

## BOOK REVIEWS.

## BOLTON HALL—THE MAN AND HIS BOOKS.

A Little Land and a Living, 286 pages.

Money Making in Free America, 314 pages.

Life and Love and Peace, 294 pages.

The Game of Life, 288 pages

Things As They Are, 304 pages.

The ordinary but extra fine edition, \$1.00 each.

Leather bound Edition de Luxe, \$2.00.

The Arcadia Press, 310 Broadway.

Two years ago—to be more precise, in the Spring of 1907—there appeared in the *Cleveland Leader* a notice to the effect that "Bolton Hall, who died several months ago, was a man whose aim in life was the betterment of social conditions." This led the gifted humorist who presides over *Judge*, the well known comic weekly, to publish the following clever *jeu d' esprit*:

"Whether the *Leader* has set the pace for the belated laudation of Bolton Hall, or whether it is following where others lead, we do not know. But we do know the pensive panegyric is slowly pervading the press of the country, and everywhere it is felt that poor B. H. was a good man trying his best to do good things in an evil and unresponsive time. Bolton Hall's latest work, "Three Acres and Liberty," finished and published a month or more after his death, is mentioned as the proof of the man's good heart, which went shy of public recognition during his life. *Judge* counts B. H. among his friends, and has not seldom been favored by contributions from his witty pen. Consequently we have felt a sense of bereavement in the death of Mr. Hall, and when he called at this office the other day we frankly told him so. We discussed with Mr. Hall the impropriety of staying around and writing for the papers after he was dead, and he agrees with us that it is an extremely unconventional not to say an annoying thing to do. We hardly know what our duty is in this perplexity. Plainly stated, Mr. Hall is dead. The *Cleveland Leader* says so, and the press

generally echoes the assertion. Against these many voices there is now our sole testimony that the author of "Three Acres and Liberty" is alive and calls at this office and even submits pieces to be published in this paper. We know the majority rules, and the majority is against us.

"Under the circumstances we ought to stop a dead man from calling at this office and contributing to this paper, and yet we do not want to be unfair to Mr. Hall. If he were just a plain author we think we could manage the business; but he is also a practicing lawyer, and knows all the technical defenses of his anomalous position. Mr. Hall insists on his rights, such as they are. We might even over-count his legal defenses, but unfortunately Bolton Hall is also a Single Taxer and so we realize we are up against it. No Single Taxer will ever admit that he is dead."

Since this was written the number of books that Mr. Hall has issued and the extent of his posthumous activity, have been very great. In this he has followed the example set by several popular authors who have passed away, and whose enterprising publishers have not permitted them to die easily or to be soon forgotten. To these works of Mr. Hall published by the Arcadia Press we now purpose to devote a few pages of this issue of the *REVIEW*, believing that our readers will wish to become better acquainted with them.

These books are the evidence of a busy life. For full as they are of an intense ideality they are not the work of a recluse. Mr. Hall has mingled much with his fellow-men, and has taken counsel with them on many subjects of practical interest. His is a familiar name and a familiar presence wherever men gather in the name of progress or in the pursuit of truth. Wherever free speech needs to be championed—whether it be in the persons of the well known teachers of anarchism, Turner or Emma Goldman, or from an orthodox pulpit—Mr. Hall appears as its persuasive teacher. He has given of his time and money to many causes. A Single Taxer first of all he has not narrowed his activities to that propaganda alone. Whether his influence has been greater or less on this account is not for us to determine.

We only know that, as Mr. Hall himself would say, he could not do otherwise than he has done. He is an intense individualist, and so much so that he has not sought to direct others into the channels he himself has selected. For he would tell you that whatever any one is doing in his own way, that way is the best the man knows who is doing it. And in this spirit of wise toleration he looks out upon the world.

The writings of such a man must possess more than a common interest. And when they prove to be the work of a thinker who has given careful study to the most pressing social problems, readers are to be congratulated that his works are brought together in convenient form and at a price that places them within reach of the man with a slender purse. The five first named volumes comprise an attractive set in uniform binding, and are published by the Arcadia Press, which has brought out others of Mr. Hall's books. An examination of their contents will, we think, prove of interest to the readers of the Review.

In *A Little Land and a Living* Mr. Hall has devoted himself to the practical possibilities of land using for market gardening, chicken raising and other objects. This work, and *Three Acres and Liberty*, were intended to be hypodermic injectors for the land question for people who are unwilling to take their medicine undiluted. Most people will not, it is true, know what they are getting. But some will find out for the first time the importance of the land and will realize how easy it is to make a living from the earth without the assistance of the capitalist. The difficulties of finding land for use will be a revelation to the settlement worker. In *The Garden Yard* the outlines of the cat will be revealed with equal distinctness. These books are incidental aids to our propaganda. For in them Mr. Hall reduces the problem of poverty to the concrete, and offers a number of solutions for individual cases. Behind the statement of this problem the great overshadowing fact is not obscured—namely, that what a few can do the many could do were not the earth the property of the few. It is remarkable that so far no single error of fact or conclu-

sion has been pointed out in the more than 2000 reviews of these books—and they are facts of unusual interest, and are presented in a most interesting way. There is practically nothing else on Intensive culture and its possibilities, and it is for this reason that they have had a phenomenal sale—phenomenal, at least, considering their character. Statistics do not lumber them with vague details. The instructive and illuminating examples which have escaped the attention of more pretentious authorities—or have failed of the same enticing presentment—are used to support the optimistic theory which pervades Mr. Hall's philosophy. The philosophy, briefly, is this. We are all earth people. There is something every one can do with the land, as a vocation or avocation, as a pleasure or a pursuit. And this he ought to do for the sake of health and long life. Mr. Hall's enthusiasm is contagious; his authorities must be left to vouch for the validity of the examples, but Mr. Hall challenges inquiry.

To a Single Taxer many of the lessons of these works will be obvious. But to none will the lesson be lost. The ideal of self help is a substitute for that of charity. Not in the doling of alms is the solution of poverty, but in drawing from the earth all that one needs by the exercise of his own labor—providing only that he has the opportunity. The owners of these opportunities who read these works will receive, perhaps for the first time, the suggestion that is subtly included in the teachings, and may be induced to discard the conventional notions of charity, which to many men stand in the way of the recognition of the fact that nature has provided the necessary opportunity for all self-help. It is this that led Mr. Fels to say that the circulation of these books is a benefit to mankind.

Though Mr. Hall's books have a tone and touch that are characteristic of them all, they are yet utterly unlike in spirit and purpose. From the practical treatment of the books just examined to the idealism of *Things as They Are*, is a far cry. This work is a series of sermons, but sermons unlike those heard from the pulpit in this modern day. The keynote of the phil-

osophy is uttered almost at the beginning. "If we act honestly with ourselves, doing the things that we profess to believe, we must come either by death or life, to a new and higher existence." It is again summed up in the statement: "We cannot go through the golden gates alone." If the thought is often repeated in different forms such iteration is necessary to the enforcement of the lesson.

In all this philosophy there is nothing really novel. It is the doctrines of Jesus translated from Oriental to more Occidental phrasing. But Mr. Hall is really one of its foremost teachers in this country, at least, an honor which he shares with his fellow countryman, the late Ernest Crosby, and the great Russian thinker, Leo Tolstoy. To the making of Mr. Hall's philosophy of life, others, too, have contributed—Emerson, Whitman, Stevenson, James and others. But the optimism that pervades it is temperamental—Mr. Hall is thoroughly and pervasively in his books.

If you do not agree with his philosophy it will be hard for you to tell why. Here in this chapter on Honesty, for example: If to tell the truth is to lose one's life, that, Mr. Hall contends, is not because truth does not meet all requirements, but that we ourselves have created a condition by which one may not tell the truth and live.

Here and there are little illuminating touches of wisdom: "It seems strange that men who have learned so quickly to co-operate in pursuit of game, should learn so slowly to co-operate in pursuit of happiness." Again: "When unselfish love is born, the sense of duty dies. It is no longer needed." And again: "If therefore the nation is persuaded by its sympathies and by those who have an interest in the war that it ought to fight, its best course is to fight, and thereby learn the folly of fighting." (Which is by way of illustration that the growth to right doing comes, not by the compulsion of duty, but through the absence of the desire to do otherwise.)

Sometimes this wisdom is aimed with wit that is aphoristic. "So that often, when one says of a child, that it is cross because it is not very well, it would be more correct

to say that it is not very well because it is cross." "The value of our relief measures is in softening the heart of the relievers."

Mr. Hall has no hesitation in satirizing with some severity the faults of the class to which socially he belongs. In this respect, both as to truth and severity, the following could scarcely be excelled. "On a business basis, charity is an excellent investment for the rich. All charities are excellent investments; they are so recommended even from the pulpit. They make taxes high, but we get it back out of our payroll. They are very cheap, and, ethically, utterly worthless."

Life, Love and Peace tells in more elaborate treatment the lessons and philosophy of those "Fables," by which, perhaps, Mr. Hall is best known. It is an inspiring book, and again we would apply to them the title of sermons if it were not that the word has too often come to be associated with dogmatic and clerical dullness.

Money Making in Free America, Short Chapters on Prosperity, is the half satirical title of another of Mr. Hall's books. An introduction by Hon. Tom L. Johnson occupies two pages. This book is devoted for the most part to statistics and comments upon them, and many of these comments are characterized by a sly humor. I know of no better book to gather material and texts for Single Tax talks before audiences of workingmen. They are made up from current news matter and are therefore unavoidably ephemeral. This does not, however, apply to such chapters as that on charity, which contains things as good as ever were said upon this great misdirected, misunderstood and mis-applied virtue. The chapters on Temperance and Money Reform are especially notable for their good sense. But perhaps the best chapter of all is that on Trades Unions and their Remedies, and we especially commend it to the perusal of our friends in labor organizations. The entire book is an admirable commingling of sense and ideality.

A word should be given to the Fables which occupy a separate volume, though there are others also in Things As They Are. Some of them are beautifully simple; a few are real prose poems, such as Grief

and the End of Grief. (Things as They Are, page 248). Now and then there is some ingenious turn of phrase, which is all there is of the fable; and one of these we venture to quote as an example of the wit that is contained in verbal ingenuity. "In the old times a man made his plans, did his work, received his product and thanked God there was enough for all, so no one need worry. Now, an employer makes his plans, a laborer does his work, a monopolist receives the product, a professor says it is all right, and a clergyman thanks God there is too much for some, so no one need care." Here is another of the fables of a different kind: "I looked at my Brother with the microscope of criticism, and I said, How coarse my Brother is. I looked at him through the telescope of scorn, and I said, How small my Brother is. Then I looked at him in the mirror of Truth, and I said, How like me my Brother is."

It would not be the truth to say that we always agree with Mr. Hall. We often disagree with him. When he says that every improvement in "the condition of mankind has been promoted by the sympathy of the rich, or at least of the well-to-do with their less fortunate fellow-men," he seems to ignore the impulse that comes from below and has often been the sole cause of transforming conditions. But perhaps Mr. Hall may have used the word "promoted," as indicating merely the assistance given to movements for social betterment, and not as excluding the other equally potent causes. But if so his statement does not precisely say that. Elsewhere in another of his books Mr. Hall seems to deny this by saying, with perhaps more truth: "The great force on which we must rely for any general improvement in social conditions, is the growth of popular intelligence under the stimulous of awakened desires, and not the unselfish sentiments of the rich or leisure class."

A word regarding Mr. Hall's style. It is an admirable vehicle for the thought—the kind of thought—he has to convey. He is not often elequent, since eloquence is not the thing he seeks. Graces of style may wait on graces of style, if that be what impells one to write at all. Mr.

Hall has another and higher purpose. If, as the writer of this review has often maintained, style is the thought itself, then Mr. Hall's is the perfection of its kind. One does not feel high exaltation without the quality of this thought infusing and coloring the quality of his rhetoric. Yet while there is little attempt to gild the rhetoric there are, as we have indicated, unexpected felicities of style, and these occasionally arrest the reader with delightful little surprises. Not often do they occur, because it is with the thought alone that our author is chiefly concerned.

And what about the man? For one desires to know something of one whose books evidence so striking a personality. To Single Taxers, to radicals everywhere, Mr. Hall is a familiar figure. Tall, past fifty, but still young in manner and appearance, quick of movement and at times even brusque, he would be a marked figure in any company. His manner of public address is quiet and conversational—some poor speeches he has made and some admirable ones. When he gets down to the work of elucidation he is serious and satiric by turns, but always forcible. But his humor is kindly, for his philosophy of life is so. He does not condemn wrong-doing in terms of scorn and hate. He himself says somewhere: "Reform must come by common desire, for action does not constitute right nor wrong: wrong does not consist in doing things; wrong is being and desiring something not the best."

Mr. Hall was born in Ireland, and is a son of the late Rev. Dr. John Hall. He is a lawyer, but has usually pursued the practice of settling disputes out of court. He was once a Sunday school teacher and charity worker, but has outgrown these things, for his religion is of a broader kind than that taught in Sunday schools, and his charity ideals are even more heterodox. His life is a busy one, for it is not confined to the thinking of useful thoughts, but extends to the doing of useful deeds. His books are the evidence of his abounding activity. They are to be recommended to all those who would fortify their theory of things with a genial, helpful and comradly teaching.

— J. D. M.