

The conclusions, therefore, which I have humbly to submit are:

1. That local public services properly so called,—and as distinguished from public services on the one hand, and on the other from services rendered to the individual on his own premises,—are alone the proper grounds for local taxation;
2. That land (except land already dedicated to public use), and land only, should be rated for local public services;
3. That all existing contracts should be respected;
4. That the levy should be made from the occupier, with right of deduction, after the Income Tax method, secured to each lessee in respect of the superior interests in the land.

ALL OF WHICH I HUMBLY SUBMIT TO YOUR MAJESTY'S GRACIOUS CONSIDERATION.
ARTHUR O'CONNOR.

Expressly for the Review.

Serial Economics.

BY JAMES LOVE.

In looking over professorial economic discussion in back years of the serials, one is struck not only by the great disagreements in what would seem to be vital points of theory, but by the conflict of opinion upon practical measures, where every phase of political dogma seen in the outside world equally perplexes the schools, so that upon the matters of protection, free trade, taxation, currency, legal tender money, colonization, and so on, there is not the slightest concurrence of opinion. Upon every principle and project they are all at sea. Single taxers of course know that this anarchy arises from, and is perpetuated by, the misuse of words—arises from what Aristotle called "equivocation"—the act of using one term for two ideas. "For," as Hobbes said, "in the right use of names lieth the first use of speech, which is the acquisition of science. And in the wrong or no definition lieth the first abuse."

To start with, these men cannot define the sole subject with which economics is said to deal, that is, "Wealth." Some say that anything having exchange value is wealth—which would include not only the valuable products of labor, but also slaves, promissory notes, land; others exclude promissory notes or slaves, others include promissory notes but exclude land; some include personal skill, which others reject; and so on without end. Yet, says Plato, "When the starting point is the unknown, and the conclusion and intermediate steps are connected with that unknown principle, how can such kind of assent ever possibly become science?" To account for commercial depressions what divergent views are held by the writers! There is equally high authority for referring them to over-production or to under-production, to over-consumption or to under-consumption, to the adoption of the gold standard or to the excessive issue of silver, to trades-unions' attacks upon capital or to the oppressions of capital, to over-protection or to under-protection; while one high authority (Professor Jevons), utterly unable to find a solution in the field of economics, despairingly turns to the skies and essays to show a relation between these recurring troubles and the periodicity of sun-spots,—that they are due not to removable causes, but were foreordained at the very beginning, when God created the sun to rule, not only over the days, but over the mercantile vicissitudes of its planets.

In the same vein, in the *International Journal of Ethics* for July, is "Ethics and the Weather," a paper by Professor Dexter, of the University of Illinois; a writer of the prevailing type, who, rejecting all fixed principles of right or justice, which, being observed, lead to order and happiness, or, being violated, bring disaster—insisting that "right" is whatever course at any time or place may happen to be in "custom"—seeks to account for much of men's moral conduct by relating it to the weather: a position that might be less vulnerable, perhaps,

should we accept his opening statement that twenty-five hundred years of discussion has not brought about a consensus of opinion in relating it to anything else. "The problem of human conduct, as far as the individual is concerned, is perhaps no nearer a solution to-day than it was at the time of the Sophists." He thinks that "on *a priori* grounds * * we might expect some definite relation between fluctuations of the weather-curve and that of the occurrence of crime;" and that a "daily record of suicides, * * arrests for assault and battery and drunkenness, of deportment in city prisons and in certain of the public schools" might be "compared with the records of the weather, of mean temperature, barometer and humidity, total movement of the week, character of the day, and the precipitation." And this, he says, he has done, "with the result that a fixed relation is found to exist between the prevalence of certain weather states and the occurrence of crime." Like Jevons, who failed to see that his theory, if accepted, would overthrow "economics," turning it from mysticism to astrology, Professor Dexter probably fails to see that his would overthrow "ethics," transforming it to meteorology, and make us find our conscience keepers in the observers of the Weather Bureau, whose signals thereafter would be moral warnings. Yet after this he seems to recognize that it is not so much the weather that induces *drunkenness* as it is suffering: "Already the betterment of social conditions has been recognized as a factor in the reduction of crimes.

* * Why not strike at once at the root of this evil, and try the application of better heated apartments, of warmer clothing, and of more nourishing food?"—thus (by making poverty relations replace weather relations) invalidating his own theory.

Fifty-seven years ago (1844) Mill issued his book, "Some Unsettled Questions in Political Economy." But, so far from being an egg-shell in the coffee pot tending to make the turbid clear, it has helped to unsettle matters that he thought were fixed. And political economy, sinking to "economics," has become an opaque muddle in which everything is unsettled but the one point that it is unsettled.

In the *Economic Journal* for June I find "Stationary Wage Rates" by George H. Wood. In this article, by "wages" the author does not mean the share that falls to the politico-economic factor "labor," but only the pay of certain of the hardest-worked and most useful laborers, as journeymen carpenters, miners, "laborers," and so on, who are hired and paid by the day or week. And his further incapacity is shown in this one sentence: "Lastly, stationariness may be partly explained by the increased purchasing power of wages"—mistaking the *money* paid by the employer for the *real wages*, what the money will exchange for. "The four more usual causes of change in wages are, (a) Trade depression, or a fall of prices; (b) Trade expansion, or a rise in prices; (c) New or increased organization of workingmen; and (d) Industrial legislation."

But these causes don't seem to fit the facts—do not explain, for instance, why in California in 1849-'50-'51 wages of mechanics, cooks, professional men—laborers of all kinds—went sky high; nor why, in spite of "trade expansion," "organizations of workingmen," "industrial legislation," and "rise in price" of land, wages have gone down ever since; nor why the same occurrences were repeated in Australia and Colorado and are now going on in the Klondike. "Cases may be found where the rate has remained stationary for a number of years"—twenty or more. My dear sir! cases may be found where they have been stationary for hundreds, perhaps thousands. In India, China, Egypt, breech-clouts and rice have been "wages" since the memory of man. And in much of Europe, amongst the lowest classes, they have never been a particle higher than would permit the continuance of the laborer.

Ah me! I feel, as did Madame De Stael, "that emptiness grows at length singularly burdensome." Dispiriting scraps are serial economics—a Job's comforter is "economics" in any shape, in bringing us to Imlac's conclusion that "human life is a state in which much is to be endured and little to be enjoyed."

I suppose, however, that I might as well whistle jigs to mile-stones as to write the present paper. Nobody will ever read it, as nobody ever seriously reads the economic quarterlies—nobody who thinks or whose influence counts. Truly, as Carlyle said, it is “the dismal science.” So dismal that were it not for the constitutional inhibition of the “cruel and unusual,” it might be well, instead of degrading the honorable industries of shoe-making and stone-cutting, to condemn convicts to terms of years in economics and finance; and under penalty of a “solitary” with Palgrave’s Dictionary to require daily recitations in Hadley or Laughlin, Seligman or Marshall.

Missing an economic volume from its accustomed place, all nervous and irritable, I was vociferously in its search when my then “Little Nell”—a sly smile confirming her words—called out: “I’m *solemnly* certain that I haven’t it, Papa.” The air became clearer at once—a zephyr rustled the curtain and the day that had seemed cloudy was golden with light. Even nature, rejecting economics, had responded to the point.

In the *Political Science Quarterly* for June I find “The Economic Ages,” 29 pp., by Professor Franklin H. Giddings.—This especially recondite paper will be grateful to the professors, for by assuming to understand it they can secure the homage of “students” who are taught to believe that comprehensible writings are necessarily shallow. After twenty-six arid pages of sage brush phraseology, put together as if in mind of Shakespere’s words, “We will give you sleepy drinks, that your senses, unintelligent of our insufficiency, may, though they cannot praise us, as little accuse us,” we arrive at a summary divided into eleven parts, of which I give but three.—“To sum up the conclusions of this article, they are these: **FIRST.** If any economist maintains that a certain distribution of useful things or qualities in the physical environment is antecedent to society, he is on safe ground so far. If he chooses to call the study of such distribution economic geography, as I believe Professor Keasbey does, then he will be quite right, also, in maintaining that the study of economic geography is logically antecedent to the study of sociology.”

You understand this? Yes? Well, unless he means that the earth preceded man—that in the order of creation “land” preceded “labor”—by my soul, I don’t! Let us try the next.

“**SECOND.** But if any economist maintains that utility (conceived as objective or subjective) is identical with useful things or with the useful qualities of an environment, he is wrong. Utility is a circumstance of things in relation to organic well-being, or to a state of mind; and in either case it is a product of some activity of the organism with reference to the useful things or qualities of the environment. In themselves the qualities of the environment are potential utilities only.”

These writers avoid simple words and lucid statements—the secret would be out. In the dark they become sacred, so that each occult Mumbo Jumbo, backed by five hundred others, feeling exempt from assault like the little village constable, can call out, “Beware! strike me, you strike the Commonwealth.”

“**THIRD.** A system of activities on the part of the organism whereby potential utilities are converted into utility is itself an economy.”

“**FOURTH.** If at this point any economist claims that economy is antecedent to society and creates society, he may be right but is probably wrong,” etc.

In the *Annals of the American Academy* for July, Dr. Edward A. Ross writes about “The Causes of Race Superiority” without defining “superiority,” but brings forth the superior doings of certain *peoples* as *causes* of their superiority. “The last two generations of Americans have amazed the world” by the rapidity with which they have occupied the Western wilderness. But was it the work of a superior *race*, or the result of superior opportunity—unoccupied land and free trade among the States? It was the work of what the Professor himself would call a “mongrel people,” from Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy, Sweden, from our older States, and even from China and Japan. I doubt that there is

any great disparity in the races. Civilization does not inhere in the individual; it inheres in society, and arises from great populations, divisions of industries and studies, and freedom of trade. Each "savage" is forced to possess *all* the very considerable knowledge of his tribe. A civilized man rarely understands but *one thing* well, while of the rest of an infinity of knowledge he may be in great ignorance. Professor Ross forgets this when speaking of "Americans" as "the highest type of civilization." And I doubt that among savage tribes men can be found who, if isolated, would be so helpless, or who are so mentally and morally degraded, as some in our cities—not always in the slums, but even so among the rich; ignorant sensualists with feelings hard as stone.

In the *Yale Review* for August is another notice of Clark's "Distribution of Wealth" by Professor Charles A. Tuttle, who quotes from the book, "Rent and interest describe the same income in two different ways." "Total interest equals total rent." "Net rent is nothing more than interest regarded from another point of view." These are enough to show what the book must be—an inconclusive piece of folly, like hundreds of its predecessors. And although the reviewer says, disputing these assertions: "ground rent and the rent of artificial instruments are not simply parts of interest. They are distinct products. The landlord gets the rent resulting from superior natural opportunities, the entrepreneur (capitalist?) gets in the form of profit (interest?) the rent of artificial opportunities," etc, he is lavish in praise. "This work meets the high expectations that were formed concerning it." And, "as the highest achievement of American economic thought," "it is impossible to convey an adequate impression of the originality, brilliancy, and completeness of the author's analyses." After which flourish of trumpets I can only cry—Rats!

In the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* for August, Professor T. N. Carver tries his hand at the same book. He is somewhat more critical than Tuttle, but seems to be awed into praise. "From previous writings it was certain to be a notable production." And though "it would be difficult to predict its influence," and though "later writers may reach sounder conclusions, * * he will be a rare man who can produce a volume equal to this in lucidity, in logical consistency," etc. Though he thinks Clark's theory of capital is most "startlingly original" (a theory in which he includes in capital, like so many previous writers, and like the mob about him, land, promissory notes, government bonds, talents, and skill), he yet evidently cannot recognize Clark's finely drawn distinctions between "capital" and "capital goods;" declaring that every distinction that Clark has made between them can be made with equal clearness between "the herdsman's hundred head and the animals composing it," or "between the farmer's bushels and the wheat which they contain."

These writers no more appreciate Quesnay, Adam Smith, and Henry George—no more apprehend the real purpose of political economy, than my little granddaughter did the thermometer which, mistaking it for a mouth-organ, she wished me to "make music on."

It was a saying of Socrates, reported by Xenophon, "that such as submit to a pecuniary return for the instruction they bestow are no longer at liberty * * but, like so many slaves, are at the will of those from whom they are content to receive wages." So we must expect no living movement from the schools. In the matter of the distribution of "wealth" the schools are petrified.

Paraphrasing amiable Lawrence Boythorn on the Court of Chancery, "There never was such an infernal cauldron as economics on the face of the earth! Nothing but a mine below an international convocation of its teachers, with all its cyclopædias, histories, systems, schools, collected there, and every professor, and instructor also, high and low, upward and downward, from its father the devil to its sons, the editors of the quarterly journals, and the whole blown to atoms with ten thousand hundredweight of gunpowder, would reform it in the least!"