

## CHAPTER II.

### LOOKING AROUND.

THE object of the present treatise being to trace out some of the causes which prejudicially affect our condition as citizens of the freest and most highly favoured among nations, and to offer for consideration a means of removing them, it is needful first to examine our present social state, in order that the evil effects of bad laws may be clearly set in view, for the purpose of fixing the impression upon the minds of all who see them, of the fact that they are preventible evils, since they are the effects of causes over which we exercise the fullest control, and for which we are, therefore, responsible.

Looking around us, then, upon the community as a whole, we recognise the fact that the common good is not the main object of any individual, but that we are all striving for our own private advantage, not merely without regard for the general welfare, but even with a jealous eye for the prosperity of our neighbours as if it must be a necessary conclusion that their gain is our loss.

Not of individuals only is this true. It is a universal characteristic of our national as well as individual life, visible in our minutest social divisions, and extending between the narrowest and the widest limits. Thus

we see man envious of the prosperity of man, city of city, district of district, and colony of colony, all steadily ignoring the broad, self-evident truth that the prosperity of all includes that of each individual, and conversely the loss of an individual is equally the loss of the entire community to which he belongs. We nevertheless put our individual advantage in the first place, and oppose at least a passive resistance to the advantage of others. Consequently we retard progress of the whole community in seeking what we selfishly consider our private interests, failing to perceive that the prosperity of each must increase or decline with that of all, whether they be individuals or states, and that prosperity which includes the whole must possess the greatest stability. But, with a selfishness that can only be regarded as unnatural in face of a truth so palpable, we begrudge success to any state but our own, to any town but our own, to any individual but ourselves.

This unnatural selfishness is produced and fostered by bad laws, which teach us to ignore the unrighteousness of seeking an advantage for ourselves at the expense and to the injury of others.

It is therefore a preventible evil for which we are responsible.

The next fact that strikes us is the tendency of the people to congregate in towns, leaving vast areas of rich and fertile lands unoccupied or unused. From Tregarthen's "New South Wales, 1860 to 1890," page

7, we learn : "Sydney now contains one-third of the total number of inhabitants of New South Wales;" (381,000 out of 1,122,000). Why should they thus crowd together in squalor and discomfort, and in unhealthy localities? We can only discover the reason by examining the surrounding conditions. These crowds who form town populations are composed mainly of manufacturers, professional men, middlemen, clerks and labourers. Rural populations of those engaged in pastoral, agricultural and mining pursuits.

Of these, professional men, middlemen, clerks and labourers are consumers only, not producers of wealth.

Manufacturers, graziers, farmers and miners are the only producers of wealth. That is to say, the nation is indebted to them for all the wealth it owns, whether in money or in goods.

Hence it must follow that the congestion of population in towns and cities involves :—

1. The abandonment of rural occupations in favour of those proper to city life.
2. The diminution of the production of wealth.
3. Increased consumption of wealth.
4. The necessary impoverishment of a greater and greater number of persons in proportion to the encouragement offered to that congestion.

When, therefore, we observe a rapid increase in our urban population, and no corresponding increase in that of the country districts, we may be perfectly certain that the number of poor people, and the

intensity of their poverty, are increasing in the same disproportion.\*

This unnatural tendency, away from the healthy, happy, and productive country life to the over-crowded unhealthy, miserable and devouring city, is the result of bad laws which impose a monstrous burden of taxation upon the country districts.

We made those bad laws and are therefore responsible for all their evil consequences.

Looking around at the people and their occupations, we observe a reluctance to embark in new enterprises, a distrust of even the most alluring prospects involving the investment of capital, and indications of a feeling of insecurity affecting even the most prosperous and firmly-established industries. At the same time we are struck with the avidity displayed by speculators, as well as by steady, cautious investors, to secure the possession of land. If this eager desire to possess land were accompanied by a corresponding anxiety to make the greatest use of it, there would be no occasion to regard it with mistrust. But when we see everywhere land lying idle that might be turned to advantage in some way or other, but which its owners will not use, we have in that fact irrefutable evidence that the

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\* Dean Langley at a recent meeting in Sydney gave expression to his opinion that already in Australia we have to deal with a "large and increasing pauper population—men and women living upon the charity of our people (often misplaced), or upon the funds subscribed for the relief of the sick, the infirm, or the aged."—*Australian Economist*, 21st July, 1890.

owners have in the mere possession a more absolute assurance of profit, with less risk of loss than any industrial occupation can offer them.

Underlying all this reluctance to engage in reproductive enterprises, and this eagerness to speculate in land, there must be some condition which produces actual insecurity in such occupations, and gives to the speculator's land an artificial value independent of its true productive worth.

This condition is to be found in the crushing taxes our bad laws impose on all kinds of industrial occupation that would give employment to a multitudinous rural population, that would add to the wealth and promote the prosperity of the whole community, and at the same time afford reproductive investments for capital in ways that would promote, instead of impeding, the country's progress, whilst giving the capitalist a return for his money. These taxes, which work all this injury to the country, leave the investor no profit at all commensurate with the risk and labour incurred in industrial occupations, and, in the absence of any tax upon land, together with the almost absolute certainty of a continued unearned increment in its value, offer every inducement for speculation in land, and drive capital away from industrial occupations. Thus they are discouraged, land is locked up from use through that discouragement, and capital is locked up in land for the sake of the unearned increment.

Under no circumstances could such a condition be conducive to our national welfare. On the contrary, it can only, and does injure us individually and collectively by impeding our progress and inflicting unnecessary and unmerited suffering. By it we are robbed and wronged and ground down, whether we regard it in its application to the whole British Empire, to Australia, to New South Wales, or to the single units composing their populations. The progress we have made in the face of this remorseless enemy cannot excuse the centuries of suffering it has caused, for that progress, achieved in spite of every discouragement, is, after all, but a slight indication of what might and could have been attained by a wise development of our magnificent natural resources.

When we realise the diabolical wickedness of this system, and the responsibility we incur by permitting its longer existence, we must also realise the necessity for its immediate destruction, for we made the bad laws by which it is enforced and upon us lies the duty of repealing them.

In another direction we find material for further strengthening our already formidable indictment against our laws, in the incessant acrimonious disputes between the two classes of employers and employed.

Enquiring into the origin of these quarrels, we find that there is very great difficulty in adjusting wages to work done. That matter is left to be arranged by

mutual agreement between the parties interested, and there is consequently a continual bickering between them, arising from the constant effort on the one side to reduce wages, on the other to raise them. Whenever matters reach a critical stage, a reduction is enforced by a "lock-out," or an increase by a "strike," both of which methods intensify the irritation and ill-feeling between wage-payers and wage-earners, and attain their objects only at a ruinous expense and through great sufferings. The true interest of both parties lies in securing the greatest possible production in return for the capital invested and the labour employed; and any cause which interferes to lessen the quantity or the value of the product, or to increase its cost, must involve loss to them and to the whole community.

The numerous labour-saving machines and other inventions and discoveries of modern times have materially lessened the cost of production, and should have left a wider margin to provide for increases of wages. To a certain extent labourers have gained in this way, and the average of comfort in their lives is now higher than ever it has been in times past. But this advance is much less, in comparison with the saving in cost of production, than might reasonably be expected. For one reason, there is always an outside fringe of workers, kept out of work by bad laws which discourage enterprise, who are ready to accept any wage that will give them bread. Driven

by hunger, they force themselves in at every opening, glad even of the poorest wages, in exchange for which they can give, as a matter of course, but poor work. In this way there is a constant tendency to lower wages and depreciate the quality while lessening the quantity of the product. Trades unions set themselves to prevent the employment of such men, whom they term "blacklegs," but if they succeed they do not improve the general average in the least, because they increase the misery of the "blacklegs." Any advantage gained by the unions is a loss, not to employers only, but to the entire people, and must in the end still further restrict and discourage enterprise, which is as much their life as that of the rest. When employers cannot yield to the unions, or when yielding means ruin, and the labourers still persist in enforcing their demands, only anarchy can result, and a certainty of worse conditions to follow it, for producers cannot be made to suffer without double suffering to all the rest of the community.

The mere existence of disputes between parties whose interests are so intimately allied condemns the system that produces them, that allows them to continue, to become more frequent, more bitter, more fraught with danger to the State\* yet makes no

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\* LABOUR DIFFICULTY IN CHRISTCHURCH.—Boycotting Goods on the Railway.—Auckland, Monday.—The Maritime Council have ordered the railway employes to boycott all goods consigned to and from Messrs. Whitcombe and Tombs, Limited, printers, publishers, stationers, &c., of Christchurch, owing to a trade dispute. The



attempt to provide a remedy that will make them as impossible as they are unnecessary. But these bad results are the products of bad laws, and the makers of those laws are responsible for their own misdeeds.

Another peculiar feature that cannot fail to attract attention is that on a continent so vast, so wealthy, so empty, and so utterly undeveloped as Australia, there should be raised by the working classes so many objections to the introduction of immigrants from other countries.

With our most magnificent natural resources, as yet comparatively untouched, and more than sufficient to employ all the starving millions of the mother country, when there cannot be, for centuries to come, any danger of over-crowding, or any appreciable diminution of the quantity of work waiting for hands to do it, such objections would be most extraordinary and unaccountable had we not a guide to lead us to their very source in the laws that oppose so many obstacles to all kinds of industrial enterprise. These considered, it is not at all surprising that the working classes should object to new arrivals,† who would thrust them out of

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Railway Commissioners and Union Steamship Company have both intimated that the law compels the carriage of anyone's goods. The secretary of the Railway Servants' Union to-day telegraphed to the Commissioners that the men were resolved to obey the injunction of the Council, and if any were suspended the Council would call out all hands and block the port of Lyttleton until they are re-instated.—*Daily Telegraph, Sydney, Aug. 5, 1890.*

† Sydney Depression.—A Warning to Immigrants.—London Sunday.—Mr. Shipton, the secretary of the London Trades Council,

employment in the few struggling enterprises we carry on, in spite of the opposition of our bad laws. It is not to be expected that, where our legislators have failed, a less cultivated intelligence should detect the difference between possible and permissible work—between a lacking of opportunity and a locking up of opportunity. But working men are prompt to perceive that "work is hard to get," and that the arrival of more hands would make it harder still, though they cannot tell why it should be so with a whole continent waiting for them to explore it. They feel the pinch of the ill-made shoes our cobbling legislators supply; but they try to hobble along, with a patience born of many vain attempts to have them mended, and only asking that they may not be made more severe.

Out of the reluctance to engage in reproductive industries there springs another evil, which it is important to recognise and set down to its right account. Profiting by his own experience of the treatment we accord to those engaged in such enterprises, no parent is willing that his sons should be trained to occupations from which he knows they can gain little and may lose much. He, therefore, very prudently brings them up to be lawyers or bank

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has published a communication which he has received from the Sydney Trades and Labour Council, in which intending immigrants are warned against New South Wales, owing to the great depression there and the large numbers of workmen out of employment.—*Daily Telegraph*, Sydney, 4th August, 1890.

clerks, the height of his ambition being reached when they are all safe in snug "Government billets." In other words, instead of educating producers, to add to the sum of the world's wealth and happiness, he is compelled to make them all consumers—drones in the busy hive, living on the honey accumulated by the industry of others. Thus the same bad laws that rob the working bees and drive them from their work, multiply the number of drones, lessen the supply of honey by preventing the cultivation of honey-bearing flowers, and so reduce the allowance all round that some must go without.

By way of encouraging the over-burdened agricultural and mining producers to think that after all they are not such despised outcasts as their ill-usage would argue, we have placed them under the wing of a special Government "Department of Agriculture," and a "Department of Mines." The function of these bodies is to try to alleviate, by more bad laws, the evils bad laws have already produced. Our legislators seem to suppose, doubtless encouraged thereto by their marvellous failures in the past, that nothing can thrive unless they stand by to regulate everything as a sort of overseers who, understanding nothing, must yet meddle with everything, whilst their own experience should tell them they are only "making bad worse."

We have now examined a number of evils that oppress us, and traced them all to their source in our own bad laws. We are, therefore, justified in assuming

that all our troubles arise from the same source. For the sake of example, let any other glaring evil be taken—larrikinism, crime, poverty, drunkenness, the social evil, or any other. We will find that, if not the direct product of our bad laws, it is at least enormously aggravated by them; and, speaking generally, if in any case it is found that any unnatural, unnecessary, or unexpected evil result mars the working of our institutions, we need not hesitate to ascribe it to the operation of laws we ourselves have made. Nor need we remain doubtful as to our responsibility in such cases, or to the plain duty that devolves upon us. Since the evil condition into which we have fallen is the unforeseen and unintentional result of measures intended to be beneficial, the guilt of past wrongs may be forgiven us if now we set ourselves to remove at once all the causes of public or private injury we have established.

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