

Wealth and Moral Law. BY E. BENJAMIN ANDREWS, D.D.
Hartford Seminary Press, 1894. — 135 pp.

The lectures included in this little volume raise and discuss the largest and most troublesome of social issues. The book is true to its title. Trusts, corporations, gambling, justice, socialism and the single tax, each and all, are regarded from the economic and from the moral standpoint. The distinctively moral remedies predominate; and though they run dangerously near to that familiar commonplace, "Get the right sort of behavior and no problems will remain," yet there is not a dull page in the book. As in the other writings of Dr. Andrews, no trait is more constant than a certain moral fearlessness in dealing with his theme. Intellectual sympathy also never fails him. Whether he deals with the Marx socialism or the single tax, there is always a distinct friendliness in stating what may be finally rejected. If this is a possible weakness, it is also a source of real strength.

The book contains no stated theory of the relation which morals sustain to economics, but it is everywhere assumed that the relation is constant. There is hardly a concrete issue raised which is not made to depend ultimately upon the sort of character available to control the issue. "Give us the right kind of men and any scheme will work." With a host of conservative writers this has come to be a very dreary commonplace, in spite of its truth. No higher tribute can be paid to Dr. Andrews than to admit that he wholly rescues it from dullness. "We must get character first before any important social changes can take place," is just now the stop-gap argument, ignoring wholly all that change of organization may imply as a character-creating force.

The author is very careful to make large allowance for this by his general remedy — regulation, as against *laissez faire* upon the one side and socialism upon the other. It is made clear that bold and yet prudent regulation of social evils must at least be fairly tried before the socialistic program can have serious hearing. Principles are indeed laid down which would seem to put the author into permanent antagonism with anything like scientific socialism, as "economic merit" is found to inhere in wage-earning, interest-earning and profit-earning forms of private property. The Marx type of socialism is refuted chiefly by showing reasons why the cost-of-production theory will not hold. Average labor cost, or any of its multiples, is shown to be far less certain as a measure of values than the rough decisions of the present competitive tests.

With Fabian socialism the author has far more sympathy, although upon the main issue a sharp difference appears.

The presupposition of this doctrine [that of the Fabians] is in favor of state industry. I would take precisely the opposite ground. Let us retain the immense advantages of individual initiative with the accompanying results of maximum enterprise and inventiveness, wherever such initiative is not erected into an abuse of society. Let us resort to state agency only when, and so far as, this is rendered necessary by the power and disposition on the part of individuals and private corporations to maltreat the public at large.

It is denied further that this would lead to the same practical results as the Fabian program, it being implied rather that experience will show very questionable results from too wide an activity on the part of the state.

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