

MORE JOBS THAN MEN

The Remarkable Conclusions of a Famous Army Surgeon, who made the Panama Canal Possible

That remarkable personality, Surgeon-General W. C. Gorgas, of the United States, to whose genius in promoting the sanitation of the Panama Canal zone the construction of the Canal is due, writes an article in the JUNE CONSTRUCTIVE REVIEW, in which he draws some unexpected lessons from his experiences while engaged on that great task.

In Panama, as Professor Gregory says in his wonderful book, DISCOVERY, Surgeon-General Gorgas had to wage a "vigorous fight against the death-dealing mosquito. . . . By the destruction of a little grey gnat a great engineering enterprise was made possible of realisation."

The making of the Canal brought an extra population of some 100,000 to Panama—hence much unsanitary overcrowding and ill-health and poverty. His experiences there have led Surgeon-General Gorgas to these conclusions:—

MAKE MORALITY POSSIBLE

"As I have examined into conditions in other parts of the world, I have become convinced that Panama is no peculiar exception. All other cities of civilised countries, I can see, are affected in much the same way, from the same causes, and are open to the same remedies. We can teach morals and hygiene indefinitely, but we shall not be able to make any great advance until we can place our fellow-men in such position that they can adopt our teachings.

"It is evident to my mind that the great and insuperable clog to the advance of the Church in its teachings, and to the advance of the sanitarian in his teachings, is the grinding poverty of the larger portion of our fellow-countrymen. The only feasible way that I can see for in any way alleviating this poverty is by increasing wages.

"Now wages are affected on the one hand by the number of persons competing for employment, and on the other hand, by the number of jobs we have for these persons. If the number of jobs is greater than the number of persons competing, wages will be high and will tend steadily to increase, until finally each man gets all he produces. Beyond this point wages cannot increase. If the number of persons seeking employment is greater than the number of jobs, wages will decrease, and continue to decrease to a point below which the labourer cannot go and maintain life.

"That condition of wages in which he gets all he produces is known as natural wages, and the object of all social organisation should be to give to all producers natural wages. All of us would automatically get natural wages unless some form of monopoly came in to deprive us of part of what we produced, without making us a just return.

"I will not consider the question of decreasing the number of people applying for employment. No churchman or broad sanitarian would consider for a moment such measures, though they would be very easily brought about. Any sanitarian could spread such an epidemic of yellow fever in the United States that a million people could easily be killed off in the course of a year. Such a sanitary measure would greatly improve the condition of those who were left. Wages for several years would be higher, and living conditions, therefore, among the poorest, very much better.

EUROPE'S EXPERIMENT.

"Europe is now trying this measure on a very large scale. When this war is over there will be many millions fewer persons in Europe competing for jobs than there were when it commenced, and there will be very many

million dollars of wealth destroyed which will have to be replaced.

"This will mean that in Europe, for several years to come, the jobs will be seeking the men, rather than the men the jobs. Wages will steadily increase, and the poverty of the poorest classes be much alleviated. Prosperity, I dare predict, will be very general.

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"Now let us turn to the other side, and see what we can do in the way of making the number of jobs more numerous than the number of applicants for these jobs.

"The present condition of having more men than we have jobs is modern and comparatively recent. Until comparatively recent times jobs were always so numerous that the only way in which one man could get what another man produced without giving him a fair return was to own him as a chattel slave. Until within the last few hundred years everywhere in civilised countries natural opportunities were so abundant and free that no man would work for another, but used some free natural opportunity where he could get all he produced.

"Chattel slavery has been abolished all over the world because it was perfectly obvious that the master was withholding from the slave a large part of the wealth the slave was producing, without making him any return. And to modern man this seemed unjust, though we must bear in mind that this to us perfectly obvious injustice did not appear unfair to our ancestors for the first six or seven thousand years of human history. It seemed perfectly natural and proper to them that the strong should take from the weak, and they did not hesitate to carry these views into practice on a most extensive scale.

TO-DAY'S SLAVERY.

"The industrial slavery of modern times is not near as obvious to us as chattel slavery was to our ancestors of a couple of generations ago, while to the labourer, the results of the present industrial slavery are much more harsh and cruel and morally degrading than was chattel slavery at any period of its existence. The master does not come in personal contact with the industrial slave, and therefore does not appreciate the suffering and moral degradation that is brought about by the system.

"But education will surely change these conditions. A time is rapidly coming when we will appreciate the wrong and harshness of our present industrial slavery. It took our ancestors six thousand years to educate themselves up to the point of recognising that chattel slavery was unjust. I believe that by the time the generation of which I am a member shall have finished its work, the present industrial slavery will be looked upon as quite as unjust as we now look upon chattel slavery.

"I appeal to you from the point of view of Christians to take part in all measures that tend toward increase of wages with the object of putting our fellow-man in such position that he will be able to adopt the teachings and morals of Christianity.

"I urge upon you the consideration of the question as to whether or not the greatest and most efficient of all these measures is not such taxation of land values as will force into use all unused lands."

The evils that begin to appear spring from the fact that the application of intelligence to social affairs has not kept pace with the application of intelligence to individual needs and material ends. Natural science strides forward, but political science lags. With all our progress in the arts which produce wealth, we have made no progress in securing its equitable distribution.—HENRY GEORGE.