the public Treasury, the first movement of Distribution fails utterly. Land value (rent) which the community created is not given, as justice requires, to its creator, but to an Idler who had no part in creating it. He takes it in the form of payment, or toll, for access to land on the part of labor and capital, without which access they can not produce anything. In other words, the land monopolist receives a share of the wealth produced—the share which of right belongs to the public Treasury. But the Treasury must nevertheless be provided for if Government is to go on. What then is to be done? Why, simply, the public Treasurer must take, by means of taxation, such portions of the wages of labor and interest of capital as may be required to make up for the land-value appropriated by the Idler. And the consequence is just what we see—neither community, laborer, nor capitalist is sure of fair reward; justice is set at nought, and instead of Idleness being fitly punished by emptiness, it is, by legal enactment, awarded the lion's share of wealth. I use the term Idler as synonymous with Land-owner, because a man may live luxuriously on land rent, without being in any sense or degree a worker or a capitalist.

Perhaps the truth may be more forcibly brought home if we suppose the Ants to have made the same mistake as man. Let us imagine that the Ants had seen fit to set up a Legislative Assembly, and this body in its wisdom had undertaken to amend and improve the law of Nature, under which the simple principle of "wealth to him who earns it" was operative. To this end they

passed an Act establishing the Human ideas of private property in land; and the title deeds to this "property" duly got into the hands of a certain number of Ants. These would at once cease working and become a leisured class—honorable Idlers. No colony of Ants could work without paying rent for access to the raw material, the amount of that rent representing all the product of their industry, excepting a bare living. This then would be their system of Distribution, too: To the workers, subsistence barely; to the Idlers, abundance. Happily for Antdom, however, it has not occurred to any black insect among them to even question the proposition that God made the earth for the use of all ants alike; that He made it as a beautiful and fruitful storehouse for the plenteous supply of all the wants of his creatures, and not as a mercantile commodity from which by speculative juggling a few Ants might live in luxury from the unrequited labors of their fellows. Go to the Ant, thou Sluggard, and learn industry; and do thou, oh perplexed and tinkering Statesman, go along with him, and learn that obedience to God's laws is the first condition of the well being of human society.

XIII.

BLUNDER ON BLUNDER!

Now I think we may easily see why the Ant world has no "social problem" such as the Human world is doomed to wrestle with. They have not, by specific legislation of their own, manufactured a "labor question." They have not through stupidity, blindness, great or general depravity, put natural justice away from them and set up artificial injustice in its place. In brief, they have not by law established and endowed Monopoly. Man, the superior, reasoning creature, has done so. The machinery of Creation would run as smoothly in the case of men as of Ants, if men were as content to keep their hands off it. But man has that strange and miraculous thing, a free will, and alas, a free will which has been touched by another mysterious thing we call Sin, and thereby set in opposition to the will of the Creator. That a thing, therefore, is the evident design of Almighty God, having for its end the happiness and comfort of humanity, is nothing to the purpose. Man has the power to ignore and set aside his Creator's will; and it is his perverse disposition to do so, though thereby he "pierces himself through with many sorrows." The deliberate establishment of this thing called Monopoly in our social system, is an instance of such perversity. There are some good people who are crying out these days against Competition, and demanding that it be done away. What they mean is Monopoly. They do not seem to recognize the distinction, but the two terms are as far apart as the ideas they signify—nature and anti-nature; good and evil; right and wrong. Competition is the free arena in which each individual develops his own power and gifts to their full extent and infallibly gets his due reward. It is the natural atmosphere of "equal opportunity." Given a world large enough and fruitful enough to ensure abundance to all, and Competition can have no other effect than to provide

a standard for the regulation of the rewards of workers—every worker meanwhile being sure of enough. Monopoly is the opposite of this: it is simply the absence of competition, for it is the removal of the free arena and the equal opportunity. This removal is accomplished by the legalization of private ownership in something which, if we followed the dictates of reason, must not be privately owned—something which the voice of Nature assures us was meant for the equal use of all. The Monopoly of Land, as the private ownership of Nature itself, is the fundamental monopoly. But as a further aggravation of this condition thus brought about in human affairs, a brood of monopolies only less fatal, has been developed by our short-sighted law makers.

Observe the man in official uniform going up to our neighbor's door and ringing the bell. He has a well-laden bag over his shoulder, and a bundle of letters in his hand. He is a messenger of the Post Office Department—what we call a Letter-Carrier. He is an employee of the People, performing for them one part of the useful function of carrying letters and newspapers. The People seem, somehow or other, to firmly entertain the conviction that the carrying of mail-matter is a business to be sacredly kept in their own hands. If any private Speculator or Joint-Stock Company of Speculators were to go to Parliament or Congress and propose to take over this business, the proposition would be promptly declined. No matter how forcibly it was argued that letter-carrying would be efficiently and economically done by such Company, the proposal would not be listened to. "No;" the People would reply through their representatives, "the business of carrying letters is a natural monopoly created by the fact of population, and an unerring instinct tells us such monopolies must be held by the People themselves. A private Corporation, whatever its flattering promises, would soon develop its selfish nature, and pursue its simple purpose of making money. In the hands of the government, letters are carried as a public convenience, not primarily for profit; if the revenue from the service pays the expenses, that is all we ask." This is sound reasoning, but why does it not apply just as forcibly to every other natural monopoly created by the fact of population? If we instinctively feel that the people themselves must control the carrying of letters, why not the carrying of other things—express parcels, telegrams, telephone messages, freight, passengers by railway and street cars? Yet all these carrying services, as well as the cognate services of supplying gas, electric light, water, etc., have been legislated into private hands, and thereby been made instruments of private fortune rather than of public convenience. The consequence has been, as we have said, to aggravate the already bad enough social difficulty. The natural revenue (land rent) has been diverted into private pockets, and as if this were not enough, the possible revenue from all these monopolies created by the needs of society (and many of them may produce enormous revenues) has been madly sent to the same destination. Of course, this just makes the vacuum in the public treasury so much the greater—to be filled out of the earnings of labor and capital. The reasoning powers of man seem to have been of little avail to him; the instinct of Ants has certainly guided them much more happily.

XIV.

CRAZY HOUSEKEEPING.

In Essay VI mention is made of a supposititious Housewife who in the administration of her home, rejected the natural instincts which are at the foundation of Parenthood, and acted on the opposite principles. We agreed that such a woman might fairly be considered *non compos mentis*. And shall we call that a sane social system which proceeds in her method—which actually and literally does what, by a wild supposition only, we attributed to an imaginary human being? Let us see if it is not strictly true that the economy of this state to-day rejects these primal principles of reason. A glance at the Larger Household shows us that although there is abundance of all that is necessary to food, clothing and shelter, only comparatively few of the children are adequately fed, clothed and housed. There is a vicious partiality at work all the while making discriminations amongst them. Any partiality in such a case would be vicious, but this is something worse; it seems to be really a devilish perversion of justice, for the favored ones are the non-workers. It is not honest toil, the faithful doing of duty, the rendering of useful service that are rewarded; it is Idleness clad in the insignia of Monopoly. This system, which we could only ascribe to an actual Housewife or Housemother on the supposition of her insanity, is in sober, literal fact in the State of to-day. And as to the method in which the housework is administered, is it not equally absurd? Have we not a fair parallel to the process of scrubbing floors with a tooth-brush, in the States' actual system of Taxation? Could the wit of man contrive a more round-about, inefficient, expensive and every way objectionable method of getting public revenue than that at present in vogue? It is known by the name of Indirect Taxation, and what it means in practice is that the Housemother, having first given the family heritage to a few of her non-working children, compels the workers not merely to pay their own footing in the house, but to provide out of their earnings all the general expenses! Translated into plain speech, the State allows its natural revenue, land value, to be absorbed by land "owners," and, to make up for the loss, imposes taxes upon those things which are the result of individual industry—salaries, houses, food, clothing, etc. etc., doing this moreover through machinery which is necessarily cumbersome and wasteful. To briefly sum up the matter, the prevailing social system seems accurately designed to produce two results: on the one hand, a numerically small class enjoying wealth without the necessity of observing any law of "service for service," said wealth ranging from ample fortune up to fabulous riches; and on the other hand, a larger class—the remaining portion of society, in fact—bound strictly under the law of "service for service," and dependent upon its earnings, these ranging from comfortable incomes in the professional classes down through various grades of comfort, discomfort, difficulty, poverty, penury, to the uttermost abysses of the hopeless slums. Such are the results of the system, and that system has for its basis the institution of private ownership of the earth—an institu-

tion, we would emphatically repeat, not existing in nature or providence, but an artificial thing deliberately set up and perpetuated by human act of legislation. The statute which legalizes this private ownership and thereby makes the rental value of land the property of certain deed-holders by mere virtue of such deed-holding, is verily a wedge inserted in the midst of society; and every step of progress in civilization has the effect only of elevating the rich unworking class to ever higher wealth, while depressing the masses to even lower poverty. In the light of this great fact the paradox which we call the social question is explained. By the touch of this fatal statute, legalizing earth "ownership," utter chaos has been introduced into political economy, and the true significance of the "rights" and "privileges" of men, confused and hopelessly entangled.

(To be continued.)

LLOYD-GEORGE.

My heart is singing with joy. As my correspondents can testify, I have for three years been calling attention to the Bible promise that "There shall be no poor." Individual obedience to the Bible abolishes the individual poverty that springs from individual faults. In like manner national obedience to the Bible will remove the economic poverty that springs from national sins. I have been lonely in testifying to this fact. But this week I have read the following words from Lloyd-George, the great English statesman and the leader of the newly-elected House of Commons:

"This is a War Budget. It is the raising money to wage impracable warfare against poverty and squalidness. I can not help hoping and believing that before this generation has passed away we shall have advanced a great step toward that good time when poverty and the wretchedness and human degradation which always follow in its camp will be as remote to the people of this country as the wolves which once infested its forests."

I, too, have hopes. I hope to see another "Layman's Movement." Its motto will be:

We can abolish involuntary poverty in the present generation.

We ought to abolish involuntary poverty in this generation.

We will abolish involuntary poverty in this generation.—JAMES B. CONVERSE, Morristown, Tenn.

Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped have entered the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.—JAMES V, 4.

The land shall not be sold forever; for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me. And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land.—LEV. XXV, 23, 24.