

ESSAYS AND ADVENTURES OF A LABOUR M.P.

The many and varied experiences recorded in Colonel Wedgwood's latest book* will evoke deep interest in the minds of those who are possessed of the spirit of adventure, and who find joy in living dangerously. The "adventures" are judiciously alternated with the "essays," the former providing the bread and mustard for the political sandwich to which the author facetiously compares his excellent series of articles. Colonel Wedgwood's intimate acquaintances will readily understand why the urbanity which he modestly describes as "a fatal propensity for civility" should have served, under exceptional circumstances, as his chief passport to the intimacy and friendship of all sorts and conditions of men. If a few strictures may be permitted before enumerating the many excellencies of the book, it might be suggested that it suffers from a lack of co-ordination. The reader is apt to be confused by sudden transitions of place and time, ranging from India to England, and from the years of the Boer war to the present day without respect to chronological or geographical order. It may also be regretted that the style is occasionally spasmodic, as though the writer had been too full of his subject to express himself otherwise than convulsively. With these trifling qualifications the book deserves the heartiest commendation as "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

The scene of the first "adventure" is laid in Siberia during the year 1917, and, like all the narratives that follow, resembles an impressionist picture painted on a large canvas with big brushes and ample colour, and showing vivid contrasts of light and shadow. This is followed by an extremely informative and interesting chapter headed "Wedgwoods," in which the history and achievements of that remarkable family are given in full detail. "Hatred of slavery and love of freedom of thought pervaded the atmosphere in which they lived." This is what is said of the spirit in which Colonel Wedgwood's ancestors lived and worked in the pre-reform days when "they bought land in many counties for the sole purpose of recording votes against slavery," and it fully accounts for the present fact that "Wedgwood's is no longer a firm; it is an institution." In the next two chapters we are taken back to 1902 and the South African war, and become interested in the author's experiences as a Resident Magistrate in the Transvaal. In "Native lands and Crown colonies" the process of "alienation of natives' lands to white company-promoters" is lucidly explained, and we can see, through the writer's eyes, how human societies in their formation, by a strange perverse instinct take that wrong turning that leads to the economic slavery that disfigures all the advanced civilizations we have hitherto known. "The Troubles of a Labour M.P. in India" and the article that follows it on "Indian Home Rule" are full of interest. All prudent and untravelled persons feel diffident in forming opinions on matters relating to foreign countries when such opinions cannot be based upon personal knowledge of the actual conditions. But while sharing to the full Colonel Wedgwood's passion for Home Rule as a general principle, one may be pardoned for raising the question as to whether the rigidity of the caste system and the consequent stratification of Indian society will not make Native rule unworkable so long as that system endures. We should have appreciated some suggestion as to how the blight of Caste in India may be permanently abolished and destroyed.

But the point of greatest interest to readers of LAND & LIBERTY will be found in the article entitled "Land values—how they should be taxed"; and we say unhesitatingly that the case for immediate legislation

in this direction has never been more forcibly and convincingly set forth. One of its paragraphs we should like to see printed in letters of gold and affixed prominently on the interior wall of the British House of Commons. "No permanent improvement can be made in the condition of the people so long as all benefits translate themselves into an increase of *private rent*. State appropriation of rent must precede all real reform. It is the necessary preliminary to all the other important reforms before the country, and the one on which their success depends. Other legislation is increasingly wasted until this reform is effected." Colonel Wedgwood takes in turn the various reforms that are "in the air" at present, Housing, Old-age Pensions, Public works, Temperance, Small holdings, etc., and demonstrates with irrefragable logic that all of these reforms if successful would only serve to raise the value of land and natural resources, *i.e.*, to increase the price that Industry must pay to Privilege for leave to toil; the downward pressure in wages and the margin of idle land and idle labourers remaining as before. Other articles bearing upon the meaning of Freedom and its relation to the one and only righteous method of revenue-raising, are, "Authority for the Morning Poster" and "The Professor and the Politician"; these are excellently written and are pervaded by a subtle humour which gives them much charm. Separate aspects of the social problem are dealt with under the headings of "The right to strike," "The soothing syrup of the annual housing bill," and "How to bring about the social revolution"; while towards the close of the book we have a final "adventure" under the title "With machine guns in Gallipoli," in which the horrors of that campaign are presented to the reader's imagination in a light so lurid as almost to curdle the blood and to "make each particular hair to stand on end like quills upon the fretful porcupine."

Colonel Wedgwood confesses in the introduction that two of the chapters are written by another hand, but he leaves the reader to identify these for himself. In whatever part of the book they may be found, they seem to harmonize with its general structure and intention, and to do no damage to a volume which its readers will close with a deep sense of gratitude.

ALEX MACKENDRICK.

* ESSAYS AND ADVENTURES OF A LABOUR M.P. By Col. The Rt. Hon. Josiah C. Wedgwood, D.S.O., M.P., Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd.

We were pleased to have a visit last month from Messrs. Hubbard and Redfern, members of the Single Tax League of South Australia and to have their news of the good work being done in that State to promote the movement. Both these visitors have been readers of LAND & LIBERTY since it was first published as the SINGLE TAX.

By HENRY GEORGE

PROGRESS AND POVERTY. Abridged by Anna George de Mille, published by Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York. Cloth, 4s. 6d.

A PERPLEXED PHILOSOPHER. An Examination of Herbert Spencer's Utterances on the Land Question. Cloth, 1s. 6d.

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