

speaks of a strenuous time to make up for years of wanton waste. The passionate cry for reconstruction is heard from end to end of the country, yet the unemployed are numbered by the hundred thousand! It is the very mockery of civilization, and ought to make our captains of industry and our trade union leaders hide their heads in shame. It is no use blaming Parliament, for this institution can be nothing but a reflex of the mind of the people. Parliament represents force, and it is guidance that is wanted. There is force in abundance to push aside any obstacle to trade and employment, but the guidance is far to seek.

Let us not be turned aside from the beginning of the argument. In the first place man must have food, clothing and shelter. When these elementary wants are assured, and only as they are assured can man begin to develop his higher nature. To ask man to listen to ethical or spiritual teachings while he is compelled to face want and the fear of it is to misunderstand him, and therefore to misjudge him and his better nature. Man belongs to the animal kingdom, but unlike the lower animals he is not here because his food is here; man's food is here because he is here; by virtue of the gift of reason he stands in a category by himself. "Man is an animal," says Henry George, "but he is an animal *plus* something else. He is the mythic Earth Tree, whose roots are in the ground, but whose topmost branches may blossom in the heavens."

We must first understand the relationship of man to his natural opportunities, before we venture forth on the path that leads to the higher graces. In other words, we must learn to give each his own right. What that right is we must discover; and just as it is revealed so will the correlative duty appear. If the morals of our experience whisper that we are not altogether to blame for what is wrong in society, that we can do so little, and that we must look to ourselves in the first instance, let the reply be: we rise and fall together, and that in looking to our neighbour's right we are doing the best we can to safeguard our own.

There are preachers of righteousness everywhere who tell us that duty and not right must be our guide in the search for better things. But is this not the very half-truth that has driven us to so much impotence and despair? In this popular preaching, the natural rights of each to his own have been effectively hidden from sight and thought directed to duties that, detached from any sound principle and worked threadbare, have brought us to the verge of ruin itself. To talk of equal opportunity in society to-day, in the forum or in the church, with a view to bringing up the question of what is mine, and thine, and ours, is to speak in a language that is not understood. It is an awkward and troublesome question.

By all means let us hold to the idea of duty, but let us keep firmly in mind that justice will not condone any false step, nor be content with any action of ours, however nobly conceived or carried out, if we fail to establish the equal right of all to the free use of the planet. This may not be all that can be said in reply to the question, "What is Justice?" but it is fundamental.

J. P.

## THE PEASANTS' MOVEMENT IN ITALY

The land workers, mainly through the unceasing and vigorous efforts of Signor Argentina Altobelli, have within the last twenty years built up a great and powerful trade union, comprising the principal classes of the "agricultural proletariat" in Italy—the metayers, the small farmers, the small proprietors, and the contadini (peasants or farm labourers). This last class partake to a certain degree and according to the region they inhabit of the nature of metayers, of hired labourers, and of squatters. The total membership of the union, the Federazione Nazionale dei Lavoratori della Terra, is now well over 900,000, and it is growing almost daily, by leaps and bounds, under the strong inducement of the successes already to the credit of the organization. Its head (secretary) is Argentina Altobelli, who is responsible for most of the details of the administration and methods given below. Its principal office is in Bologna, but it has branches in every part of the country, even in the most backward. In this connection it should be noted that one of the most vigorous and combative of the branches is that of Sicily, where the brunt of the struggle is at present being borne.

"No private ownership of land" is the motto which they have learned from the Russian and Hungarian experiments. The peasant once he owns his land is the greatest obstacle in the way of the Revolution, and the greatest reactionary, as the French Socialists could say. Any assistance in this direction can never be looked for from the Union of Land Workers. Their programme would be that the Co-operatives should expropriate the owners or that the State should substitute itself, if this be not possible. Intense propaganda is being made by them on this idea. "Your victory is for the collectivity, not for yourselves," insists the brave Altobelli, in and out of season.

That great changes in the land system in Italy are being made cannot be denied. It is only when the comparison is made of the Italian land system with our own or the French that the long distance which still separates the peasant in Italy from anything very startlingly revolutionary appears. They have made great progress, but they are not yet where we stand. It is really in virtue of this very fact that the Italian Socializers of the land still have, as it were, room to turn in. They have not reached the goal of the French, the land to the peasants; nor do they wish to reach it. "The Land for the People!" is their war cry.

(From an article in the MANCHESTER GUARDIAN, October 11th, contributed by its Bologna Correspondent.)

## THE ROTARY CLUBS.

The HAMPSHIRE TELEGRAPH AND POST, October 22nd, gives a lengthy report of Mr. C. H. Smithson's address to the Portsmouth Rotary Club at their weekly luncheon, October 19th. Mr. W. H. Porter presided. Mr. Smithson was warmly thanked for his address, on the motion of Mr. Hooper (who did not see eye to eye with him), seconded by Mr. Walter Ward, who said "that even though they themselves might be penalized by the system, they had to bear in mind that as Rotarians they were out for the greatest good for the greatest number." Mr. Smithson is on higher ground. He is out for the greatest good for all.

Mr. Smithson visited the Swansea Rotary Club on November 12th and was well reported in the SOUTH WALES DAILY NEWS of the next day. On this occasion again he dealt ably and fully with the penalties imposed on industry by the present methods of taxation and urged the rating of land values. Mr. H. J. Marshall and Councillor F. J. Parker took part in the discussion, and Mr. C. E. Cleaves (President of the Swansea Chamber of Commerce) said it did look absurd on the face of it that land rated at the agricultural value of 25s. per acre should be sold at £600 per acre.