

## "EARNINGS AND FINDINGS"

To accumulate wealth is a desire common to most of us: perhaps few of us are troubled by the question how far is such accumulation ethically permissible? Some will say, if the question be raised, that it is beneficial to the community, others hold that great wealth in the hands of some people is an instrument by which others are kept poor.

"The Ethics of Wealth Accumulation" is the title of a striking article by Alexander Mackendrick in the *Hibbert Journal* for the current quarter (October-December). This may be regarded as part of the larger problem—whether or not there is a tendency to human progress.

"To those who have been described by Dean Inge as the victims of that great twentieth century superstition, the belief in a natural law of progress, and who have willed to believe in the perfectibility of human society, it may appear that the stars in their courses are moving towards conditions that favour the fulfilment of their desires."

The road by which fulfilment of desires is to be attained is a subject of controversy, some having faith in a change in human nature itself, others in legislation to restrict human powers. The writer thinks, however, that these two lines of procedure are not contradictory but "complementary and interdependent." This reconciliation of opposites is apparently justified, and it is probable that many readers of *Land & Liberty* would add the corollary that legislation to prevent the doing of wrong is better calculated to improve human nature than legislation to compel the performance of what the Government happens to regard as duties.

On the much debated topic of "Rights" and "Needs" Mr. Mackendrick takes a rather novel view. He says:—

"One of the most beautiful adaptations in Nature's ordering is the quantitative relation that holds between a man's capacity for effective or creative work and his need of wealth for self-realization. The scientific genius or inventor, who enriches the world with the product of his thought, requires, as a condition of his continued effort, a multitude of conveniences and facilitations that are unnecessary to the average man, and in addition a certain freedom from the economic pressure which the world as a whole cannot escape. Under natural conditions, wealth flows to him proportionately to the social value of his services and as though to equip him for further usefulness."

This recognition of natural inequality and its functions involves a striking comparison with the purely artificial inequality which is a real social evil and which causes so much of the bitterness of civilized life. With regard to this, the author regrets the tendency to judge a man's value by the wealth he possesses, and he anticipates a time when this tendency, in common with the allied desire to make a pretentious display of wealth, will be looked upon as mere vulgar

BY HENRY GEORGE

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weakness. The reason that a man's possessions are not an index to his efficiency is that wealth is of two kinds, which have been defined by an American economist into "Earnings and Findings." In practice these are not easily separated, but that is no doubt a subject upon which Mr. Mackendrick could, upon occasion, say a great deal. G.C.

## A PARODY OF PRIVATE PROPERTY

From an article by G. K. Chesterton in the *Co-operative News*, 13th November:—

"That a few distant and detached individuals should hold up a huge mass of subterranean minerals, which they cannot even reach without paying bolder and poorer men to reach, which they have never seen, which they cannot possibly have loved, which is mere raw material never to be fashioned in any form they know or stamped in any way with their image as individuals—this is an abnormal and even anarchical situation in itself. It is unnatural to all our instincts— but especially to the instinct of private property. It is like a parody of private property. It is like a *reductio ad absurdum*; an absurd abuse of the abstract idea deliberately invented to bring it into discredit. . . . You cannot say anything sensible in praise of property that is not senseless as applied to things like mining royalties.

The Hesketh Estate, Southport, consisting of the north-eastern portion of the town, has been sold. It represents one of the biggest real estate deals outside London of the present century. The sum paid, it is stated, is nearly £500,000. A large portion of the estate consists of ground rents, there being some 3,500 houses, shops, etc., producing ground rents amounting to about £10,000 per annum. It is estimated that the rental value—i.e., the rack rent, is £150,000 per annum.—*Glasgow Herald*, 13th November.

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Mr. Robert Paton, late City Chamberlain of Edinburgh, at a meeting, 22nd November, explained that among other species of income "the Edinburgh Common Good Fund was maintained by the public ownership of large areas of land in the central parts of the City and in Leith, from which feu-duties and casualties are derived." The taxation of all land values in the City would develop a Common Good Fund that would provide for all municipal expenditure and otherwise enlarge the scope of its operations.

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In the course of a speech at a meeting of the Glasgow Education Authority held yesterday (*Glasgow Herald*, 5th November), Mr. MacNeilage submitted an addendum to the Committee's recommendations to the effect that "the Authority express itself as strongly of opinion that the housing conditions in which many of the poorer people are compelled to live are largely contributing to some of the gravest forms of sexual vice." His reason for proposing the addendum would be found in the minutes of the School Management Committee for the Eastern Territorial Division, which had inquired into certain cases involving school children. He would not beat about the bush, because he thought that in Glasgow men and women lived at ease, and did not realize what the actual position was unless they were told in plain English.

The Rev. Henry Wallace seconded.

The Authority agreed to include the addendum in the report to the Scottish Education Department.