

In a warfare of ideal there can be no reprisals. In a new era, past piracies will be forgotten. The resilience of free industry, that means free men on free land, will so flood the world with wealth that every son of Adam may have, may enjoy, all he cares to create. Anxious for action and results, Single Taxers realize they are building, not for to-day, not for themselves; but for the ages and for the race of men.

Never, since that day, "When the embattled farmers stood by the rude arch that spanned the flood, and fired the shot heard round the world," has the appeal been made in vain to the patriotism of the American farmers. And when the record is made up he will be found to have done his part.

AESTHETICS AS A FACTOR IN SOCIAL REFORM

(For the Review)

By **ALEXANDER MACKENDRICK**

The part that may be played by the Aesthetic sense in the evolution of sweeter manners and nobler laws, and of public morals generally, has probably never been adequately appreciated by our society-reconstructors and social reformers. It has indeed been recognized by poets and others that the sensitiveness to the ideals of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful act and react upon one another. Some have even affirmed their identity and maintained the impossibility of conceiving one member of the Trinity in isolation from the other two. Such recognition, however, of the relation between the three constituent elements in human virtue has for the most part been confined to those thinkers who stand apart from the rough work of the social uplifter, and who live on a plane of thought above that of ordinary mortals. In a general way it may be affirmed with confidence that the artistic faculty, the sense that distinguishes between acts, relationships, and things that are ugly and those that are beautiful, has hitherto been regarded by the social reformer as the Cinderella of the family—the negligible member of the tri-sisterhood of senses on whom we rely for our standards of conduct. The moral pointed by the familiar fairy-tale of the nursery may be not without some bearing on the stage we have now reached in the evolution of human relationships. It may be that the future fortunes of the household are to be retrieved by this Princess in disguise whom we have left sitting among the ashes and regarded as of no account; and it will not be the first time in the history of a family, a nation, or a race, that salvation or rescue has come from an unexpected quarter.

Mankind has probably never been entirely without some vague or sub-conscious perception of an ultimate check upon conduct; a high court whose judgments are irreversible and which delivers its verdicts only after the laws of right and wrong or truth and falsehood have been violated; a judiciary that

condemns with the judgment of ugliness, actions that have fought their way through all the lower courts of conscience. We recall Talleyrand's famous "It is worse than a crime, it is a blunder," and Ouida's "It is worse than wicked, it is vulgar," as unconscious admissions of the ultimate authority of this dimly-conceived final court of appeal. At no time, indeed, has the aesthetic sense been quite inoperative as a factor in the regulation of private conduct. In the lives of the more refined members of the human race it has served the purpose of those finer adjustments in machinery which determine the rate of speed to a degree of delicacy impossible by the ordinary levers and ratchets. In domestic life, for example, there occur countless junctures where problems of conduct arise upon which the moral law offers no very definite opinion, but on which the aesthetic sense pronounces an emphatic judgement—says this act is graceful, that act is ugly. We rebuke unseemly conduct in our children and sometimes in one another, not by stigmatizing it as wrong, but as "not pretty" or as "undignified." Again, it is fairly certain that many crimes against society of the genteeler sort known as manipulation of markets or watering of stock, have been condoned not only in the consciences of the perpetrators but in the judgments of the public, by the consideration that they have been planned and executed in an artistic manner. It is probable that even our old friend Bill Sykes is not quite insensible to the artist's pride in the robbing of a till or the "cracking of a crib," and would feel agonies of remorse over a piece of work that had fallen short of his artistic standard in detail and technique.

Yet though in private life men never entirely disregarded the judgments of the aesthetic sense, it is painfully obvious that the criteria of conduct it sets up have not been applied with equal incisiveness and discrimination either to the material structure of society or to the mutual relationships and attitudes in which men stand to each other. We tolerate ugliness in our cities that few among us would endure in our homes. We patiently suffer outrage and violence upon our sense of the beautiful in the hideous advertisements that disfigure our railway embankments and country roads, in apparent unconsciousness that one of the members of the blessed Trinity upon which our higher life depends, is being insulted and trampled upon. We seem to have forgotten that if in any real sense the Good, the True and the Beautiful are convertible terms, we ought to regard ugliness as immoral, and as untrue to the deepest laws of our being. And it is not with impunity that we permit ourselves thus to stumble through our public life and to make mistakes of so atrocious a character. The words of the late Professor Huxley are as applicable to the conduct of Society in the collective sense as in the case of an individual man. "Life," he said, "may be compared to a game of chess with an unseen player who never makes a mistake and never pardons one; who makes no allowance for ignorance of the rules of the game; who would rather lose than win, but who punishes carelessness equally with trickery and rewards the valiant and skilful with that lavish generosity which the strong delight to show."

Is it not evident that we have blundered egregiously in thus contemning in our public life this youngest member of the group of senses by whose aid we find our way to the higher levels of being? And as all mistakes have to be paid for when the day of reckoning comes, might it not have been expected that this disregard of the beautiful in material things would work itself out in an insensibility to ugliness in social relationships and a subsequent blindness to immorality in public conduct? This at all events is what has happened. The regard for aesthetic considerations which in private life not only demands beauty in material things, but undoubtedly provides an additional sanction to the dictates of conscience and serves to regulate conduct where the moral law is silent, has utterly failed in the corporate life of society both in material things and in matters of policy or behaviour.

But there are not lacking signs to those who keep their ears to the ground, that the artistic sense in our corporate life, which we may thank God has never been quite smothered but has only lain dormant, is at length beginning to assert itself. Men are realizing as they have never done before, the material ugliness of our public surroundings and the unsightliness of the contrasts in economic conditions that distinguish present-day society. What the sense of righteousness, blinded as it has always been by the dust of class-prejudice and the cross-currents of mercantile-economic theories, has not been able to condemn, the sense that hungers and thirsts for beauty in all its tangible and intangible forms, revolts at and pronounces intolerable. We are convinced that this revulsion of the artistic sense at the unspeakable ugliness of many of the aspects of modern society is an important contributory to that wave of passion for economic reform that has laid hold of the souls of men, even of those whose own lots have been cast in pleasant places. If this is true, it is a circumstance full of hope and promise. And was the recovery of this dormant sense for sweetness and harmony that we name aesthetics, not inevitable as a result of the growth of intelligence? It can only have been that stupidity that has dogged the footsteps of man ever since he forsook the lowly path of instinct and started upon the great adventure of the intellectual life, that has made him insensible to the violence done to his finer intuitions by the form of society which he has himself evolved. But stupidity is fortunately one of the human limitations that tends to cure itself. It is a negative thing like darkness or ignorance, and disappears before light and understanding. With the gradual unfolding of the intelligence there could hardly fail to come a development of the aesthetic faculty, a quickened sensitiveness not only to the things that are good and true, but to those that are beautiful in the life of the community as well as within the circle of private life.

The purpose of this article is to urge economic reformers in general and Single Taxers in particular to welcome the impetus towards reform that may lie concealed in this sensitiveness to the ugliness and vulgarity of much of our wealth-display, this aesthetic nausea which so many of us feel towards the

inequalities of fortune we see around us; and to realize that it is predisposing the minds of the younger generation to the study of root causes in a way that theories of social justice have often failed to do. Human action must always be guided by reason, but it can only be impelled by sentiment. Nor need this appeal for a recognition of the judgments of the artistic sentiment be interpreted as derogating from the importance of the part that the moral sense must always play in human life. What is intended is to insist that ugly things, ugly contrasts, and ugly human relationships are at bottom immoral, and that to some minds the immorality first reveals itself as an offence against the aesthetic sense.

That the hunger for righteousness, truth and beauty form the trinity of motive-forces on which humanity depends for its upward development, will generally be conceded; but it is probably not sufficiently understood that an under-development of one of those senses tends to distort the judgments of the other two. It has sometimes been recognized that a deficiency of the moral sense or of the scientific habit of mind limits the sensitiveness to beauty in all its forms; but it is no less true that an insensitiveness to beauty in tangible and intangible things, limits the sensibility to right and wrong, and to truth and error. Only by the recognition of this truth can we explain to ourselves the strange aberrations of human judgment upon the actions of men in society and on the economic structure which forms the framework of our collective life. If ugliness pained us as it ought to pain moral and truth-loving creatures, we should be moved to revolt by almost everything we see around us. To the psychologist, the biography of that great English writer, John Ruskin, is chiefly interesting as showing how an intense sensitiveness to the beautiful produced in him at the period of middle age a revulsion at the ugliness of the social system around him, and turned the whole current of his life away from the sphere of art criticism where it properly belonged, into that of economic reform. It was the offence to his aesthetic sense that first moved him to that passionate outburst of appeal to the British public to realize the degradation of the mire of commercialism and low ideals in which it was then sunk, and in which pure life and noble art had no chance to live.

"That which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of the Lord." When that God-given faculty which discerns a thing of beauty as a joy for ever, becomes atrophied in an individual or in a people, the judgments of the moral sense and the power to perceive truth are inevitably dulled. With a revival of the aesthetic sense many things that are now "highly esteemed among men" will be brought to that bar of judgment where the Goddess of Beauty presides and called upon to show reason for their continued existence. A new kind of public opinion, reinforced by that sense of artistic fitness which largely regulates our private life, may be expected to come into operation. We may then ask ourselves why we should despise the glutton at the dinner-table or the strong man who shoulders his weaker neighbour aside that he may

occupy the space that would accommodate both, and continue to respect him who uses his superior brain-power to gain an advantage over his less astute brethren in the economic field. If our aesthetic sense revolts at the greed of a child who appropriates by force a larger share of a limited luxury than he can use, it will equally despise the child of a larger growth who clutches and holds more of nature's bounties than he can wisely employ. When that vision arrives which only comes with the sensitiveness to beauty, the essential difference between service and dis-service, between working and stealing, will be revealed. We shall no longer respect the man whose wealth is not an exact reflex of the value of his service to the world. When the Beautiful is restored to its rightful place with the Good and the True among our scale of value-standards, it may be regarded as an unseemly and disreputable thing when we see men appropriating to private uses those forms of wealth which obviously belong rightfully to society. In short, with the aesthetic faculties in full operation, we may come to recognize no essential difference between a man wallowing in unearned wealth, and a pig wallowing in mud; and when Dame Fashion approves the judgment of the aesthetic sense as she is likely ultimately to do, the doom of "bad form" may be pronounced on swollen fortunes as it is now on ostentation in jewelry. Under pressure of a public opinion of this kind, how much more easily conditions of economic justice may be made to prevail. The main part of the opposition at present offered to the Single Tax movement will probably disappear when Millionaires find themselves ostracised as vulgarities and offences to our most delicate and refined sensibilities. And so, at last, through the aid of that final culture of the spirit which we call the aesthetic sense, we may have Beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

NEW SOUTH WALES

A STORY OF ENDEAVOR AND PROGRESS

(For the Review.)

By A. G. HUIE

Some years ago I assured the late Joseph Fels that there was no part of the world where effort to further the Single Tax cause could be put forward with greater advantage than in New South Wales. The progress that we are making is substantial. It is not of course all that we desire, but when we compare it with what is being accomplished elsewhere there appears to be reason to feel thankful and take courage. There is every prospect of a substantial step in advance this year. Before these notes reach the hands of the readers of the REVIEW we expect that the City Council of Sidney will have finally