

HENRY GEORGE
AND HIS REMEDIES
ANALYSED

BY

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INTRODUCTION.

WHEN these pages were written I had not read Mallock's admirable book on "Labour and the Popular Welfare," containing, as it does, a complete refutation of socialistic fallacies. He takes away the temptations to plunder by showing that the redistribution of all the apparent wealth of England—so that every man, woman, and child would have an equal share—would, if practicable, add but slightly to the income of the working classes, *i.e.*, manual labourers; while in the act of distribution the greater part of the value of property would be destroyed. This is proved incontestably by the public statistics. The other great feature in the argument is the denial of the assertion that all wealth is the result of labour, in the strict sense of the word as used by socialists, and the assertion that two-thirds of the value of property is derived from the special *ability* of the operators, who by inventive genius or power of application create new facilities, so that one man can do the work of ten, and do it better, or one engine do the work of 1000 men. The mechanician, the man of business talent, the painter, the poet, and many others in every rank of life all create value by mixing their work "with brains," as the painter said when asked how he mixed his colours.

Land, labour, capital, and ability—Mr. Mallock attributes two-thirds of the wealth of England to "ability"—are all concerned in the production of value, so that if the people, counted by the head, were to claim an equal distribution, they would only kill the goose that is continually laying the golden eggs. The bellows-blower would demand equal wages with the consummate organist, and society would be made to stand upon its head. Mr. Mallock's appeal is to facts and common sense, and everyone who values these in the conduct of life should get the book and read it.

In introducing my own poor pages, as an analysis of Henry George's views in "Progress and Poverty," which have obviously infected those who now handle our public policy, I have had different aims, for I have no pretensions to the skill of a statistician or the erudition of a political economist.

My first object is to show that the misery and degradation which Mr. George alleges is the inevitable fate of the working class, so long as private property in land subsists, is exaggerated and misrepresented, as shown by the manifest improvement in the condition of the working class during the present century. At the same time, it is granted that there is still a substratum of want and misery, brought out into greater relief by the luxury and abundance of those who are above want, and by the zeal of those who seek to relieve it. This being granted, instead of denouncing landholders as essentially robbers, I have sought to point out that the acknowledged evil in society is inherent in human nature, and is contrary to the intentions of God, being due to sin, which must needs bring suffering, as it does, on the innocent as well as the guilty. Thus, intemperance brings poverty on many children; impurity brings disease and demoralisation; dishonesty brings bankruptcy and ruin on many households, as we know too well. These are the known sources of poverty and the cause of the decay of States; these are the moral factors in social economy, and have to do with the hearts of men as the springs of action. The remedy proposed by Mr. George in the Single Tax is ridiculously inadequate, and would reverse the history of the world with regard to titles. The idea of *meum* and *tuum* is divinely written on the mind of man, as expressed in the tenth commandment.

Mr. George's great point is "that wealth is the produce of labour," and should, therefore, go to the labourer (in his sense of the word); but the land produces nothing without labour, and, therefore, the possessor of land has no right to any share in the produce. Therefore, the rent should be confiscated, and applied so as to relieve all alike from all taxation, any surplus being devoted to public purposes. In this way the landowner would become a public tenant, but without rent or any share in the produce, and could only fall back upon the poor rate being dealt tenderly with, like Isaac Walton's worms. I try to show, on my part, that there is, and has been, much labour employed from the beginning of the world in occupying and improving lands, which led to extended settlement before and after the Flood, and in our own times has opened up new continents and colonies by means of exertion and enterprise, with which bootmaking and similar trades are not to be compared. Without some reward in increased value, new lands, such as ours in Victoria, would never have been known. From 1803 to 1835 we were trying to find out a place fit for settlement. The law of expansion is the law of progress, and makes little England the mistress of nigh half the world. I point out how with a firm hold of law she has recognised prescriptive rights, and guarded the titles of the meanest subject, if it were only an applewoman's stall in the way of Apsley House; while on the

other hand, if the State claimed the title to the land under the Single Tax *régime*, every man's home and living would be subject to those who could capture legislative power, and take charge of the division of the spoil. Mr. George estimates the value of confiscated rental under the Single Tax at an amount which would make every citizen prosperous and happy, but he does not see that in shifting the foundations of society he would pull down the house. In 1894 the total income of both landlords and farmers in England was only 16 per cent. of the total income of the country, and if redistributed it would only give 2d. a day to each man and 1½d. to each woman.

Mr. George makes much of the fact that land is the gift of God, but that labour is the work of man, so that all the inhabitants of earth have as much right to share in land "as in the air we breathe;" but he seems not to be aware that his own head and hand and all that men can do are alike gifts of God, intended to be used for His service. If Mr. George is right, any abnormal amount of brains, such as he possesses, ought to be redistributed. The only true equality is to be found in the ultimate dispensations of God; and meanwhile, all good work on earth, of every kind, is being done, not by the many, but by the few, whether in arts or science or in social and religious progress. I have recognised that there is a specialty about land, inasmuch as it cannot run away and is of permanent value, but have urged that it was meant to be the basis and foundation of the superstructure of improvement. When we build a house we lay the foundations in the ground, but we do not live in them; and it is only the fool who says they are of no use.

For fifty years past I have taken an interest in the public affairs of this our colony, and marked many failures in the midst of great successes. In its capabilities there is no richer country under the sun, but we have suffered and are suffering from incapacities. The land is still the battle cry between those who have and those who have not; and yet there is plenty of room in the world for all who seek land by their own exertions, and are men enough to live and work for themselves, and not to live on others. I have myself held many acres, and now have not a square yard of my own, but my favourite book of political economy tells me that "godliness with contentment is great gain."

COLIN CAMPBELL.

*"What is writ is writ ;
Would it were worthier."*

Proposed
remedies.

HENRY GEORGE'S well-known work on "Progress and Poverty" has evidently had a remarkable influence on public opinion in this and other colonies as manifested in schemes of taxation, which, if carried into effect, would have an immense effect on social welfare. The book is written with an amount of power and of acute intelligence which demands attention, but at the same time requires the reader to think for himself, without being carried away by eloquence and ingenuity. The first part of the work lays the foundation of his conclusion that the salvation of society depends on the adoption of the Single Tax upon land by seeking to establish certain propositions which are essential to his argument.

The title—"Progress and Poverty"—at once suggests his first premiss, which is, that notwithstanding all the progress which has been or is now being made in social life, poverty is gaining the day, and therefore there is "something rotten in the State of Denmark." He then enumerates remedial measures, of which six are specified at p. 212. These are:—

1. From greater economy in government.
2. From improved education.
3. From combinations of workmen.
4. From co-operation of labour and capital.
5. From governmental direction.
6. From a more general distribution of land.

These are all dismissed as unsatisfactory, and the ground is cleared for laying down the grand conclusion that the recovery of land held in private property, so that it may become the inheritance of every man born into the world, by taxation, equivalent to the confiscation of rent, is the real "safe cure" for all the evils which afflict mankind. Towards the end his pages glow with eloquent descriptions of a new paradise, which the adoption of the Single Tax will introduce. This is the

main argument, which, however, is fortified by disquisitions on the justice of this confiscation of the rents of land, and also on the expediency of the plan as the most effectual remedy for the social evils which oppress mankind. I have to point out, however, that Mr. George's case is not proved by advancing a special remedy of his own, after showing that six other remedies have failed, for it does not follow that there are only seven remedies possible, so that, if six be eliminated, the seventh must remain; but there may be some other remedy for social evils which has escaped notice, and may nevertheless be the true one. I hope to be able to prove that this is the case, and that Mr. George's remedy is neither just nor expedient.

The first proposition, that in spite of the advancing civilisation of the world there is increasing misery and increased disparity between poverty and riches, is expressed in the Preface, p. 6, where it is said "that the natural result of material progress, land being private property, is, no matter what the increase of population, to force labourers to wages which give but a bare living." If this be so, then it follows that wages are being greatly reduced, in progressive countries, such as England and the United States, and that that must be the prevailing tendency so long as private property continues to exist. Now, is this really a true statement of the case? Sir W. Harcourt, the popular leader of the House of Commons, speaking before the nation, said recently—"Even now, in the midst of agricultural depression, the wages of the labourers are double what they were in 1815;" while Mr. Edward Langton pointed out in Melbourne that in 1852 agricultural wages in Kent were 8s. per week, and in 1887 16s. per week, while bread had fallen from 8½d. to 4½d. per loaf.

Mr. George's
not the true
one.

At the same time all the commodities of life have been greatly reduced in price and improved in quality. Wages in the United States are higher in amounts than in England, although the effect is marred by their Protective policy. The Single Tax theory demands that wages should appear to fall when the rent or annual value of land held in private property is found to have risen. There may be disturbing causes in England to reduce rents for a time, but it is manifest that while the evil of private property has been in existence for many centuries, nevertheless the artisans and labourers of England now enjoy a status and a degree of comfort which was altogether unknown to their ancestors, and, as a general rule, their wages, if well applied, are adequate to their wants. Mr. George makes frequent allusions to the condition of slavery to which manual labourers are being reduced, but are they not now treated as citizens of a great commonwealth, with a Parliament, in which their voice is heard, legislating in every possible way for their advantage by affording facilities for the acquisition of allotments, and in other ways?

The position
of labourers
is improved.

To speak, therefore, of the working class being crushed by the machinery of progress is a misrepresentation of the facts. Our colonial experience is not irrelevant. Before the gold era wages were moderate, but after that when land was immensely increased in value they rapidly rose from 5s. a day to 20s. for artisans, although this was the result of the available supply being insufficient to meet the demand, and the absorption of labour by the goldfields. This indicates, however, that wages are not dependent on the rise or fall in the value of land, or on the existence of private property, but on other circumstances. The disciples of George would probably wish to pull down the value of land in order to raise wages, which would be equivalent to burning down a house to roast a pig, which is Mr. George's favourite metaphor.

Rent,
wages and
interest.

There is another fallacy in the book which may be noticed here in connection with rent. The case is stated at p. 157, where we read:—"Three things unite to production—labour, capital and land," "Three parties divide the produce—the labourer, the capitalist, and the landowner."* If, with an increase of production, the labourer gets no more, and the capitalist gets no more, it is a necessary inference that the landlord gets the whole gain. Here Mr. George supposes his own case, and draws his own conclusions; but it is quite as easy to suppose that the three parties are all gainers. The produce comes to be divided between rent, wages and interest; and we are told that it is impossible to increase the rent without diminishing the wages and interest. In a joint undertaking A contributes a suitable site, B conducts the business, C receives interest for the capital employed, and thus all three may prosper better than otherwise. If labour stood alone we might have to live by exchange of cattle instead of coin for other goods. If capital stood alone, it would be like bags of gold to a drowning man; if land stood alone, it would not be worth the smallest coin of the realm. Its value is its eligibility for a special purpose, and its increment in value is the result of its eligibility. There is, therefore, no logical force in the assertion that as the value of land increases, the share of labour and capital must be diminished. In ordinary transactions capital, land, and labour are inextricably bound up in each other.

There is one great fact, however, which all must acknowledge, viz., that there is a grievous want felt in society for some healing influence to bring peace to a weary world, in which some are very sick and many are very poor, and there is much discomfort and unhappiness, which is not likely to be removed by any new theory of taxation. The disease of human nature is too deeply seated to be reached by any new version of political

* Mr. Mallock makes it very clear that Mr. George speaks of labourers fallaciously, for socialists have now admitted (see Mr. Mallock's appendix) that two-thirds of England's wealth is derived from ability, so that only one-third would be available for redistribution.

economy. It goes, perforce, back to its original source, when man preferred to believe the tempter rather than the God of Truth. We feel, without being told, that the trouble springs from moral rather than political causes, and Mr. George himself advocates his Single Tax on the ground of the moral effect it will produce; but we are in need of a healing measure. Is the Single Tax likely to bring men together peacefully when a war is proclaimed against all who have ever possessed an acre of land in their own right? Is the antagonism of classes, carried out in some cases with dynamite and cannon, likely to be mollified by telling excited men that they have been robbed of their rightful possession, and are "no better than slaves?" The world has a long history to look back upon, and the land has been always there from the time of creation, but now for the first time the true remedy for fallen man—the redemption of land—has been discovered. The poor old Bible has been ignored as an account of how God made the earth "very good" and man to live on it, and how sin came into the world and has remained ever since, spoiling the good work, until the "flood came and destroyed them all;" and we read of Sodom and Gomorrah, with the Dead Sea for its epitaph, until in the fulness of time, and in the fulness of the wickedness of the world, Christ came as the Prince of Peace, to take away the curse of sin and consequent misery. "And they crucified Him," and we have been crucifying Him ever since—seeking to claim the inheritance of this world for ourselves.

The real source of trouble.

The existence of much poverty and wretchedness is therefore fully admitted, but it is beyond the reach of political economy, and we might as well attempt to put out a fire by spitting on it as to stem the evil which springs up from the hearts of men by a new method of taxation. "From whence come wars and fighting among you; come they not hence even of your lusts that war in your members?" There is the lust of drunkenness, with the enormous drinkbills of civilised nations, and of our own colonies—above £3 per head for every man, woman, and child in the population—a far more potent cause of poverty than the existence of private property, which is so often the reward of honest industry and sobriety. There is the prevalence of impurity demoralising the soul, and sapping the foundations of that family system which is meant to be the foundation of a healthy state and social happiness. There is infidelity destroying the obligation of men to both divine and human laws, and suggesting anarchy and the gospel of despair. There is false religion, counterfeiting the true, and bringing men's and women's minds under the bondage of superstition. Witness the pilgrimages of modern times! Christianity has had a poor chance of showing what it could do to ameliorate our fallen estate, and yet, when the stream flows from the fountain head, and from the words of Christ and his Apostles as recorded in the Bible, it is the only

Talleyrand.

hope left of escape from such judgments as the world has already known and will again experience. Under the circumstances the wonder would be if society were not diseased, and we must look for some heroic remedy. There is a story told of Talleyrand, who was asked by one of the philosophers of the French Revolution—"What is the best plan for starting a new religion?" and his answer was, "Monsieur, I advise you to go and get crucified and rise again on the third day." This has been done for us, and there has been a marvellous failure, and yet a marvellous success. Failure on account of the contradiction of sinners; success by the all-pervading influence of Christian thought, gradually converting slavery into freedom, restoring woman to her true position as the chosen helpmate of man, and quenching the flood of immorality which still threatens to overwhelm society. On the one hand we have the supreme sacrifice of the Son of God; on the other, the demon of selfishness—the special sin of the rich and those who aim at riches.

In the last pages of his book Mr. George himself speaks hopelessly of the regeneration of the world, and points to the necessity of another life to realise his dreams of happiness. "As we have seen," he says, "there is nothing whatever to show any essential race improvement." Again he says—"The Scriptures of the men who have been and gone—the Bibles, Zendavestas, the Vedas, the Korans, the esoteric doctrines of old philosophies, the inner meaning of grotesque religions . . . have a heart and a core in which they agree, a something which seems like the variously distorted apprehensions of a primary truth." The passage is remarkable, as showing the bewilderment of Mr. George's mind on religious subjects, confounding the clearness of Bible truth with heathen and Mahomedan delusions.

Settlements
in Canaan.

If there are any great problems in social life to be solved, one would have expected to find the solution in the history of the world, which God Himself has caused to be written by the hands of inspired men. In the settlement of the people of Israel in the land of Canaan, which was done under divine superintendence by Moses and Joshua, we have a model, as it were, of what God would have us do in like circumstances. The people had to conquer the land, with the help of God, before they could possess it, but each family was put in possession of a suitable lot, to be held as private property, without power to alienate it beyond the jubilee year, so that the property was to some extent entailed on each particular family. No doubt every head of a family got a piece of land, but Mr. George, at page 232, in speaking of remedies, rejects the general distribution of land among a population as an ineffectual remedy for the evils he seeks to cure. At the same time, a great object in the agricultural settlement of the Israelites was to isolate them from other nations with whom intercourse was dangerous. If, however, the Bible was right in thus stereotyping private property in Canaan, Mr.

George cannot be right in treating private property as a robbery, and we must choose between the political economy of God and of an individual man. The eloquence lavished on his favourite theory by Mr. George has probably stirred up in many a young man a noble enthusiasm as to the injustice arising from private property in land, but the highest and oldest precedents are all in favour of it. We see Abraham solemnly purchasing a burial-ground from Ephron, the Hittite, for 400 shekels of silver; and we see David again purchasing the very site of the Temple of Solomon from Araunah, the Jebusite, for 50 shekels of gold. Surely this was a good holding title. At a later period, Ahab, the head of the State, set his heart on Naboth's vineyard, to round off the royal gardens, and this invasion of the sacredness of private property, prescribed by God himself, was washed out with the monarch's blood.

The authority of Scripture history, and the prescription of nearly 4000 years from the time of Abraham, is in favour of the justice and expediency of the exclusive possession of land in private property.

The root of the question, however, still remains in the ground. What is the original title of the possession of land by one man rather than another? Mr. George stakes the issue of his cause on these words, at page 235:—"If private property in land be just, then is the remedy I propose a false one; if, on the contrary, private property in land be unjust, then is this remedy the true one." Even this is not a logical sequence, for some other remedy might be, and is, the true one.

The case of the Single Tax, however, fails unless it can be proved that private property is in itself unjust. The question is asked, Book vii.—What constitutes the rightful basis of property? Whence comes the *meum* and *tuum* of society? Mr. George's first proposition is—"As a man belongs to himself, so his labour, when put in concrete form, belongs to him; and, for this reason, that which a man makes or produces is his own as against all the world;" and then an instance is given. The pen of the writer is his own, transferred from the stationer, the importer, the manufacturer, the miner "by successive process of purchase." So purchase for a fair price is one source of title admitted to be valid in the case of pens and other goods, for "a fair exchange is no robbery." Then another proposition is added (p. 237):—"In the laws of Nature there is no recognition of any right save that of labour, and in them is written the equal right of all men to the use and enjoyment of Nature." We read again at p. 239:—"The equal right of all men to the use of land is as clear as their equal right to breathe the air; it is a right proclaimed by the fact of their existence." This amounts to saying I am, and therefore am entitled to a share in certain lands belonging to the people. It might be asked what people, for there is a right of property in

Origin of
title to land

nations acquired by some previous effort, and nations fight for their territory. Then comes another dictum :—" If a man be rightfully entitled to the produce of his labour, then no one can be rightfully entitled to the ownership of anything which is not the produce of his labour, or the labour of someone else whose right has passed to him." Neither is this quite certain, for some of our surest possessions are pure gifts. Then comes the distinction between land and labour on which the conclusion depends. That they are essentially different is pointed out in these words:—" A house, and the lot on which it stands, are alike property, as being the subject of ownership, and are alike classed by the lawyers as real estate. Yet in nature and relations they differ widely. The one is produced by human labour, and belongs to the class in political economy styled wealth; the other is a part of Nature, and belongs to the class in political economy called land. The essential character of the one class of things is that they embody labour, and exist irrespectively of human exertion. The essential character of the other class is that they do not embody labour, and exist irrespectively of human exertion and irrespectively of man."

God provided land;
man labour.

The gist of the argument seems to be that God made the earth, but man made everything else. Now, we have always understood that God made man also, endowing him with great capabilities, as well as the land with all its varied powers; and placing man upon the earth with the command to "increase and multiply, and replenish the earth." So Malthus is condemned, and we are told to turn every talent and every good gift in Nature to the best account. The principle laid down by Mr. George is that property in land does not embody labour, and exists irrespectively of human exertion, and irrespectively of man, and, therefore, is not a fit subject for appropriation.

Colonisation

The command is "to replenish the earth," and this involved labour and exertion. As men multiplied, they journeyed from place to place seeking an eligible settlement. They gathered the fruits of the earth as they went along, or, forsaking a nomad life, they built cities and cultivated chosen spots. Nations with settled boundaries were formed, lands were acquired by occupation or conquest, and those who took part in the occupation or conquest had a share in the lands. Whenever men act together in concert there must follow some kind of government—and those who occupied land were bound to contribute to the wants of the commonwealth in peace or war—in feudal times by military service, but afterwards, as in England, lands came to be held by inheritance or purchase, and the title consisted either in some original service or the payment of a sum of money in exchange for the original service. Modern societies, recognising private rights, provide for the general wants of the community by levying contributions through their legislatures for common purposes. We in Australia have added

an empire to the British dominions, not by staying at home but by overcoming distance and difficulties. We have helped "to replenish the earth," and that is our title to occupation. We did not come to this colony, however, as separate individuals, but were brought under English law and government, and the State, claiming possession in virtue of our *bona fide* occupation, proceeded to require an equivalent for the lands occupied either by a pastoral rent or by purchase money. The rent or price came to be expended for the benefit of the whole community.

Price paid
satisfies
claim of
State.

There is a characteristic story told of the days in 1835 when Batman and his friends claimed the title to the lands and were gainsaid by Fawkner's friends, who had come some months later on the scene. There was a representative on either side, and they met on Flagstaff Hill, from which at that time there was a good look-out across to Station Peak. "How far does your land extend?" said Fawkner's man. "As far as you can see," replied Batman's friend. Then came the inquiry—"What about the land you cannot see?" The answer came (probably from Gellibrand, the lawyer)—"Oh, that belongs to my son John," a beautifully simple title and a grand subject for Mr. Hirsch's Single Tax. Let anyone study the history of this and other colonies, and then say whether Batman and other settlers have not made personal exertions in connection with settlement on land, not without danger to life and limb, with risk of loss as well as gain in a new country. The monument of Burke and Wills speaks for itself. We are reminded also of the claim to about 600,000 acres, embracing Geelong and Melbourne, by means of contract with native chiefs, but we know how that was disallowed, and a sufficient price was demanded for every acre sold. The time had passed for free grants of land, and a minimum price not less than £1 per acre was established as an equivalent for the protection of life and property and the general improvement and management of the colony. It is in this way that the general interest of all was conserved, while everyone applied himself to the business which suited him best, so as to turn his opportunities to the best advantage, and the division of labour has added immensely to the general wealth.

Efforts
required.

There has been ample opportunity of advancement. I remember a very honest Irishman, who used to saddle my horse for me, and he saved all his money and invested it in corner allotments, and after fifty years of persevering industry he died worth, I am told, a million of money. I have employed men at £40 a year, or less, who became large sheep-farmers and landed proprietors; and all this was done by making good use of opportunities. Such examples promoted the success of the colony by giving an impulse to settlement and a stimulus to industry. It is in that way that God encouraged us to "replenish the earth," and it is in His name that the title to private property arises, for He made the earth for man, but especially for those who make good

Reward of
enterprise.

use of it. The world is still wide enough, and those who go to the ends of the earth to improve their position will find a corner for themselves. Such is the true law of social progress, not any wild idea of the rights of man or of community of property, or of wives, or anything else. I have proved, therefore, that the acquisition of land in private property is the result of human exertions, which keeps the world in motion, and conquers new fields of useful occupation; and, therefore, it is not *unjust*. There is an infinite variety in the fortunes of men, which may be in accordance with higher purposes. Some earn their day's wage with but little trouble; others toil all day, but the Master's words were—"Is thine eye evil because I am good?" "Shall God not do with His own what He will?"

The life to come will explain many mysteries. In our own experience we see great disparities in gold-mining. One man earns £50,000, another gets a shicer; but we do not dream of confiscating mining property, provided that every man has a fair chance given him. If also the possession of land, fairly bought and paid for in an open market, is to be held as robbery, the possession of more than a fair share of any of this world's goods may be equally considered robbery; and then we shall realise "the good old rule, the simple plan, that he shall take who has the power, and he shall keep who can."

In the case of land, private property is said to be unjust because its value is not derived from labour. It has been clearly proved that it is derived from labour, as shown in the exploration of our own colonies, in the occupation of Central Africa, and in the enterprise which has made British settlement coterminous with the globe.

The plea that God made the land, and therefore it must be equally shared among all men, has no logical meaning. If applied to gold found beneath the surface, it was not made by man, and yet it is appropriated by personal exertion, and the State, in order to encourage effort, does not even claim a royalty or levy special taxation upon it. Shares become a marketable commodity at a price, and the prospector is secured in an exclusive title.

Improvements
swallowed
with land.

Mr. George, at p. 242, after denying that there can exist any title to any part of the material universe, readily admits that a good title can be shown to the improvements; but that this can give no right to the land itself. Then how are we to distinguish between the value of the land and the improvements, which Mr. George says may be "undistinguishable?" His answer is:—"Very well. Then the title to the improvements becomes blended with the title to the land; the *individual right is lost in the common right*. It is the greater that swallows up the less; not the less that swallows up the greater. Nature does not proceed from man, but man from Nature, and it is into the bosom of Nature that he and all his works must return again." The bosom of

Nature will, methinks, have much to answer for, if under the dominion of the Single Tax dispensation, the State, if such a thing exists in those days, will have it in its power to swallow up improvements, as the other day the greater boa constrictor swallowed up the less. We sometimes hear of the holder of an original title suddenly making his appearance and claiming possession of valuable buildings. This is an accident of rare occurrence and is a hard case, but who will be safe when the State inquisitors are authorised to swallow up the greater in the less, because they fail to distinguish the value of improvements from the value of the land?

Mr. George, on the same page, 243, graciously proposes to concede to priority of possession the undisturbed use of land. By *confiscating rent for the benefit of the community*, we reconcile the fixity of tenure, which is necessary for improvement, with a full and complete recognition of the equal rights of all to the use of land, as if A had paid £5 for a cow, and B milked it for him. We are told here that fixity of tenure is necessary to promote improvements, which, for once, is true; but that fixity of tenure is to be obtained by confiscating the rent, leaving the present occupant as a caretaker, with some small allowance for his trouble. Suppose this pleasant doctrine were applied to a dairy farm—the rent of the land would be confiscated, and even the milk of the cows might be attached, for God made the cows, and gave them a flow of milk, which is a natural product, which ought to return into the “bosom of Nature,” which is the new name for the rapacity of man.

Tenants as
caretakers.

Mr. George is fond of illustrating his ideas. He takes the case of a passenger in a railway car, who may spread his baggage over as many seats as he pleases until other passengers come in; and so may a settler take and use as much land as he chooses, until it is needed by others. Not a very happy instance, for the railway passenger rests his title to one seat, on the ground that he has paid for it. Under some circumstances he might take a whole coach to himself. But Mr. George's theory would deny that anyone has a right to acquire exclusive possession of railway seats, which are public property, by merely paying for them.

Then follows a chapter on the enslavement of the working classes under the inexorable law of supply and demand, which, however, is ignored; and the real cause of all the mischief is said to be “the monopolisation by some of what Nature has designed for all.” It is added—“The truth is, that there is, and can be, no just title to an exclusive possession of the soil, and that property in land is a bold, bare, enormous wrong, like that of chattel-slavery.” Does not such exaggerated language condemn itself?

“Robbery
and slavery.”

The next subject dealt with is compensation. Is it due to those whose rents are to be confiscated? There may be many

who think that if the work of the State were to be done over again it would be better not to part with the fee simple of lands, but they would feel bound to buy back the rights which had been sold or parted with, just as vested interests are sometimes purchased in the interests of the people. John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, and others have held this opinion; Henry George cuts the Gordian knot, and repudiates all idea of compensation. "Private property," he says, "is not merely a robbery in the past; it is a robbery in the present—a robbery that deprives of their birthright the infants that are coming into the world. Why should we hesitate to make short work of such a system?" The State in the discharge of its proper functions is bound to reclaim the use of lands for railways, &c., but not, in any civilised State, without compensation, which is a practical acknowledgment of an original title. When the new Utopia comes in, the State will have fewer scruples, and not only land, but also other goods, will be requisitioned for the public service. The Duke of Wellington always paid his way in a foreign country; Napoleon helped himself.

The history of the acquisition of land is then brought forward. We are told how early tribes and nations held lands in common with village allotments. All this is historically true; but what good can be done in the end of the nineteenth century by going back to those early days when barbaric tribes were being formed into nations? Our German ancestors were not particular about the *meum* and *tuum* when they chased the Britons to the mountains, and when the Goths overran the Roman Empire they threw their swords into the scales of justice. As law and order have been established, the rights to property of every kind have been made more and more secure. An Englishman's house is his castle, so long as he holds the land along with the house; but his independence will not be of much value when the public landlord takes possession.

Single tax
promotes
improvements.

We are next told, at p. 286, that private property is as "wasteful and uncertain a mode of securing the proper use of land as the burning down of houses is, according to Charles Lamb, of roasting pigs." The great object of the Single Tax is to promote improvements and encourage labour, so as to raise wages, and it is contended that the resumption of the rents of land will cause more buildings to be erected, and lead to superior cultivation of land. We deny the fact, both from human nature and experience. There is no stronger motive to improvement than the feeling of certainty of possession. The love of a home is a divine instinct, and home is scarcely home if you are liable to be turned out at the will of another. No one cares to be evicted, and no one will throw his heart into the work if he is not sure of reaping the fruits of his labour. Take the case of a garden—to be trenched and planted and enjoyed by one's children afterwards—will a tenant, even on a long lease, do what

a proprietor would do? A long lease is better than a short one, but that only shows that a perfect title is better than an imperfect one. Mr. George wants us to believe that if the value of improvements is secured to an outgoing tenant he ought to be fully satisfied; but he would be told to move on, and so old associations and local attachments would be scattered to the winds. Is love of country and love of home likely to be promoted on such a plan? In another place he speaks of the possession of land being determined by the "highest bidding." So, whenever a readjustment of the public lands took place, there would be a shifting of old ties and settled occupations. There are many cases in which a farmer of small means might do better, especially in old countries, by renting a farm rather than purchasing the land, for in that case his capital of, say, £1000, applied to working purposes, might realise 12 per cent., whereas the landlord on his investment might not receive more than 3 or 4 per cent.; but who would not rather be a yeoman farmer, holding his own land from generation to generation?

In this colony, from 1865 onwards, a great body of selectors ^{Selectors.} have been settled on the land, and to every one of them the assurance was given that on compliance with favourable conditions, they would have a freehold title. Who will venture now to take it from them?

Under present conditions land is now held under the law; if ^{Value of law.} the Single Tax system were instituted, land would be held directly from the State. The State, after this revolution had been effected, would be under the dominion of those who might be in power, every man's holding would be at the disposal of a legislature where party feeling would probably run high, and the battle would be fought on the incidence of taxation between class and class unto the bitter end. The existence of private property *under the law of the land* has hitherto saved us in Victoria from the uncertainty of political vicissitudes, but there have been occasions when feeling ran high in the time of deadlocks and the Darling grant, when the decisions of the Supreme Court saved the colony from fraudulent transactions. Let our lands be nationalised, and a national conscience will be established, which will end in no conscience, and will be capable of any amount of cruelty. We are all looking out for federation and the formation of a great dominion. Let those who take part in framing a constitution see to it that some supreme tribunal shall be established as in the United States, to which all political institutions shall be subordinated. On all these grounds I have a right to conclude that private property in land is neither unjust nor inexpedient.

One of the main points in Mr. George's argument is, that the increased value of land in advanced communities is entirely owing to the action and labour of the community itself. When we look upon the history of nations we see how they have sprung from an individual ancestor, as Abraham, extending into families and

Men make
states, not
states men.

tribes, and after a time becoming fully organised, as in the time of David and Solomon. In modern times we have more or less constitutional governments, but in every case the community is only an abstraction, and has no existence except in the form of a number of individual human beings, endowed with intelligence and active powers. Each one has a part to play in life, and their success as members of an organised body is the success of the community. St. Paul, speaking of the Church, says:—"But now are they many members, but one body; and the eye cannot say unto the hand I have no need of thee, nor again the head to the feet I have no need of you." Thus harmonious action is established, and it is put into the hearts of men to act together in corporate bodies, bound together in subordination to the laws of God, from which the laws of men are reflected. If anything occurs to dissolve this union, the individual members have it in their power to reconstitute themselves as an organised people. Human power is vastly increased by concerted action; two can do what one cannot do, a band of soldiers can clear the way when a crowd would fall to pieces. The Scots, who won the Isle, in Aytoun's ballad, crossed the Rhine shoulder to shoulder, with hand linked in hand; but success depended on the grip of every one of them. And so, when a colony like ours is successful, and every holding becomes greatly increased in value, it was the early settlers who one by one added to the strength of the commonwealth, as each coral insect helps to build up the ocean walls that grow into a fertile island. The labour which has achieved success and increased values was the labour of individuals, not of an abstract entity, which never used pick or spade; and that labour was in the first place attended with risk of life, when half-a-dozen white men had to face three hundred armed natives.

The squatters had to fight the battle, and they had set Victoria on its legs when separation took place in 1851. In one sense they illustrated Mr. George's ideas, for they had been in the hands of the State without lease or any title except by the discretion of the Crown, not even having the right to vote until 1851, on the ground of their dependency. At the time of separation it was found that without the alienation of a single acre, they had paid into the public revenue the sum of £240,406, while the lands sold previous to separation had realised £638,613. It is an old story how leases had been promised to them by the British Government, and were about to be issued when the gold came in a flood, and from mismanagement on both sides the quarrel went on until one half of the old squatters were kicked out of their holdings, and the other half were kicked into possession of valuable lands, mostly at £1 an acre, under the Duffy Act, which was intended to have swept them all away, but failed in the execution. An equitable compromise which would have opened all lands from

the Murray to the sea, would have saved many from loss, and would have added millions to the resources of the colony in the purchase of land. The name of squatter has now no meaning, although the old prejudice still lingers.

The result has been that nearly all lands in Victoria are now held by a freehold title, complete or incomplete, and the price contracted for by the State has been, or is being, paid, and if this contract is not fulfilled, what is to become of the obligation of legal contracts affecting not only lands, but also all other transactions? Contracts.

There is, however, a speciality about land, which may be fairly pleaded. It cannot run away or be dissolved or burned down like a house, and, no doubt, as Melbourne sprang up from a tiny settlement, the land on which it was built has increased enormously in value. We hear of the £40 allotments at a first sale in 1836, on which banks and splendid buildings are now erected. It was a first sale, and those who start a city or a colony, or any other good investment, may, all the world over, reap immense advantages or may suffer total loss, for every early settlement is not successful. In Melbourne, however, in 1840 there was a boom in land, as prospects improved, and town lots were sold at comparatively high prices—above £900 per acre, and country lands at £2 per acre, the total amount realised for them in that year being £219,127.

Most of these lands lay idle for many a year, until the gold came with a new population. I remember well the rise in values which then took place—in some cases a hundredfold; but I never heard a whisper of discontent at the good fortune of fellow-colonists, nor was the idea imagined of claiming the increment for the State. The land does not labour, but it provides the standing ground for labour. When appropriated by an individual for a price, which represents labour, the land would of itself yield no return if there were not a prospect of increased value to induce people to invest their working capital. When sold by the State, the money is applied to the general purposes of the State, which is bound to expend it in improving the property. Hence municipal subsidies, which have helped to make our streets, roads, and bridges. Moreover, since the commencement of municipal government in 1842 annual contributions have been made by landholders as well as householders, to be added to the £26,000,000 paid in purchase-money. We have all been in one boat, helping ourselves, and at the same time helping one another; for it seems that we have been so constituted by the God who made us that what is good for one is good for all, so that all our interests are interwoven, as members of one family not grudging the success of one another. Contributions of land to public purposes.

Mr. George proposes to lay all taxes upon land, so as to relieve the whole population from all other taxes, and he

contemplates having a surplus (imaginary) available as a bonus for further distribution, which is a powerful inducement to all who will not pay to adopt his plans.

It reminds us of Mark Antony's famous oration when the will is produced. "To every Roman citizen he gives, to every several man, seventy-five drachmas (50s.) Moreover, he hath left you all his walks, his private arbours, and new-planted orchards on this side of Tiber." The citizens prepare to pull down all before them. Antony concludes (aside): "Now let it work; mischief, thou art afoot."

Utopia.

The promises made to the people by Mr. George go far beyond this, amounting to freedom from taxes for all their lives, with the free enjoyment of all manner of public conveniences. See page 288. "What I therefore propose as the simple but sovereign remedy, which will raise wages, increase the earnings of capital, extirpate pauperism, abolish poverty, give remunerative employment to whoever wishes it, afford free scope to human powers, lessen crimes, elevate morals, taste, and intelligence, purify government, and carry civilisation to yet nobler heights, is—to *appropriate rent by taxation*, and to abolish all taxation except on land values." So all the world will be regenerated by the Single Tax, as Medea regenerated her old father by boiling him down and making him up again.

With regard to the future increment of land values, I see no virtue in altering the order of Nature for many thousand years, during which the sense of injustice has slept. If there had been any principle of right and wrong involved it would have been indicated in the Book, which contains the true economy of the world, but, on the contrary, the possession, inheritance, and buying and selling of land is fully recognised in Scripture. The existing land tax in Victoria was probably vindictive in its object to reach the squatters. If a direct land tax was required, it should have been imposed on town and country lands alike, and might have brought in a large sum for many years past. Thus lands held for speculative purposes, in becoming valuable, would have contributed fairly to the public revenues, and may continue to do so under equitable legislation.

Future
increments

J. S. Mill and Herbert Spencer are quoted as advocates for claiming all future increments in land value for the benefit of the State, but, admitting their intellectual ability, it may well be doubted whether either of them possessed that delicate sense of right and wrong, which can only emanate from Christian philosophy.

The cause of Free Trade and the Single Tax have been bound up in each other by Mr. George and his talented admirer, Mr. Hirsch, in this colony, but is not this unnatural? The theory of Free Trade dates from Adam Smith, and its practical application from the potato famine and Sir Robert Peel's famous experiment. After less than fifty years' experience it has made

England the foremost people in the world, with its revenues ^{Free Trade.} doubled, and its commerce multiplied fourfold. Artisans and labourers enjoy increased wages and get better value for their money than formerly; while food comes in from every corner of the globe in return for her manufactures. The so-called working-classes have been elevated in every respect. The whole population is being educated, not without great regard for religious training, with a proportion equal to one in six at school instead of one in twelve, and this has prepared for the intelligent exercise of the franchise, which is now almost universal. Both parties in the State outvie one another in efforts to improve the homes and add to the comforts of the manual labourers. Every visitor to England must have remarked the increased manliness and good taste of the working population during the last half century.

Throughout his book, Mr. George represents the working-man as being ground down by the oppression of the rich. He is devoured by an enthusiasm which is genuine in him, but very deceitful for others, for he speaks with the perfect assurance of personal conviction. The one prevailing idea overrules all else, and he rejoices in his own ingenuity in devising the Single Tax as an invention for recovering the possession of lands, which would be practically impossible in any other way. Given the power of taxation, it may be applied, as in Turkey, to any extent to crush a people or a class. The primary object of the Single Tax is not to adjust taxation to the best advantage, but to recover the value ^{Room for all.} of the land from those who have stolen it, and the boon of Free-trade is thrown in as a prevailing motive. The genuine Free-trader takes a far wider view. He looks round on the world and sees that it is full of the goodness of the Lord, with varied products, and all manner of climates, replete with capabilities which are as yet only partially developed. Fifteen hundred millions of people are on the surface of the earth, and all are provided for, chiefly by means of exchange and barter, for there is scarcely a corner on earth which is not dependent upon other corners. England is cooped up in her sea-girt isles, but the wealth of the world is laid at her feet. Each part can do something better than others, and so all parts of the world can be employed to the best advantage for the benefit of all. If this be true, exchange cannot be too free, and our business is to do everything that we can do best, according to our natural advantages. Nature is God working for us; and then if we want our goods to be untaxed in foreign markets, it is our interest to do as we would be done by, and leave untaxed the goods that other parts of the world can provide better than ourselves. There is thus a gain on both sides. It is the policy of unselfishness which pays best in the long run. The persistence of Protection depends on the power of selfishness—the sin of the world—which first of all suggests artificial assistance for the benefit of individuals,

and then creates vested interests, which lead us deeper and deeper into the morass into which we have entered. Here lies the inequality which affects our social system, for the whole community is defrauded when they are taxed for the benefit of particular persons or classes. It might be that certain persons might be enriched by increased value of land, and yet no one else might be injured. My neighbour might realise a million sterling, and I might be none the poorer, but Protection openly takes from the whole to give to a part, and makes many poorer to make a few richer. As a means of regenerating the world, the adoption of Free-trade and the law of mutual kindness would be a far more effectual motive power than the new gospel of reclamation of land values, which would place one-half of the population under the heels of the other half. Such was the dream of Cobden and his associates, who thought that freedom of commerce would bring peace to the world; but the armaments of nations are more oppressive than ever, and wars have been more desolating and on a larger scale.

Decay of
States.

The history of the world repeats itself. Ancient monarchies and empires have literally crumbled into dust. Modern States and civilisations, according to Mr. George, are being corrupted by their own progress. He draws, at p. 378, an awful picture of his own country in the United States, which means democracy gone rotten, like an over-ripe pear, and his only cure is the "Single Tax." We can do no good by shutting our eyes to the true state of the case, from the time of Cain and Abel down to the lynching of black men in the southern states. Every country that is practically Godless must needs perish, as has always been the case up to the present time. Not perhaps in a day or in an hour, as in the days of Belshazzar; but there is decay at the heart. Mr. George cannot refrain from saying—"Human progress is not the improvement of human nature," and, without laying aside his theory, he is led to think of another life as the solution of the problem. He is in love with liberty as the fountain head of every blessing, but liberty, like steam or gas, is capable of destruction, unless bound down by pressure, on which its useful force depends. It is Virtue and Truth which make us free indeed. Mr. George demands equality as the equivalent of liberty, and he finds it fully carried out in the American Republic, at least in theory, for there also are to be found the most marked contrasts of millionaires and outcasts. England, he says, has yet "to win her triumphs in extending the suffrage, and *sweeping away the vestiges of monarchy, aristocracy, and prelacy.*" Fortunately for us there is a spirit of *loyalty* which God has implanted in the hearts of men—not slavish dependence, but regard for law and reverence for the highest obligations both towards God and our fellowmen; and this loyalty, which is the inspiration of the divine in our nature

True
loyalty.

forms the bond which keeps society from disintegration. It is the unwritten law of God upon the heart, and foreshadows the only hope we can have of redemption from the decay of nations, when "the stone cut out of the side of a mountain without hand" shall break in pieces and consume all other kingdoms; but that conquest will be over the hearts of men.

The misfortune of Mr. George's book is that it is written in a spirit of intense antagonism, and its real force depends on what is the true state of the case. Our experience in Victoria and the neighbouring colonies is that the normal condition of labour is one of superior excellence compared with the condition of labour in other countries. There are not many places where coal miners could strike for an advance on 10s. a day; and if 5s. a day is now an ordinary wage, instead of 6s., living is cheaper by 25 per cent. We have the unemployed around us, but we have passed through a crisis, and the results give us an insight into the causes of that poverty which is a wide-world trouble, and forms the basis of Mr. George's argument. In the first place, we had strikes which wasted means and stirred up angry passions and lawlessness. Employers as well as employed may have been in the wrong, but the source of the mischief was sin and selfishness. At the same time came the boom in land, with wild speculation, not on the part of holders of land, but on the part of buyers, and this worshipping of mammon led to widespread ruin, which has so reduced the spending power of the people and the progress of improvements that the wonder is that so many still continue to find employment. Go to any part of the world, and you will find some form of human misery, and in every case you will find that some one has sinned against himself or against his neighbours. Hence it is that what the world calls success is always attended with failure, and the greater the success the greater the failure. This is the key to the evil of the world, and the pity is to see remarkable talent turned into an engine of increased discontent and mischief. In his otherwise admirable book on Free-trade, Mr. George brings all to bear on the hopelessness of rescuing the working-man from slavery so long as there is private property in land. His words are:—"Let other conditions be what they may, the man who, if he lives and works at all must live and work on land belonging to another, is necessarily a slave or a pauper." This proves too much, and the statement is belied by the good condition of ninety-nine out of a hundred of our population.

Sin and
selfishness.

Mr. George has some eloquent chapters on mental power as a factor in social progress. This is so to an increasing extent, as Mr. Mallock clearly shows, but moral power, with reference to the evils which all acknowledge, is surely a more appropriate and effective remedy to obviate injustice, selfishness, and cruelty in

every form. Our family affections have a healing charm which saves us from much misery. A feeling of brotherhood among nations would remove the burden of armed watchfulness. The warfare of classes would be stilled if Paul's few words as to masters and servants were acted on. The time has come when we must make our choice between humanity as it is and Christianity as it ought to be. The best political economy which was ever preached on earth was preached on the first Christmas Day, when the angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill towards men!"

COLIN CAMPBELL.

