

lation in the towns applying the old system, increased but 15.5 per cent. The value of the improvements in the former towns increased 82.3 per cent., as compared with 36 per cent. in the latter; and, last but not least, the value of the land in the towns where it was exclusively taxed increased 105.2 per cent., while the land value in the town with the old system of taxation, increased but 51.9 per cent. Thus, the land values and the improvement values both grew in a much more rapid ratio in the towns applying the tax where it could not be shifted; and the increase in population tells the story of the desirability of locating in towns where this tax has been adopted.

LITTLE ESSAYS ON A BIG SUBJECT

(*For The Review.*)

By J. W. BENGOUGH.

I.

THE HATRED OF DRY SUBJECTS.

I am waiting for the gentleman of the home and am permitted to do my waiting in the library. I do not own many books myself, and perhaps this is why I can never go into a well-stocked bookstore, or a private reading room like this, without being conscious of an inordinate craving, a voracity which longs to consume the whole of the contents. Well, here I lounge about with what I hope is not a blameful covetousness, and my eye happens to fall on a solid looking volume—"Political Economy." I take it down through some unexplainable impulse, because while I love books, I hate dry subjects. I am twirling over the pages and looking with disapproval on the close, hard, unbroken print, when the man of the house comes in, and I can't help muttering as if to him, "dry, dry—intolerable!" He recognizes the book and looks at me in pitiful surprise. "Dry you call it?" he says. "I thought you loved your fellow-creatures and believed with Pope that 'the proper study of mankind is man.' I always supposed that you were partial to poetry, pathos, humor,—to all the precious elements of that mysterious thing we call life?" "You are right, my friend," I reply—"and that is just why I have no stomach for the Dismal Science, with its interminable desert of statistics, computations, abstractions and technicalities. Mathematics never had any charm for me, and I always think of Political Economy as the dreariest species of mathematics." "For a just man you speak wildly," he replied. "You are condemning the Subject, when what you really mean to condemn are some individual authors who have written upon that Subject. I do not deny that Political Economists as a rule are dry, but I affirm that there is no topic in all the range of literature in itself more absorbing, charming, genial to a man of human sensibilities, than the Subject they attempt to deal with.

You evidently have not looked into it. Let me recommend you to do so."

I have "looked into it" since then, and found my judicious friend was right.

II.

GETTING ALONG.

I like to lie down flat on the ground on a beautiful summer day, and study at close range the wonderful insect world. I can spend hours delightfully watching the busy little ants as they scamper about on their diversified errands intent upon prodigiously important objects and quite unconscious of the monster eye stationed a few inches above them. Whence the pleasure and interest of this to me? It is clearly that these miraculous little beings are linked with myself in the scale of nature—they share in common with me that inscrutable something which no Philosopher has yet explained or even will explain—which we call life. The ant is my little brother of the sand, and by virtue of our mutual dependence upon God, I must inevitably be interested in seeing how he gets along. That is what I try to see by peering into his affairs on a summer afternoon. And is it strange that I should be so deeply interested in the activities of the human ant-hill? The poet speaks of the touch of nature which makes the whole world kin, and is not that touch manifested in the instinct by which neighbor concerns himself with the affairs of neighbor? Is there a human being of reasoning age anywhere in the world who is not interested more or less intensely in the "getting along" of other people? Not one. What other basis than this has the great and flourishing industry of publishing newspapers? This study to which schoolmen have given the name of Political Economy, is in reality the systematic observation of the Human ant-hill; the science which treats of the "Getting along" of our human kindred. How then can it possibly be dry to a man with a heart in his body? Or to a woman with the feminine instinct of sympathetic curiosity in hers?

Will any thrifty housewife confess to me that she does not feel an interest in the way her neighbor manages her affairs, especially if she happens to know that that neighbor has a large family and a small income? I protest that the drama of making-ends-meet played throughout the year next door, is as profoundly entertaining as anything presented at the theatre down town. This is Domestic Economy. Does our neighbor so manage that after all just dues and debts are paid out of the receipts, she has still enough left to provide clothes, food, warmth and schooling for her children and a reasonable share of the comforts of life for all the household? If so, we are glad, if we are human; if not so—if there is pinching and deprivation and distress—we are sad and sorry by virtue of the same humanity. Domestic Economy, then, is essentially an interesting subject, who could call it dry? Now, we simply change the qualifying word to make it fit a bigger family when we alter Domestic to Political Economy. It is the same absorbing theme on a larger scale. For the community, the nation, the world—what is it but a larger

family, a wider household? The poet easily shows us the similitude of a homestead on the green-carpeted earth with the blue sky for its ceiling—its choice apartment being the fertile plains and verdant valleys; its marts of trade, its founderies and factories the kitchen of toil; its coal and iron and other useful products the storehouse from which supplies are to be drawn for the family. Manifestly, a household superintended by a bountiful and beneficent Father, and in a situation to be very comfortable and happy if there is a fair degree of housewifely sense and management exhibited. Shall we regard it as a dry and uninteresting thing to watch the doings of this Family and see how it gets along? This then is the study of Political Economy.

III.

WHAT THE ANTS, AND THEIR HUMAN NEIGHBORS, ARE AFTER.

One thing I have noticed in my summer-day ant-observation: I have never yet fixed eye upon the insect community without seeing numbers of the little creatures carrying loads—removing material from one place to another; and there was reason to believe that those of them who were “going light” were actually on their way for a burden—having probably just deposited a load at its destination. These cargoes were either grains of sand or particles of earth excavated in the course of house-building operation; or else food material destined for the storehouse in which the winter supply was kept. It was clear to see beyond all question that the need and purpose of all ant-activity was the securing and storing of the things upon which ant-existence depended—food and shelter, there being no need for the third item of human necessities of life, clothing. And it was clear, too, that all ants were employed in this direct production of necessities; there were none, so far as I could see, who were engaged in secondary occupations analagous to those of our artists, authors, scientific investigators, etc., and certainly no class of them engaged in doing nothing, as vulgar loafers or cultured gentlemen of leisure. They were all producers, and all engaged in producing what, in those volumes of the dry Economists, is called “Wealth.” The particles of sand or other soil duly wrested from where Nature had placed them and carried to the surface to be deposited on the little heap, were mere raw material; the result of the labor in thus carrying them, namely, a convenient mansion under-ground, was wealth: what in human society would be called a house. You notice the difference in method: Ant-beings build a house by removing the raw material of nature and using the vacancy thus provided; human-beings build a house by taking a vacancy and enclosing it with raw-materials (brick, stone, wood or whatever else) gathered from the same storehouse of Nature. In both cases the raw-material is—in the language of political economy—“land;” and the labor result, “wealth.” So with the ant-laborers who are working in the food department. When they have secured the substance and carried it to their place of safe-deposit, it is Wealth, but not until then. Before the nippers of the ant-workers seized it, it was only

potential wealth, and belonged to the category of Land—mere raw material. Just so human food belongs to the category of wealth only after it has been produced—that is, started on its way to the mouth that finally consumes it. An apple hanging on a tree for example, is not wealth until it has been picked. From that moment until, through whatever agencies of farmer, teamster, railway, produce merchant, retail fruit dealer, it finally reaches the hand of the man who is destined to eat it, it is Wealth. And there can be no difficulty in seeing that in both insect and human society, Wealth has two uses. Take the department of food. Some of this Wealth is consumed at once to satisfy immediate needs, and some of it is stored away for future use. This latter the economists call "Capital." Or, if you can suppose an enterprising ant-colony building a nest with the purpose of renting it to other ants, such a nest would be Capital—that is, as the Economists word it—Wealth devoted not to the immediate use of the owner, but to the production of other wealth. The principle is of course the same amongst men. The baker has a stock of wealth on hand in the form of bread. That part of it which he uses on his own private table is wealth, pure and simple; that which he keeps for sale to his customers is capital. So with the farmer's grain. It is all wealth, but the portion which he sends to market or keeps for seed is capital.

IV.

"SAY NOTHING BUT SAW WOOD."

So far as I have been able to discover by intent looking, the Ants have no Universities or Societies for the Diffusion of Economic Knowledge. I suspect that theoretically they know nothing about capital, wealth, and all the rest of it; and I feel pretty certain they don't care at all for Sciences, dismal or otherwise. Indeed, if I am not led astray by a too-active imagination, I was plainly told this by a prominent member of a certain ant community. At least it was so I translated the eloquent movements of his "feelers" as he politely stood and held converse with me during one of my visits to the ant country. He was a most intelligent little fellow, and succeeded somehow in conveying his meaning to me very clearly. This is what I understood him to say: "Sir, as we look at it, life is a very simple thing, though as mysterious to us as it is to you. We are conscious of just two sets of wants: those of the body, and those of the soul, heart, mind, affections, or whatever you please to call it. For the satisfaction of the first we require food and shelter; for the satisfaction of the second we need leisure. Having leisure, each individual may look after his soul-needs in the way that gives him the most perfect life; he may travel or study or do whatever else he feels most disposed to do, always consistently with the equal rights of all his fellow-ants. That, sir, is our view of life. Simple, isn't it? Well, we find ourselves endowed with an instinct by which every solitary ant of us is inclined or impelled to devote his energies to the production of wealth. We find ourselves well equipped for this purpose, having strength, activity

and ingenuity; and then, sir, we find ourselves set down in a suitable environment. We are in the midst of a field of raw material from which food and shelter may be provided—a field that seems literally inexhaustible. Why, sir, I have heard that this earth on which we live is almost twenty miles round, and capable of sustaining a thousand ants for every one now or at any time living on its surface. In view of this fact, why should life be anything but simple? With a certain amount of industry every ant can assure himself of adequate shelter and abundant food. That settles his bodily wants. The rest of his time (say a clear half of it) is his own, and if he does not get some true comfort and joy out of living, surely, sir, it is his own fault. He cannot, at least, lay the blame on the Creator. Now, sir, I put it to you: this being the situation, what were to be gained by the vexing and worrying of the ant-intellect with abstruse theorizings and endless dissertations in obscure phrases about “funds” and “flows,” “supplies,” “demands,” “production,” “consumption,” “transportation,” “tariffs,” “balances of trade,” and all the rest of it? What is all such learned disputation but talk *about* Life.* It is the shadow not the substance. You humans are perfectly welcome to what you call your Political Economy in the shape of printed books and spoken discourses; we Ants prefer to have it in the shape of actual life. What I mean, sir, is that we are fulfilling our function in positive act and deed, and it would be sheer waste for us to set apart a lot of highly cultivated ants to merely describe what we are doing or to deliver lectures or write books on the laws by which we are doing it. At least we would have to regard such Ants as simply descriptive poets—a luxury, not a necessity. They could teach us nothing, for we do not stand in need of teaching in the science or art of getting a living.”

These latter expressions may have a conceited sound in the reading, but on thinking them over I consider them the language of truth and soberness. Ants do not require any instruction in the Art of Getting Along; and they could have no possible use for Political Economists except as ornamental adjuncts to their civilization, like poets, singers and painters.

But underneath the whole discourse of this Ant I was somehow conscious of a condemnation of our human civilization as inferior to theirs. I put it into words for myself, and it ran to this effect:

In what essential respect do human beings differ from ants as sentient creatures on this earth? Do not both live in communities? Have not both the two sets of needs, Physical and non-physical? Are not both endowed with powers and faculties adapted to the satisfaction of these needs; and have not both an environment containing inexhaustible supplies which their powers and faculties can transform to their fit use? Are not both, in short, the creatures of one and the same all-wise and beneficent Creator? Yes, is the reply

*The beginning of Inquiry is Disease; all Science, if we consider well, as it must have originated in the feeling of something being wrong, so it is and continues to be Division, Dismemberment and partial healing of the wrong.*** Had Adam remained in Paradise there had been no Anatomy and no Metaphysics.—CARLYLE, *Characteristics*.

to all these questions. Then in view of the fact that every ant actually does get along prosperously—has a sufficiency of food, adequate shelter, and still abundant leisure to devote to the cultivation of its higher nature (if so be that it has a higher nature) whereas in human society we find comparatively few who are thus prosperous; many being short of food, shelter and clothing all the time; many more part of the time; many having no leisure for any cultivation of mind or heart because it takes so much of their energy to secure bodily necessities; others having limitless wealth who never do any useful work at all; I say in view of this remarkable difference between the outcome of Ant and Human civilization, the inference must be clearly that the latter is inferior. If I am answered that ants live in accordance with mere instinct; whereas men are endowed with reason, then I must conclude that instinct is superior to reason, but this nobody will really believe. Perhaps, however, the reply is that ants, endowed only with instinct, blindly obey a mechanical law of their being, whereas men—here the replier stops, suddenly seeing the unpalatable thing that was at his tongue's end. That unpalatable thing, however, is, I fear, the truth, so let us out with it—finish the sentence: Whereas men, endowed with reason, by which they should be able to discern the law of their being as well as the ants do by instinct, either do not see that law, or seeing, do not obey it, but perversely thrust it aside, ignore it, defy it, and take the consequences. In very truth the replier has hit the nail on the head. The ants fulfill their function perfectly; we, the superior beings, the lords of creation, have made a muddle of ours.

(To be continued.)

WHAT IS THE SINGLE TAX?

Speech of EDMUND NORTON at the Jefferson Club, Los Angeles.

The Single Tax is the popular name of the great fiscal reform and social philosophy most powerfully promulgated by our great American, Henry George, sometimes called "the prophet of San Francisco." Its advocates are almost universally known as Single Taxers or Georgeans.

WHAT IT PROPOSES TO DO.

Its purpose is to increase wages to the full returns or earnings of labor; to shorten the hours necessary to earn a living; to leave to capital, which is secondary labor, its full returns, which are secondary wages; to abolish monopoly, which is the thief that is robbing both labor and capital, and thereby prove the unity and remove the apparent antagonisms which have no place in a natural order where monopoly does not exist. It will free production, including all trade, barter and exchange, which are but processes of production, and will equalize the distribution of wealth into the possession only of those who can earn it. It will destroy privilege by substituting equal