

it are poor. In the scheme of creation, it is only among mankind that such a state of things exists; it is unjust and wrong; surely it is not the intention of a Higher Power. There will be rich and poor as long as the system of landownership (of which one phase has been shown here) remains; but if that system can be abolished there will be plenty of work for all who desire it. The land was given to all, not a few. Security of tenure is necessary, and should be guaranteed by the payment of the undeveloped value of the land as revenue to the community through the Government. In other words, all rates and taxes would take the form of a payment made for the use of land: all land, whether used or unused, would pay this value tax. This would free the land, and there would be employment for all. No one man could become rich at the expense of others; and there would not be then the extremes of poverty and wealth which we see everywhere to-day.

E. B.

### "EVERY MAN'S WAGES"

The attractiveness of Mr. George Burgess' little book\* begins with the title and is maintained throughout. Consciously or unconsciously the aim of all honest sociologists, as we must believe, is to determine every man's just wages and to let him have them. But only a scattered few have yet caught sight, as Mr. Burgess has done, of the simple and natural principle by which he may be left free to take them instead of having them handed out to him after careful calculation as to the exact amount. "Day's wages for day's work," exclaimed Carlyle. "The progress of society consists even in this, the better and better apportioning of wages to work. Give me this, you have given me all. Pay to every man accurately what he has worked for, what he has earned and done and deserved,—to this man high honours and broad lands, to that man high gibbets and treadmills; what more do I ask? Heaven's Kingdom which we daily pray for has come; God's will is done on earth even as it is in Heaven." Yet the majority of mankind, in common with this inspired teacher, have not got beyond the pay-envelope point of view and the ancient superstition that its contents must ultimately depend upon the generosity and sense of justice of those who fill them. That the payee should have equal right and equal power with the payer in determining the amount paid; or better still, that the power should rest with neither but be determined by a great impersonal Principle of self-enacting Justice, is a thought which is as yet the possession of a minority. But to this thought the distraught world must come sooner or later. All attempts of men to "apportion wages to work" have failed unutterably. The best work has never been paid for at all, except in the currency of Heaven. The worst work, or even such as had better have been left undone, has been lavishly rewarded in the coin of the realm. In that wonderful compendium of soul-stirring phrases UNTO THIS LAST, whose author was so richly endowed with sympathy for the underpaid, and indignation at the rapacity of the classes whose responsibility was assumed, the equation is triumphantly worked out. "If a man works an hour for us," says Mr. Ruskin, "and we only promise to work a half an hour for him in return, we obtain an unjust advantage. If on the contrary, we promise to work an hour and a half for him, he has an unjust advantage." How simple and self-evident! We have only to make quite sure that we give full weight pressed down and running over, in all our bargains, and we have solved the social problem. The world swallowed the formula like a Morrison's pill, and the faith or hypnotic "suggestion" which accompanied the act may perhaps have produced for the moment a sensible alleviation of the malady of unjust wages. But the pains recurred with their usual periodicity and all their former violence. The

patient became restive, distracted, exasperated, and even delirious. He developed belligerent tendencies and afterwards became quite unmanageable. In short, he has become that world-problem of to-day—the problem which, when stripped of irrelevances and reduced to its last form of expression, is—"Everyman and his wages."

It is the problem to which the world must now direct its attention, unless indeed, to quote Carlyle again, "the Sun is to miss one of his planets in space some morning, and henceforward there are to be no eclipses of the moon"; and the book before us is a notable contribution to its elucidation. Its argument obviously rests upon the two indisputable assumptions: that a considerable part of Everyman's wages is not being earned at all, owing to some of the workshops having locked doors; and that a portion of the wages he is permitted to earn is filched from him by those who are privileged to hold the keys of all the workshops. To make those two basic facts clear to those whose vision has not yet penetrated the obscurities raised by the interaction of conflicting forces in politics, finance, and commerce, the author states the initial conditions under which real wealth is produced, and also the laws in obedience to which it should naturally distribute itself equitably, but in disobedience to which it *does* distribute itself in the senseless and chaotic manner that all sane men deplore to-day.

As a necessary preliminary to clear thinking, Mr. Burgess redefines for his readers' benefit the subject terms of the science of Political economy, and it would be difficult to find clearer, pithier, or more succinct definitions than those given. It is somewhat humiliating that at this time of day it should be necessary in a branch of knowledge that calls itself a science and boasts of Professorial chairs, to tell ourselves exactly what we mean by certain words. If we felt uncertain in respect of any element whether to describe it as a gas, a liquid or a solid, we should suspect our own competence in the science of physics. If we are ignorant of the difference between an acid and an alkali, we modestly disclaim any understanding of chemistry. Yet in the alleged science of Political economy, the man in the street, though he may discourse without diffidence on the subject, has only the vaguest notion of what he means when he speaks of "wealth," "rent," "land," or "labour," nor is his intellectual darkness ever really illumined by those appointed teachers whose function as light-bringers might reasonably be assumed, but who, unfortunately, exhibit a curious predilection for drawn blinds and dim religious lights. Thus we constantly find "land"—which simply means the physical expression of the freedom of the human will, the sum-total of opportunity, or the environing conditions that make life possible—confused with Capital, which means, and means only, those products of human effort which have been laid aside to aid further production. We find the term Capital muddled up with that of Labour, and a craftsman's skill, a prima donna's voice or an inventor's brain, spoken of as their "capital." Then, as to Labour itself, which to common sense is co-terminous with all human effort of hand or brain and excludes only the raw material or conditions covered by the term "land," we have it divided into subsections such as "inventive power," "organizing ability," "unproductive labour" (soldiering, policing, etc.), "direct service" (doctoring, lecturing, etc.), some of which are by implication placed outside the general category and left to determine their own status in the scheme of things. But it is when we turn to the term "Wealth" that we find confusion worst confounded; and on discovering so precise a thinker as J. S. Mill writing that "Every one has a notion sufficiently correct for common purposes, of what is meant by wealth" we wring our hands in despair. For this notion is just what is so conspicuous by its absence in the common mind. Slaves were once regarded as wealth and would be still, had the moral sense not revolted. The National debt is by some included under the same category. The "water" in industrial stock is called wealth, and the selling value of the

\* EVERY MAN'S WAGES.—By George Burgess. T. W. Griggs & Co., Durban; The United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values, London. Cloth, 2s. net; paper covers, 6d. net.

land is included in "the wealth of nations" though we all know it only represents a deduction that will be made from the wealth produced by labour in the future. Then the confusion reaches its climax with the premature introduction of the ethical standard into the "science," and it becomes necessary to coin the word "illth" to describe those products of industry that do not make for human "weal." Thus tobacco and alcohol are "illth" to many sincere humanitarians; animal food, tea, and coffee to others, and implements of warfare to almost all. How completely water-tight and proof against vagueness is, on the contrary, Mr. Burgess' definition, that "Wealth consists of matter which labour has by change in place, form, or condition, fitted partly or wholly for the satisfaction of human desires."

The explanations which follow, of the essential meanings of the words "labourer," "wages," "interest," and "value," are intelligible and educative. As to the two last-named terms it is barely possible to find two competent thinkers who have reached identical conclusions on these elusive concepts. One thing seems clear, however; the difficulties they raise are artificial and grow out of the abnormal conditions consequent upon Everyman having been defrauded of his just wages. When he gets those wages—in full—there will perhaps then be no interest question to worry over; and value relationships may then have determined themselves as spontaneously as water finds its level when not dammed. On "the causes of land value" a cantankerous critic might find some ground on which to differ with Mr. Burgess. It may fairly be said, for example, that of the four "conditions" he postulates as necessarily precedent to the appearance of land value, the fourth is the only one that matters, "There must be some freedom of labourers to exchange articles and services, and some co-operation and specialization, etc." The selling value of land (such a critic might maintain) is always an exact expression of the economy of effort that has been effected in the surrounding community by exchange of service or by combination or specialization. Neither exclusive occupation nor individual labour nor individual capital could have created land-value; but only the saving of trouble brought about by association. To illustrate: a community of energetic men might each with his own hands have built himself a motor-car. That would not produce nor increase site-values around their dwellings. But if they lay their heads and energies together and set up a public service of buses or tramcars, or build a public car-factory and garage, or in any way pool their energies, the total of the individual savings in expenditure will reflect itself accurately in the situation value of their houses. As to the right of the community to the rent of land (Chap. V) this is the point at which the moral ideal impinges upon the science of economics. The people by their joint action make possible the paying of a surplus-value in the form of rent,—therefore that rent belongs to the people jointly. If things belong to those who make them, the logic of this syllogism is unassailable.

The "conclusions" of the last chapter are what the reader must have anticipated. By asserting our right to the rent of the earth, and by collecting it in the form of taxation, we enlarge indefinitely the area of employment. Mother Nature will then dictate the minimum wage below which no man will need to offer his services. He may, indeed, never require to "offer" them at all. The employer who wants Everyman's services may have to come and request them and put up with a refusal. Under such conditions, is it conceivable that wages should not rise and steadily approach the maximum,—that is, the full value of his product, or the full value of the contribution he has made to the joint labour he has been engaged upon? Everyman will then have come into his own. His long years of brick-making without straw will have ended. The promised

land will then have been reached and he will have a chance at last to cultivate the garden of his own soul.

ALEX MACKENDRICK.

Why is it that men have to work for such low wages? Because if they were to demand higher wages, there are plenty of unemployed men ready to step into their places. It is this mass of unemployed men who compel that fierce competition that drives wages down to the point of bare subsistence. Why is it that there are men who cannot get employment. Did you ever think what a strange thing it is that men cannot find employment? Adam had no difficulty in finding employment; neither had Robinson Crusoe; the finding of employment was the last thing that troubled them. If men cannot find an employer, why can not they employ themselves? Simply because they are shut out from the element on which human labour can alone be exerted. Men are compelled to compete with each other for the wages of an employer, because they have been robbed of the natural opportunities of employing themselves; because they cannot find a piece of God's world on which to work without paying some other human creature for the privilege.—*Henry George in THE CRIME OF POVERTY.*

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