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Art. V.—THE NEW GEORGICS.

By H.G. Keene

THERE can be no question as to the interest of Mr. Henry George's doctrines. His new book [Social Problems London, Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1884.] has been brought out by one of the best London Houses. His former work, after a favourable reception in America, has run into three "Library Editions" at seven and six-pence, and there is a cheap reprint at all the bookstalls. He makes triumphal entries into London, he is courted in good society, his lectures are well attended, his system is attacked by journals of all shades of opinion, he has been answered by an Oxford Don (now unhappily no more,) and is said to be occupying the leisure of a Duke who has been a Liberal Cabinet Minister.

Nor is it difficult to account for this. Mr. George's style is pleasant, on occasion even eloquent. The writer has enough culture to catch the ideas that are epidemic and to express them with a scientific air. And there is enough of truth in some of his statements to startle" the general reader," a person unaccustomed to facts and principles that lie below the immediate surface.

The new book is little more than an expansion of some of those social "Principia" submitted some time ago In the work called "*Progress and Poverty*," that has been so largely read. This professes to be "An inquiry into the cause of industrial depressions and of increase of want with increase of wealth—The remedy." It is to that work, therefore, that the present remarks will be confined. Beginning with the enunciation that it is necessary to remove the reproach that misery increases *pari passu* with civilisation, the author accuses Malthus of having offered a false explanation, proceeding to declare that the alleged increase of misery is attributable to wrongful methods devised for the distribution of wealth; he claims "the solution of the problem" for two chapters in which, with especial advertence to England, he asserts that rent has been rising while wages have been falling, ever since the Plantagenet times; and quotes a "law" of Manu (which seems not much to his purpose) to the effect that fruits of the soil belong to him who at any time owns the soil, but "its flowers are white parasols and elephants mad with pride." Then comes "the true remedy," which is expressed in six underlined words:—

*We must make land common property.*

He next attempts to show the injustice of private property in land. Property, he argues, arises out of labour; but land is not produced by labour; and land, therefore, ought to create ownership. "If we concede to priority of possession the undisturbed use of land, 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 to the use of land." In treating of the application of this remedy, the author lays down that private property in land is

inconsistent with the best use of land, and proposes to regard and treat all proprietors as State-lessees, assessed to pay the rent to the State, minus a commission of sufficient amount to recompense themselves for the care and labour required in the management of the estates. There is, however, to be no "Permanent Settlement," [A well-worn Indian phrase that will be generally understood] the demand being increased from time to time "as society progresses and rent advances." The remainder of the book — about a fourth part — is devoted to a recommendation of this plan on grounds fiscal, political, and transcendental; and the whole concludes with a dithyramb on "the gifts of the Creator." Nemesis, "the fiat," "the Prince of Peace," "the Bibles (sic), the Zend Avestas, the Vedas, the Dhammapadas, and the Korans," the solar system and the starry depths.

Necessarily, there is a good deal of this that will not go down with Englishmen. It has much of puerile inaccuracy, much of *a priori* assumption, and not a little of the hysterics of French-Revolution perorating. Will the reader bear with a brief attempt to show grounds of general dissent, at the same time that we pick out what is valuable and true, and show what portion of the programme may be thought over if not profitably adopted?

Firstly, we must note that there is no such pressing necessity for action as Mr. George asserts, because there is no truth in his assertion that misery advances *pari passu* with civilisation. It is true that Prof. Huxley has lately added his great authority to that of Mr. George, and has echoed his doctrine that the lot of a savage is preferable to that of a British workman. It is open to endless controversy whether a gypsy-life under a semi-tropical sky, where long days of idle loafing with, palm-wine and cocoa-nuts are alternated with tomahawk-fights and cannibal feasts, may be more agreeable to the animal man than regular labour relieved by family-duties, and a turn at the public house or the mechanics' institute. Into such fancy questions we need not care to enter. But if increased incomes, increased knowledge, increased sobriety, decorum, and freedom from crime, be sources of elevation, then

the British workman is constantly rising, and his "misery" tends not to increase but to diminution. In proof of these assertions we need only refer to the figures given in the *Quarterly Review* for January last. Of these figures—which indeed are accessible to every one—we can only here afford a few samples. During the past thirty years, the total spending power of the British nation has about doubled, while the prices of many necessaries of life have considerably decreased. The income of the poor — that is, of the class exempt from income-tax — is larger than was the total income of the nation in 1851: in the meantime the numbers of that class have only increased 20 percent. The number of the income-tax payers has been trebled in the same interval. The average income of each poor family, which in 1851 was £58 a year, has risen to nearly £100. Of the income-tax payers the class under £300 a year has increased 148 per cent, while "the rich" (incomes

over £1,000) have only increased 76 percent. The very rich (incomes over £10,000) are under one thousand in number, and of these the majority of incomes are not derived from land but from business. Evidently the enunciation is untenable; it is untrue that society in Great Britain is suffering from an increase of misery due to unjust distribution of wealth, the rich are not growing much richer nor the poor any poorer; on the contrary, the poor are better off than they ever were before, the numbers and wealth of the rich are increasing, but it is in a constantly diminishing ratio. At the same time, drunkenness and crime are on the decrease, as are likewise the number of paupers and the amount of the national debt.

Mr. George's next step is to enter upon an argument to show that wages are not paid out of capital, but out of labour itself. From this he concludes that labour is self-supporting, and therefore that the more labour there is the more food will be produced. According to him Malthus was in the wrong when he asserted that population had a tendency to increase more rapidly than the means of subsistence, and the best thing for the planet must be a constant increase of population. It is "the Malthusian doctrine that parries the demand for reform and shelters selfishness from question and from conscience by the interposition of an inevitable necessity." He has a notion that China and India may be cited against him as instances where society is always in danger from the tendency supposed by Malthus; but he gets over this by showing that the average per square mile of those empires is not after all so very high. But he does not seem to know that the provinces of India where the level of life is lowest, and the liability to pestilence and famine the most severe, are among the most populous in the world; see the figures in the margin.

Belgium 441 per sq. mile  
England 422 per sq. mile  
*Bengal* 510 per sq. mile  
*Behar* 435 per sq. mile

The people of those provinces are averse to emigration; moreover, the thinly-peopled portions that bring down the average are largely constituted of river, marsh, rock, and mountain. Lastly, in the cultivated parts, the population increases at a rate of about 1 percent every two years. The author quotes such authorities as Burke and W. Hyndman to prove that the misery of India, such as it may be, is due to the over-taxation of a rapacious alien Government; forgetful of the fact that about one-third of the Indian revenue is derived from his own pet-system, the confiscation of rent; that of the rest a great part is paid by foreigners, by litigants, and by the consumers of excise; while the obligatory contributions of the poor only average about seven-pence a head per annum. It would be hard to imagine a more complete instance of negative reply to all his theories. Here is an almost untaxed population, very numerous, very laborious, not supported by capital and ( for the most part ) with nationalised land: *but it is poor and non-progressive.*

He says presently (p, 93) that "so far as the limit of subsistence is concerned, London may grow to a population of a hundred or a thousand millions, for she draws for subsistence upon the whole globe." But he admits that there is a "limit of the globe to furnish food for its inhabitants." Surely these admissions are fatal to his fundamental theory. If the globe can only furnish food for a certain number of inhabitants, and if a locality can only support an increased population by drawing for subsistence on a globe so limited, it would seem that there is a limit to profitable increase of mankind, and a point beyond which labour must cease to be self-supporting. But, says Mr. George (page 97), "the tendency to increase weakens just as the higher development of the individual becomes possible." Is this so? In France, where the operation of the Malthusian tendency is not relieved by emigration or free imports, the increase has had to be arrested, whether by "moral" restraint or otherwise we need not stop to ask. Are the French so much more intellectually developed than the people of Great Britain or the United States? "The most populous countries are always the most wealthy," we are told (page 101). Here again the state of France (as of India in the opposite way) must give us pause: France is wealthy without over-population. In India the facts are reversed. Moreover, even if the general rule be admitted, it is far more reasonable to suppose that wealth produces population, than that population produces wealth. If Mr. George be right, then the increase of labourers implies, of necessity, an increase of wealth: but would that be the case if the labourers only produced jewellery and fireworks, or trampled up a tread mill? The case of India is enough to show that even field-labour in the greatest abundance will not add to national wealth unless supported by capital.

Mr. George then has not, as he claims to have done, "disproved the Malthusian theory." If a ship with food for a hundred persons were to take another hundred off a wreck, no amount of added labour on board would prevent the crew from having to submit to half rations. And what is true of a ship will be ultimately true, not only of an island, not only of a country without free trade and emigration, but of a planet orbbed in space.

Had Mr. George reflected on these simple facts, he would not have found himself in the position of attacking Malthus and his followers, taxing John Mill with confusion, or throwing ridicule on Adam Smith. Of course, as he says further on, capital may be regarded as "stored-up labour," and in that sense wages are paid and labour is supported out of labour, or its results. But that is by no means what he started with, nor is it of much use to his main thesis.

In the next division devoted to what he calls "the statics and dynamics of the problem," (he uses scientific terms in an unscientific way ) he is on firmer ground. No longer impelled by the force of his own paradox to oppose himself to the greatest thinkers who have dealt, with his subject, he does apparently show that the privileges of the landholder are often adverse to the claims of labour. This, however, is by no means peculiar to the labour bestowed upon the land. In every branch of industry there is a tendency, on the part of the capitalist, no less than on

the part of the labourer, to seek a maximum of profit for a minimum of exertion. It has hitherto been held that the mechanics of the matter were capable of expression by the aid of what is called "the parallelogram of forces." Each force acting on the line of least resistance, one opposing force acts to divert the other, and a resolution ensues by virtue of which progress goes in a third line, that of the diagonal.

At bottom, the question is one of expediency, and, to some extent, one of time and place. Mr. George ( p. 117) defines rent as " the price of monopoly," and elsewhere (p. 168) describes, in a pretty passage, some of the advantages which human exertion can give so as to raise that price over which, according to the first sentence, human exertion ought to have no control. Passing over this inconsistency, is it not clear that society is at times much beholden to this monopoly and to the exertions it provokes; and, if so, is society justified in "confiscating" (it is Mr. George's own word) the price for which the monopoly has been conferred? It is surely not enough answer to this to point out (as is done in Chap. I of the 5th Book) certain unfavorable results on industry of a system of speculation and advance in land values. Each nation — so long at least as it progresses — is bound to engender the institutions that suit it best: and wherever a monopoly of the usufruct of land exists (in a progressive community), there is a strong presumption in favor of its utility. That it may come to be abused is only a common result of human infirmity which lets abuse creep into all unwatched proceedings. And it may be suspected that it is this eternal tendency — *in pejus mere* — that makes the appearance of a man like our author so excusable and even welcome. The second chapter of this Book is on "the persistence of poverty amid advancing wealth," and, however attractive, must be read with the allowance due to the figures cited above. We have high authority for believing that "the poor we have always with us," and always shall have, so long as one man is bolder, abler and more energetic than ninety-nine of his neighbours. But, if it be the writer's meaning that poverty tends to increase, while wages show a constant tendency to fall, in proportion to the increase of productive power, the statement is not merely exaggerated, it is absolutely false — of Great Britain at least. That a great rise of wages in England ensued upon the depopulation caused by the "Black Death" in the fourteenth century, is admitted by our author, and is indeed easily accounted for without the necessity of recourse to any elaborate or paradoxical explanations. But that rise was certainly not due to increased wealth and productive power in the country. It may be, as he concludes, that the possession of land "is the base of aristocracy, the foundation" (amongst other foundations) "of great fortunes, and the source" (or a source) "of power." But it does not follow that an aristocracy, great fortunes, or power, are necessarily bad things for a progressive community.

It is for these reasons that we demur to the wholesale acceptance of the next part of Mr. George's book in which he discusses the "inefficiency of the remedies currently advocated" and propounds his own. We doubt the existence — in anything like a pressing state — of the evil assumed, and we still more strongly

doubt the efficiency of the remedy proposed by Mr. George. Our first doubt has been already justified by present statistics. To justify the second, we would crave attention to a very brief summary of facts from the past. In so doing we shall, perhaps, find some amount of reason for thanking Mr. George. He will have deserved thanks if he has roused Englishman to inquire into abuses, even if he may not have succeeded in showing that private ownership of land is in all times and places an absolute evil, the abolition whereof would bring in the Millennium.

He begins the exposition of his "remedy" with the laws of Nature (which he says are laws of the Creator); these, he says, give the land as the common right of all. In so saying he advances no whit. Nature is cruel, man ought to be kind; Nature is blind, man should discriminate; Nature makes us naked, ignorant, little more moral than the beasts, man invents dress, knowledge, duty, institutions. Nature is but raw material for man to work on. Titles to land, he proceeds, are founded upon force; what force has created, force can annul. That is true, as a last resource; but, before this is done, society generally finds it best to move by suasion and observe prescription. Wiser reformers than Mr. George would credit the existing with some *raison d'etre*, and weld its healthy parts to their new grafts. It is true that English titles generally go back to the Norman conquest; but why? Simply because it *was a conquest*. And the revolutionary force of the Conqueror was not used so much to create titles as to introduce a species of communism, suited indeed to the times but quite in the spirit of Mr. George. William the Norman found the estates of the Saxon thanes held on *allodial* terms, which was in fact private property. He confiscated most of those estates and substituted *feudal* tenures. In so doing he restored the land of England, so far as circumstances allowed, to the condition that land usually presents in all rude stages of social progress.

Land, as Mr. George himself constantly reminds us, is originally treated — by all but pure nomads — as tribal, or communal property, the source of all national or collective wealth; and is not then regarded as capable of private appropriation on a large scale. A savage of energy may form a personal stock of arms and rude ornaments, he may even get temporary or even permanent possession of a homestead and a plot of ground. But since he cannot by himself hold any more land than what he can guard, the next step is to confer on him a portion of the public land on his undertaking service to be rendered to the community; and in the possession of that portion he is then, by the community, protected and maintained. Such was the utmost development of landholding in ancient times; and if, in Eastern countries, it has usually continued so to be, that is only because Eastern societies have been behind the rest of the world in organisation. That progressive nations have allowed it to grow into private ownership — even "monopoly" if Mr. George will have it so — should suggest a connection between private ownership and progress.

That among nations who have continued to practise communistic principles of land-holding there has been little progress, is surely no reason for expecting to

stimulate progress if we apply it to races who have had no experience of it for many generations. The state of things aspired to by Mr. George has characterised the history of India, Persia, and most other Asiatic Empires. The monarch might assign the State's interest in the surplus produce of an estate to a soldier, a favourite, or a farmer; but the grant even if declaredly perpetual, was always terminable, and in practice usually did terminate, either on the death of the grantee or on that of the grantor. The ultimate fact being that there was no private property in land (of which we have a vestige in the restriction of the term "personalty" to other kinds of property in English law); beneficial holdings might, and did, subsist; but, subject to temporary alienations, the nett produce of the land was the common property of all.

It cannot be regarded as other than a symptom of a more progressive spirit in European civilisation that, while this type still prevails in Asia, it has grown into such a deviation in the West. It is not necessary to determine how far the traces of difference between communal, regal, and allodial tenures show that modification had set in among the Barbarians before they took possession of the Roman Empire. It will suffice to say that we have the authority of Sir H. S. Maine for supposing that these rights had arisen, and that ideas of a like kind had been simultaneously working in the Empire itself and acting on the Barbarians at points of contact. Thus, the tenures of the Roman world — especially that known as *emphyteusis* — had become fitted for Barbarian manipulation; and the new Europe was born, so to speak, with the allodial idea in one hand, but with the feudal idea in the other. Gradually, in those rough times, the weakness of independent proprietors drove them to seek the protection of the great territorial beneficiaries, in doing which the process would be facilitated by a survival of the old relations of clientship. Thus the allods would become more or less absorbed in what were originally service holdings, what in the East are called *jaigirs*; life-tenures assigned in consideration of service, usually military. So far, the old idea, still existing in Eastern countries, had not been much modified. The *equitable* right might devolve on the feoffee, carrying with it the right of sub-infeudation: the *legal* right remained in the State, whose head could demand service from the landholder and might resume the holding at his death. Such had been the relations of the Roman State to the landholders most closely and most constantly in contact with the Barbarians. It was on very much such terms that land was held by the military colonists on the Danube and the Rhine; and such continued to be the nature of the feudal tenures until the benefice, in the weakness of rulers, translated itself into the hereditary fief.

The next step, of course, was for this feudal system to pass into the modern European tenures; with effect, it must be admitted, not wholly beneficial to national Finance. It will suffice for the present purpose to take a glance at this process as it went on in England. By the theory, then, of the Normans (and with some of those anomalies without which nothing seems possible in English affairs) the feudal system prevailed until the disputes about the militia precipitated the quarrel between Charles I and his landed gentry. The tenants in-chief held of the

crown, as their tenants held of them, by the condition of service. As the country settled, personal service began to be replaced by pecuniary commutation. How soon this began is not known; but, by the time of John, it had been so much established that *Magna Charta* contains a special provision upon the subject. By this the king bound himself not to levy "esnage" without the consent of the Lords in Council. But, as occasion arose, burdens of this sort were continually cast upon the land. Besides the constant demands (incidental to the system) of aids, reliefs, and knighthood-fees, a tax (or "subsidy") was often raised, amounting to as much as four shillings in the pound. Personal service, meantime, was not abolished. But all these complications were swept away by the Long Parliament, and their abolition was finally confirmed by 12 Car. II, c. 24. By this Statute all military and feudal tenures were converted into "free and common socage." This, which is the general tenure of all lands in modern England excepting those of the Church, is not to be confounded with the out-and-out ownership of the *allod*. It implies allegiance, and service of a fixed and determinate character. Accordingly the Crown was compensated and the superior right acknowledged by a Parliamentary grant, not only of the excise, but of a landtax at the customary rate of four shillings in the pound. The yield from excise was at first exceedingly small; and, so late as 1693, the land-tax still sufficed for all the ordinary expenses of the State. But unhappily — as most tax-payers must now think — provision was made for its redemption by thirty-two yearly instalments, at the valuation of that day. Under this the land-tax has now fallen to the infinitesimal figure of about an eightieth of the whole public revenue; while it has been calculated that, if levied at a rate of assessment that would be fair on present values, it would come to as much as thirty-three millions, or say three-eighths. The incomes of the landholders are, of course, subject to income-tax; but not being personal property, they have maintained an immunity from Probate and Legacy-duty, of which their fair share could not be much less than another five millions a year.

By the Indian modification of the old Oriental system the revenue derived from land at present amounts to about a third of the net income of the State. This is an obvious relief to the tax-payer, while it hardly operates as a tax in itself, being more of the nature of tithes, a rent-charge under which the right to hold land always changes hands, except indeed that its incidence tends to constant diminution, from causes into which we need not here enter.

A system of finance, with such a nucleus, is not quite the same as the wholesale confiscation contemplated by Mr. George. But it seems to possess advantages over that of England, where the landholders have obtained immunity from taxation — *qua landholders* — and where the nucleus is furnished by the excise; arising, in a great measure, out of the simple luxuries of the working classes.

This retrospect will enable us to examine the part of the book that deals with the proposed cure for the alleged disease of modern society, and to extract whatever useful matter may be contained in Mr. George's remaining arguments. His central proposition, indeed, is one that can be shown to be sophistic and barren. Herbert



Spencer disapproves of the monopoly of land; "had we to deal with the parties who originally robbed the human race of its heritage, we might make short work of the matter" (*Social Statics*, p. 140, *ap.* George). But he admits the claim of present holders to be compensated. John Mill only lays down that "the claim of the landholder is altogether subordinate to the general policy of the State," and that "when private property is not expedient, it is not just." He does not propose to redress injustice by further injustice, even then. But Spencer and Mill are unwise men in the estimation of this modern sage; the land belongs to the people by the law of God, he tells us, as if he had seen the statute recorded in the Eternal Chancery: and that system is still respected "wherever extraneous influences have left intact the form of primitive social organisation." Private property "can nowhere be traced to perceptions of justice and expediency" (p. 263). The examples that are cited are those of India, Russia, the Slavonic countries subjected to Turkish rule, the mountain cantons of Switzerland, the Kabyles in Northern Africa, the Kafirs in the South, the natives of Java and the aborigines of New Zealand!

Is it necessary to point out the weakness of all this? Free sexual intercourse is the law of Nature, the marriage-tie is lax or nonexistent wherever extraneous influences have left intact the form of primitive manners. Wedlock can nowhere be traced to justice or expediency, it is ignored in Tirabuctoo and New Caledonia, This paraphrase is hardly unfair. Institutions cannot be recommended by the practice of primeval man or of his unprogressive descendants. They must be accepted as having arisen from real or supposed "principles of justice or expediency" in the course of human evolution; and must be tried by the test of practical utility and fitness for existing circumstances. It is particularly necessary to admit this when we accept the general doctrines of Darwin and Spencer, as our author generally professes to do. That the soil of a country is subject to the ultimate claims of the inhabitants is not probably anywhere' denied. Least of all in England, where the landlords hold in *socage*, where by the law of *derelict* alluvion belongs to the Crown, where the mightiest territorial magnate has to undergo *expropriation* whenever his land is needed for a railway, a Thames embankment, or any public use certified by the national voice expressed in Parliament.

"The basis of the feudal system," says our author, "was the absolute ownership of the land." And yet, on the same page (268) he says that it "was a triumph of the idea of the common right to land." Leaving the reconciliation of these two statements to keener intellects, let us note in passing that, in England at least, allodial tenure preceded feudal; and the latter made an approach to Mr. George's revolution, by recognising the right of the State to exact obligation in return for enjoyment, so far "nationalising the land." A few Saxon thanes must have had influence enough to maintain their possessions, but all, it is believed, were willing enough to accept the protection of some feudal lord. The feudal tenures naturally became hereditary in those times. A system that was submitted to for six centuries by the most manly of nations, must have had some "principles of justice and

expediency" on its side. As it ceased to be expedient it began to fade. Every nation has, in the long run, the institutions that suit it; every progressive nation has the institutions that it deserves and needs for progress.

A good illustration of these truths is afforded by the next chapter ("Property in land in the United States.") The writer, dealing with a subject well-known to him, enlarges upon the doctrine long ago originated by a clever Scot, the author of *Men and Manners in America* — that the almost inexhaustible wilderness of the far West has acted the part of that *ager publicum* or common domain which has been so useful in the infancy of many agricultural communities. But he does not show, what his scheme nevertheless required, that this common domain ought to continue common, that the charm of private dominion has in North America been absent from the work of reclaiming it to human use, or that a state of things that suited a sparse population with few wants, would be best for a mighty Empire in the full tide of progress. [Nor does he propose to restore it to the Redskins, to whom by the gift of God it must belong.]

In a word, the author does not perceive that it is utility, and not *a priori* assumption, that must form the basis for salutary criticism of institutions. If ownership has developed itself out of official benefice or out of squatter occupancy in the course of social evolution, it is to be presumed that it did so by reason of some need. If not, the society in which this happened would have perished, or, at least, grown stagnant. Such a development may get rusty, like any other machinery, and stiffen into a condition no longer thoroughly serviceable. But it cannot be talked down in our author's peremptory way.

The inquiry in the next chapter, however, will be found more legitimate, and perhaps more fruitful. It is devoted to testing private ownership by the criterion of utility. "If no private ownership," asks Mr. George, "were acknowledged, but all land were held in such a way that the occupier or user paid the rent to the State, would not land be used and improved as well and as securely as now?" And his unhesitating answer is; "Of course it would." The supporters of the present system have only to deny this, and the *onus probandi* devolves on Mr. George. But he does not support it with sufficient strength or resource. "What is necessary for the use of land is not its private ownership but the security of improvements. It is not necessary to say to a man 'this land is yours' in order to induce him to cultivate or improve it. It is only necessary to say to him, "whatever your labour or capital produces on this land shall be yours." No doubt this, in a sense, is true, or there could be no cultivation by cottier-tenants or by mortgagees. But what Mr. George must be understood to mean is, not that this is all that is needful to make a man cultivate, but all that is needful to make him work his utmost and make the most of this land. If he really means this he must believe that a tenant, whose tenancy is terminable or only usufructuary, will rise early and lie down late, put spades into the hands of his sons, and make his wife and daughters carry loads of manure to the fields, all with the same energy as a man will who knows that he can never be disturbed till he sells or dies, and that the dear acres of which he knows every clod

will furnish a subsistence after his death for those that he loves. But this opinion is opposed not only by theory and sentiment, not only by the observation of Arthur Young and the authority of Stuart Mill, but by the daily experience of every one who has eyes to see. At this moment one of the most popular of contemporary movements is seen in the various friendly societies for enabling working men to acquire freehold plots of land. Mr. George, as a matter of hard fact, is opposed as much by landholders of this sort as by lords and squires. It is in vain that he points to land held for higher prices or trammelled in its transfer by bad systems of conveyancing and registration. In India an estate can be sold as easily as a pound of sugar; but India is as far as most countries from agricultural improvement or "the best use of land."

Undeterred by such considerations or by any keen sense that he is building upon water, our author goes on to propose what may be best described as a "Zemindari settlement for Great Britain."

"By leaving to landowners a percentage of rent, which would probably be much less than the cost and loss involved in attempting to rent lands through State-agency, and by making use of this existing machinery, we may without jar or shock, assert the common right to land by taking rent for public uses. We already take some rent in taxation. We have only to make some changes in our modes of taxation to *take it all*."

Here, as it seems, we have an extreme example of the good and evil of our author's system in combination. If the reader has followed us so far, he ought to find but little difficulty in decomposing the amalgam. The land in England is held in socage, it is liable to the land-tax,\* to the laws of escheat, derelict, and expropriation, the supreme rights of the State are in reserve. On the other hand, the landholders have done some good service and are perhaps still in a position to do it. By taking "all the rent," you would destroy a natural aristocracy into which any one may enter, and entry into which has long furnished scope for the noblest and most salutary ambition. You would not only run a great risk of killing the bird that lays golden eggs, but you would act in defiance of the primal canon of taxation — overlooked in this connection by Mr. George — that the correlative of taxation is protection. It would be idle to give the name of protection to a rule which only ensured a landholder the right to be rack-rented at present values, and to bear a new turn of the screw every time that the assets were found improving. For there is to be no "Permanent Settlement" (v. p. 280).

\* Little notice need be taken of the farcical "redemption" at an obsolete valuation. Under this head he afterwards, however, quotes Adam Smith. "Smith speaks of all incomes as enjoyed under the protection of the State; and this is the ground upon which the equal taxation of all species of property is commonly insisted upon — that it is equally protected by the State." But this, he assures us is "only true of the value of land: of nothing else save of things which, like the ownership of land, are in their nature monopolies" (pp. 298-9.) He supports this sweeping and not very

clear assertion by another — that "with every increase of population the value of land rises; with every decrease it falls." But that will not support him unless he could prove that ownership is not an element of the value of land. Once more we find his world standing on an unsustained tortoise.

It may be, that in a country which does not require the services of a territorial aristocracy or its maintenance as a level to attract ambition, the land could be more beneficially managed without the existence of non-cultivating landlords. It is not now our purpose to inquire if England at the present day is such a country, or is in such a state that its social corner-stone could be removed without serious injury to the social fabric. But supposing that to be the case, we are no nearer to a justification of Mr. George's system, which would equally rack-rent the cultivating occupant. Does he suppose that the farmers — if they paid rent to the State instead of to the Landlord — could afford to improve if that rent were raised to a rack-rent and again raised whenever a rise was judged feasible? He quotes Fawcett, as approving the Indian system; but omits to mention the difficulty of improving under that state of "economic perfection." It may be safely asserted that, where the State does not improve, there are in India no landlord's improvements at all. Agriculture in that country still relies almost wholly on all the rude expedients of Triptolemus.

The next part (Book IX.) is devoted to a sort of crescendo of ecstasy on the effects of this unsustained reform; in which, nevertheless, we have found germs of truth. Recurring to our old test of expediency, we have to see what can be done, not in an ideal Republic, not, as Wordsworth sings:—

"Not in Utopia, subterranean fields,  
Or some secreted island — Heaven knows where —  
But in this world, which is the very world  
Of all of us; the place where, in the end,  
We find our happiness — or not at all."

The principal criterion to be applied to the naked and unmitigated Georgics is to be found in the 4th chapter of this book — "Of the changes that would be wrought in social organisation and social life." For, if we cannot have the whole system without a complete disorganisation of society, it will doubtless appear to our dull, practical, English view, that the price is too much for the proffered commodity, though a transaction may be made. We have attempted to appraise at its true value the boon offered by Mr. George. Let us now see what his forecast is, and what — whether he will admit them or not — must be some of its social results.

"In the administration of justice, there would be a saving of strain. Much of the civil business of our Courts arises from disputes as to ownership of land." This is bad news for the solicitors, conveyancers, and counsel in *Nisi Prius* and Chancery practice. But the prognostic can only be completely verified if the system should be so introduced as to destroy all value; for so long as titles continued valuable,

they would be liable to transfer and litigation. Public debts and standing armies, according to our author, are the result of landowning, and will therefore disappear. If so, here is another powerful interest threatened. Not only fraud, but honorable ambition would expire for want of food, and a general but platonic benevolence would take the place of the self-seeking motives by which men are now spurred to exertion. "Want might be banished," thinks our author, "but desire would remain ..... It is not labour in itself that is repugnant to man, it is not the natural necessity for exertion which is a curse." Every one will rise to the mental stature of a Humboldt, a Franklin, a Michael Angelo, a Herbert Spencer (p. 331). The work which really enriches mankind is not that which is done to secure a living (*ibid.*) Amateur exertion, then, is to take the place of that which is at present done professionally; what a dismal outlook for the world! Lastly, politics would of course pass out of the hands of territorial magnates, persons with the greatest stake in their country's safety and the smallest possible temptation to falsehood and intrigue, and would pass entirely into the bands of adventurers.

To a certain extent, some of these things have an element of good. All but lawyers will hail practical measures for simplifying the transfer of landed titles. All would like to see the National Debt diminished, and the earnings of the poor made adequate in amount and security. Most people would like to see the Army-estimates reduced. The appearance in politics of a Canning, a Gladstone, is always welcome. But these things are being done as it is; and if Mr. George's system would bring them on with a rush, that seems an additional objection to its wholesale introduction. Change, to be beneficial, must be slow.

Book X. begins with a chapter intended to show the insufficiency of the current theory of human progress. It does nothing of the sort, and the concluding paragraph contains the refutation of all that precedes. The life of a nation is more than analogous to the life of an individual; it is the same thing, magnified by multiplication. In either case heredity is only one element of the law of progress, and the author only scores a cheap victory by assuming that modern thought regards it as the whole. The "differences in civilisation" considered in the next chapter are partly due to surroundings, but partly also to different powers of adaptation to surroundings. The Jews, says the writer, are differentiated not by race but by religion; but surely many nonreligious Jews have shown the metaphysical, musical, and moneymaking talents of their race. Hindus, he says, are of the same race as their European conquerors; but that is only a partial truth;\* and they are immediately sprung from persons debased and demoralised by secular subjection to violent oscillations between anarchy and the most crushing despotism. The Barbarians were not superior to the Romans, because the latter were civilised, but because the former were hardy Northerners, and the latter the children of effete and servile debauchees. If race were of so little value, why should not greyhounds be taught to point, or bull-dogs to dance like poodles? "The child of ignorant parents may become a pioneer of science or a leader of thought." Yes, if his parents have inherited great capacities; but not if their ignorance be the result of inherited brutality. These reckless and one-sided

statements are meant to lead up to a so-called "law of progress," which turns out to be no law at all, but only an inversion of cart and horse whereby progress is made to appear as the result of institutions, instead of the reverse.

\* There it an immense non-Aryan element, as modern ethnology allows. But space fails us to go on noting the overstatements and fallacies of this acute but most unequal and, on the whole, misleading book. We may sum up by invoking all history to bear witness to the few conclusions here following, and from this testimony of Clio's there is surely no appeal: ---

Some organs, in the process of evolution, assume a differentiation that raises them above others. Out of a varying combination of reason — the result of man's own experience — with instinct — the capitalised experience of ancestors — comes a varying degree of high organs in each individual, as in each nation. Out of this law and others, arises, in the course of development, a constantly increasing inequality by which levels are created which call ambition to scale them. And on these shining steps of the Giants' Staircase great men ascend, taking the eyes of contemporaries and raising the thoughts and aims of all. In Eastern countries, where there is less scope for ambition, there is less progress. There is no class with leisure, culture, or public spirit; men are not brought into contact with circumstances, there is no shaping power developed. Like the Moon, such a nation loses its atmosphere and its inward heat by the same ossifying process. Let us all strive, in our respective circles of action, to help our weaker brethren; but let us, at the same time, combine to avert from our dear old country the stagnation of an Asiatic community.

Mr. George draws our attention to the fact that, as the ancients were, we are. More especially does he lay stress on the common origin of the Aryan races. Accepting the challenge thus conveyed, we may reply that the communistic sort of landholding practised in ancient Aryan civilisations has not produced progress, nor mitigated poverty, to anything like the extent that the enthusiastic reformer appears to expect. But at least as modified in modern British hands, it has greatly lightened taxation, and it has almost annihilated pauperism. On the other hand, the feudal system developing into modern landholding, has thrown most undue burdens on the general tax-payer, although it has produced social advantages of a very valuable kind, till "the grey barbarian" has got to be "lower than the Christian child." The moral, evidently, is to get rid of the evil while holding fast the good. Still let the magic of property go on turning sand into gold, still let the management of laud create culture and high social levels. But let all incomes derived from laud that the holder does not cultivate be liable to their fair share of fiscal demand. A rent-charge-tax, at the old rate of four shillings in the pound, together with a fair *ad valorem* rate of succession-duties, ought apparently to fall on all such sources of wealth, and would give all the benefits of Mr. George's system without any of its evils.

If any apology is needed for the space that has been devoted to his somewhat chimerical arguments, it may be sufficient to state that they are enforced in a lively and attractive manner, and are so far in harmony with the spirit of the age as to have caused a good deal of comment. Indeed, they are not unlikely to have some effect on the future course of legislation in regard to land in the British islands. Although on all sides regarded as founded on a fallacy and permeated with hasty conclusions, the system involves surely more or less of genuine matter for reflection; and it has the more interest for Indian readers that the plan proposed has been extensively tried in the East from time immemorial. Whether it has, on the whole, worked ill or well may be a subject of controversy. What is beyond a doubt is that it has hitherto coincided with backward social relations, great political scandals and calamities, above all, with deficient land and sea commerce, and constant liability to famine.