

Nor can I see that anything is to be really gained by stopping at this point to set forth the theories and explanation (in so far as these can be made out) which this Schoolmaster employs to justify his position. Enough that they will lead to the above hopeless conclusion—that he does not know what is wrong, unless it be some mysterious dispensation of the Creator. Nor would it be more useful to spend time in castigating the teacher for not knowing, since he is paid his wages for finding out.

Of course, we reject his conclusion, with the whole body of argument that leads up to it. It is manifestly unbelievable, and even involves something like blasphemy. There are two free agencies in the matter, God's and man's; and for my part, I must be fully convinced that man can by no possibility, through his folly or selfishness, be the cause of this miscarriage of things, before I shall feel at liberty to say it is by the will of God. I say there are two free agencies: What I mean is, that there are two law-making powers, the Human and the Divine. The latter being itself perfect, promulgates only perfect laws—laws, that is, which, being obeyed, infallibly secure a smooth, orderly, harmonious condition; the former, being itself imperfect, is capable of establishing laws that will necessarily produce friction and disorder. My belief being that the Ants do not legislate for themselves, but contentedly obey the laws of Nature—the Divine laws—I have ground for assuming that the true cause of the human trouble must be looked for in human legislation. If this turn out to be the case, then the explanations of the schoolmaster are not only untrue, but are the exact opposite of the truth; the reason why Wealth cannot be distributed equitably as between the community and the individual, and as between individuals of the same community, is to be found in laws deliberately established and maintained by man, and is in no degree the doings of Providence. Along this line, then, must our investigation proceed.

(To be continued.)

AT EASE IN ZION.

(For the Review.)

By W. A. DOUGLASS.

Part of an Unpublished Story.

"I should say he is comfortably fixed. The lines have fallen to him in pleasant places, and he has a goodly heritage," remarked the first speaker.

"Do you mean to tell me that he is very rich," asked the second.

"Well, hardly that. He is not a millionaire or a billionaire; but that makes no difference; for when a man has a few hundred thousands safely invested, so that he can live at his ease and not worry about business, he is just as well off as a man can be; he eats the best of the season, he sleeps on the

softest of down, he can get all the enjoyments that his nature is capable of, so that if he were to multiply his fortune a hundred times he would be no better off."

"Besides that," continued the speaker, "that is a mighty good investment he made across the river. I tell you, George Spaulding is a long-headed fellow, he can see through a stone wall as far as the next man."

"How do you make that out?"

"Did you not hear of that little trade of his? It was well reckoned, and I shall be surprised if he doesn't make a pretty pile on that transaction. It is this way: After he secured a seat in the Council, he got the option on a large frontage of land across the river at a mere trifle, three or four dollars a foot frontage. Then through his influence with the papers he got up the agitation to have that splendid bridge built, for which the city is to pay a pretty fortune. Then he rolled the logs and pulled the wires with Jones, who had some lots to the east. They voted a considerable figure to open up a new road at the cost of the city, but this could be accomplished only by giving similar favors to Smith and Robinson who had lots to the North and the West. I think I may safely bet, that Spaulding will realize five dollars for every dollar he invested. They say he will make two or three hundred thousand dollars out of that deal."

"Well, Sir, but he is a lucky fellow. How is it some people always fall on their feet?" asked the second man.

"Yes," replied the first speaker, "you may say he is lucky, when without making the world richer by a stiver, he can get what some people would regard as a large fortune. But did you ever think, is this honest?"

"Honest!" exclaimed his friend, "you don't mean to insinuate that Spaulding is anything but the pink of honesty. He is a leader in the largest church in the city, one of the most liberal givers; presides at the principal meetings, and received the endorsement of the preachers when he offered himself for a seat in the Council. I never heard the slightest hint as to his being anything but the soul of honesty."

"Oh, there you are quite right," said the first speaker. "In the eyes of the world and according to the law of the land, he is strictly honest. Offer him a bribe, and he would quickly show you the door, without any ceremony. In all his personal dealings, I have no doubt of his genuine honesty; but when I ask if this is an honest transaction, I refer not to the individuals, but the law which allows such transactions. Just look at this: The public have to pay for the bridge and the roads, that is one obligation, called a tax, and then they have to pay an increased price for the land, and that is called a speculation. That is a second obligation, a double burden for the citizens, while Spaulding, Smith, Jones and Robinson, reap fortunes. Do you think that is the honest way of getting wealth?"

"Well, but every one does it who gets the chance. I know a number of the preachers who are up to the lips in just such transactions. You don't mean to say that they would do anything dishonest?" he repeated enquiringly.

"What you say is quite true, but because many sincerely good men do a certain thing, that is no evidence that it is necessarily right. The watch-maker takes some raw material and by his labor adds to the utilities in the world. That workman increased that value by his labor. Who made the increase of value in that land? Did Mr. Spaulding do it, or was it the public did it, when they built the bridge to make it more accessible to the city? When the farmer puts in one bushel and then reaps twenty bushels, he multiplies wealth, and therefore, he has honestly acquired a title to increased wealth; but what increase did Mr. Spaulding make to the wealth of the world in this transaction? Did he build that bridge more than any other citizen? Was not that value made by the community as a whole and does not honesty demand that the community should take that value to pay for the bridge and other public improvements?"

The Mr. Spaulding of whom these gentlemen had been speaking, was a man in the prime of life, and of fine personal appearance. As the speaker had remarked Mr. Spaulding was a member of the largest church in the city. As he was a speaker of some influence and gave largely to the funds of the church, he was frequently asked to preside at important meetings. The attention and consideration thus bestowed on this gentleman, proved very acceptable and gave him the comfortable feeling that the lines had really fallen to him in pleasant places.

In a sense and in a measure he was sincerely religious, and the failings he had were due more to his unfortunate surroundings than to any intended perversity.

That old Mr. Hodge, who was a member of the same church, should occupy a back seat, that he should never be called on to preside, that he should receive no particular attention, all this was regarded as perfectly proper; for Hodge was poor. That he was honest as the Sun, that he toiled bravely, long and well to maintain himself and his family, that he showed noble self-sacrifice, that his contributions of money were a much larger percentage of his possible savings than those of Mr. Spaulding, all these were little thought of. Balanced in the scales of true worth, Mr. Hodge was the peer of Mr. Spaulding any day. In beneficence and self-sacrifice he was much the superior. But, who can tell? Reverse the conditions; place Mr. Hodge in the circumstances of Mr. Spaulding, and the development might have been also reversed. We are all so wonderfully and unconsciously influenced by environment.

"Oh, my brethern," said the Reverend Charles Dibbs, D. D., the pastor of Mr. Spaulding's church, "it is woe to us, if we do not defend our nation from the curse of bad and corrupt government. Too much, far too much have the good people of our cities left the government of the people in the hands of the worst elements of society, till the stories of wrong and fraud often make a man hang his head in shame at the disgrace to which our municipal governments have sunk. With the immense resources and the privileges of this nation, born in the cradle of freedom, uncursed with the relics of feudal-

ism and monarchical despotisms, why is it that we are often so indifferent about the highest interests of the city, as to allow its control to fall into the hands of grafters and schemers whose rapacity and self-seeking often turn the halls of justice into dens of looting and plunder? What we want above every other consideration is good men at the helm of government. I beseech you, therefore, be at the polls as a sacred trust, as a religious duty. Cast aside all the prejudices of party, and let it be the men of truth and integrity, whom you will choose for your representatives."

Thus did the Reverend gentleman exhort his people as to their civic duty, and there was great rejoicing when they managed to return George Spaulding at the head of the pole.

"Now we have a straight man," remarked many of the electors, when congratulating themselves after the returns had come in. And so they believed. Forthwith did Mr. Spaulding elaborate his schemes and form his combination to secure the building of the bridge at the cost of the public to add largely to his fortune.

Mr. Spaulding was a good man according to his knowledge. In thus utilizing his opportunities, he was not conscious of any wrong doing. He looked only at one end of the transaction. He expected to gain fortune; but he did not ask the question, whence that fortune was ultimately to come, and what must be the consequence of allowing one part of humanity to grow rich without producing riches.

It is true that some parties had written to the Rev'd Dr. Lasheer, the editor of the Christian Alliance and denounced the method which allowed individuals to appropriate the value of the land just as if they had raised it after the manner of a crop.

"If the crowd increases in a certain locality, is that any reason why the farmer, the mechanic, the merchant and every other industrious man should have to hand over their products to the so-called owner of that land? The man who honestly cultivates an acre of land raising wheat or oats, may earn therefrom ten dollars yearly; while the owner of an acre in the center of commerce may claim every year the product of a hundred farms. The man who sacrifices his skill, his energy and his life in the production of abundance, obtains only scarcity, while the man who sows not neither does he reap, can demand year by year an overwhelming fortune. Is this the fulfilment of the command, Render to every man his due?"

To this enquiry, the doughty editor answered in short meter.

"There was a time," he replied, "when it was regarded as a virtue for a man to persevere in his business and to achieve a fortune; but now-a-days, a number of grumbling socialistic writers, influenced, we doubt not, by an envious spirit because of their ill success, are proclaiming against those who have excelled themselves. If these men would exercise more their muscles and less their tongues, they might succeed a great deal better. If instead of looking to the legislature to improve their fortunes, they would stick to the cardinal virtues of thrift, economy, industry and temperance, they would

have no reason to complain of want. Abolishing want and poverty by act of parliament, that is the latest outcome of these feather-headed brains. If these agitators only keep on they will soon reach the crock of gold at the foot of the rainbow."

"Yes," said Mr. Spaulding, when he read this article, "That is so. My father commenced with his axe in the bush. Let these agitators do the same thing; let them rise before the Sun and let them work till after dark as the early settlers did, and they may become rich just as easily as any one else."

He thanked the editor the next time he met him. "These agitators are dangerous. I am glad that you do not give them any countenance. It is amazing how some people talk so glibly about confiscating other peoples property." If Mr. Spaulding had any qualms of conscience, the editor had lulled them to sleep.

Mr. Spaulding worked his combinations with admirable success. His fortune increased rapidly. In his vault, the mortgages on the hard earned homes of a number of his fellow citizens kept growing apace. The fortune grew at the one home, the obligation grew at the other home. But blind to this social cleavage, the growing claim at the one end and the growing obligation at the other end, he rested in peace and tranquility.

It was Christmas eve. He had sat up later than usual. As the midnight bells tolled the hour, out broke the peals of the chimes announcing the anniversary of the birth of the Prince of Peace. These ceased, then he listened and listened. Soft and sweet as the songs of angels, he heard voices in the distance. What harmony, what melody!

"For lo the days are hastening on,
By prophet bards foretold,
When in the ever circling years
Comes round the age of gold.

"Peace on earth, good will to men,
Their glorious splendors fling,
Let the whole world join in the song,
Which now the angels sing."

Four blocks away there was another scene. A mother held her babe to her breast. She was struggling to hold back the tears. Her husband had bought from George Spaulding a lot across the river, hoping to build a home thereon. Then came the unexpected. Slack work and sickness had exhausted their little treasures. Their payments on the lot had fallen behind. Interest and costs had swallowed everything they had invested. The mother clasped her arms around her babe. "Oh, my God," said she, "to think we are face to face with beggary."