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# PROPERTY AND PROGRESS

OR

A BRIEF INQUIRY INTO CONTEMPORARY  
SOCIAL AGITATION IN ENGLAND

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## PREFACE.

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THE aim of the present volume, which has been reprinted without substantial alteration from the pages of the "Quarterly Review," can be very simply stated. One of the principal features by which Continental politics have been, during modern times, distinguished from those of England, has, during the last few years, developed itself in England also. I refer to the attempts being now made by extreme Radicals on the one hand, and avowed Socialists on the other, to identify politics, in the minds of the poorer classes, with some wholesale seizure, in their behalf, on the property, or on part of the property, of the richer; to represent the accomplishment of such a seizure, as the main task incumbent on a really popular government; and to madden the people with a conviction, that, until the seizure is made, they will be suffering a chronic wrong.

When we consider the squalor and misery that exist in the heart of our wealth and civilization, it

is not surprising that language of this kind should sound to many like a new social gospel. The aim of the present volume is, to examine, accurately and calmly, into the exact amount of truth underlying this appeal to the sympathies; and to enable the reader to judge whether our contemporary social agitators are men of science, revealing to us new social possibilities, or merely quacks beguiling us with new delusions,—whether, in other words, they are the best friends of the people, or whether they are practically their worst and their most insidious enemies.

MARCH, 1884.

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## PROPERTY AND PROGRESS.

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PROGRESS AND POVERTY: *An Inquiry into the Cause of Industrial Depression, and the Increase of Want with Increase of Wealth. The Remedy.* By HENRY GEORGE. London, 1882.

THERE has been a strong disposition among certain English critics, to regard Mr. George as though he were nothing more than a charlatan, and to think, upon that ground, that a passing sneer will dispose of him. In both these views we consider them wholly wrong; but, even were the first of them never so well founded, we should fail to see in it the least support for the second. Were Mr. George's subject mathematics or biblical prophecy, then, no doubt, the case would be widely different. An ingenious writer, not many years ago, maintained that the earth was shaped like a Bath bun; and another, that Mr. Gladstone was the real beast of the Revelation; but had Dr. Tyndall lectured against the first theory in Albemarle Street, or had Canon Farrar denounced the second at Westminster, we should have thought the distinguished critics about as

wise as the men they criticised. We do not find a "Janus" crossing swords with the Jumpers, nor the Astronomer Royal refuting Zadkiel's Almanac. But though the Zadkiels and the Jumpers of abstract science and theology are forever safe from any serious notice, and reach their highest honor when we sometimes condescend to smile at them, the moment they enter the domain of politics they become amenable to a new kind of tribunal.

Our meaning is not recondite. False theories, when they bear directly upon action, do not claim our attention in proportion to the talent they are supported by, but in proportion to the extent to which action is likely to be influenced by them; and, since action in modern politics so largely depends on the people, the wildest errors are grave if they are only sufficiently popular. How they strike the wise is a matter of small moment; the great question is, how they will strike the ignorant: and the modern politician, who disdains to discuss a doctrine merely because none but the very ignorant could be duped by it, acts much like a man who lets himself be knocked down by a burglar because his honor will not permit him to fight any one but a gentleman. Thus it is easy to call Mr. George's proposals ridiculous, and to say that his fallacies have been again and again refuted;

but nothing is gained by these facile and futile sarcasms. For practical purposes, no proposals are ridiculous unless they are ridiculous to the mass of those who may act upon them; in any question in which the people are powerful, no fallacy is refuted if the people still believe in it; and, were Mr. George's book even a lower class of production than it has ever been said to be by its most supercilious critics, we should not, for that reason, in the present condition of things, esteem it one jot less worthy of a full and candid analysis.

Let those who disagree with us consider the following facts. "Progress and Poverty," whatever its merits or its demerits, is remarkable first and foremost as containing one special proposal. This is a proposal, urged with the utmost plainness, for the wholesale and indiscriminate plunder of all landed proprietors. We say *plunder*, and we use the word advisedly: that, and that alone, will express Mr. George's meaning. Other writers have again and again suggested that it would be well if the class in question could be bought out by the State; but Mr. George's point is, that there should be no buying in the matter. Let us not buy them out: let us simply use force, and turn them out. "That," he says, "is a much more direct and easy way; nor is it right," he adds, "that there should be

any concern about them." Now, without pausing at present to comment on this teaching, let us ask simply what success it has met with. "Progress and Poverty" has been published for but three years—for three years in America, and in England only one. In America its sale was so large and rapid, that it had already gone through a hundred editions there before it was known by so much as its name here; and here, though its circulation has been most probably smaller, its reception in some ways has been even more significant. In America the author, so far as we have been able to learn, has failed hitherto to make any practical converts. He has been more fortunate on this side of the Atlantic. One of the chiefs of the Irish Land League has become his enthusiastic disciple; and what was yesterday the mere aspiration of the thinker, will probably to-morrow be the actual demand of the agitator. Nor is this all, or nearly all. Mr. George's London publishers have lately re-issued his book in an ultra-popular form. It is at this moment selling by thousands in the alleys and back-streets of England, and is being audibly welcomed there as a glorious gospel of justice. If we may credit a leading Radical journal, it is fast forming a new public opinion. The opinion we here allude to is, no doubt, that of the half-educated; but this

makes the matter in some ways more serious. No classes are so dangerous, at once to themselves and to others, as those which have learned to reason, but not to reason rightly. They are able to recognize the full importance of argument, but not to distinguish a false argument from a true one. Thus, any theory that serves to flatter their passions will, if only put plausibly, find their minds at its mercy. They will fall victims to it, as though to an intellectual pestilence. Mr. George's book is full of this kind of contagion. A ploughman might snore, or a country gentleman smile, over it; but it is well calculated to turn the head of an artisan.

This alone would suffice to give it a grave importance, but half of the story yet remains to be told. It is not the poor, it is not the seditious only, who have been thus affected by Mr. George's doctrines. They have received a welcome, which is even more singular, amongst certain sections of the really instructed classes. They have been gravely listened to by a conclave of English clergymen. Scotch ministers and nonconformist professors have done more than listen: they have received them with marked approval; they have even held meetings, and given lectures, to disseminate them. Finally, certain trained economic thinkers, or men who pass for such in at least one of our

universities, are reported to have said that they see no means of refuting them, and that they probably mark the beginning of a new political epoch.

It is easy to think too much of the importance of facts like these: it is equally easy to think far too little of them. It is to this latter extreme, we fear, that the conservative party inclines: we have therefore no hesitation in putting our case strongly. We say once more, and with even greater emphasis, that were Mr. George's arguments intrinsically never so worthless, were his knowledge never so slight, his character never so contemptible, his book has acquired an importance, from the special success it has met with, which would make it our duty to examine its wildest falsehoods with the same attention we should give to the gravest truths.

We have other reasons, however, for taking Mr. George seriously. Our arguments thus far have supposed him to be a charlatan pure and simple, but we have supposed that for argument's sake only. Our own judgment of him is something widely different. It is true, as we purpose presently to show in detail, that, in all his main positions, he is as false to fact as the most crack-brained astrologer, and as hostile to society in his proposals as the most malignant criminal; but, in spite of this, he himself is



neither criminal nor crack-brained. In tone and in moral method he betrays many faults and weaknesses. His self-conceit is inordinate; his temper is often petulant; his finer feelings are so tainted by self-consciousness, that he can rarely express them without striking an attitude; and his practical programme, as we have seen, is monstrous. None the less we believe, that, in spite of all these defects, the intention he has started with is thoroughly pure and honest; and that, however his character may change for the worse hereafter, he is at present an unselfish philanthropist. He is the friend of the poor, he is not the enemy of the rich. He seeks to save, not to ruin, civilization; and he almost equals a czar or an English Tory in his hatred and horror of our modern proletarian anarchists. Morally, therefore, he fully deserves a hearing; and our condemnation of his doctrines, though it will certainly not be softened, will at least be accompanied by a certain respect for himself. What we have said of his character applies with equal force to his intellect. Grave as his errors are, they are the errors of a vigorous thinker; and he falls into delusions which most men would escape from, from perceiving arguments that most men would be blind to. It is indeed no exaggeration to say, that he uses more logical strength in floundering in the quicksands of

falsehood, than has sufficed to carry others far up the rocks of truth. Should any reader, out of prejudice, be inclined to question this, let him turn aside from Mr. George's main thesis, to the remarks he makes by the way, and to his handling of subsidiary subjects. We shall there find not only casual sentences which have all the terseness, and more than the truth, of Hobbes, we shall find chapters also in which certain of the most cherished delusions of Radicalism are submitted to a keener and far more merciless criticism than they have ever met with since they began their wretched existence. Mr. George's power will thus be at once apparent. In the strength with which he attacks one order of falsehoods, we shall learn the strength with which he supports another; and, if the delusions to which he is himself a victim are greater and more dangerous than those over which he triumphs, this will only form the weightiest reason possible why we ourselves should try to dispel the former. The difficulty of the task is, we think, not equal to its importance. It has required greater skill on Mr. George's part to see his way into his errors, than it will require on ours to see the way out of them.

If this be the case, however, it is but fair to Mr. George to acknowledge, that, in some measure, we have his own talent to thank for it.

His book is a model of logical and lucid arrangement. He shows us exactly what he wants to prove, and the exact steps by which he means to prove it. The track of his thought is thus so distinctly marked, that we can at once see where he stumbles or goes astray, or where he jumps instead of bridging a chasm. Half the ease we find in proving his meaning false, is due to the clearness with which he shows what his meaning is.

The great problem which he attempts to solve is as follows. He starts with reminding us that the present century has been, so far as material progress goes, the most astonishing period in all human history. Wealth has increased beyond the dreams of the alchemist. Science and industry have performed greater miracles than any foreseen by Bacon in his visions of the New Atlantis. Nor do the wonders show any signs of ceasing. Scarcely a week passes without some new achievement—some new invention which will minister to our comfort, or help us to escape from some immemorial evil. But there is an evil, which, amidst all this progress, nothing touches, nothing seems to alleviate. On the contrary, it is growing daily greater; and, having long been a disgrace, it will soon be a menace, to our civilization. That evil is the poverty of the industrial classes. It

is true, that, in some sense, the poor have been always with us; but never before were their numbers or their misery so great or so portentous as they are, or are fast becoming. "Material progress," says Mr. George, "does not merely fail to relieve poverty; it actually produces it:" and it can be seen to do so, he adds, under such varieties of local circumstance, that the fact in question is plainly no mere accident, but is bound up in some way with material progress itself. Here, he exclaims (we are quoting his own words), "is the great enigma of our times. It is the central fact from which spring the industrial, social, and political difficulties that perplex the world, and with which statesmanship and philanthropy and education grapple in vain. From it come the clouds that overhang the future of the most self-reliant nations. It is the riddle which the Sphinx of Fate puts to our civilization, and which not to answer is to be destroyed." Mr. George in his present volume undertakes to answer it. He engages to show us, not only why poverty is connected with progress, but, further, that the connection is not in any way necessary; that the evil is artificial, not natural; and that it is in our power almost at once to cure it.

That men hitherto have failed to understand this, is due, he says, to the following simple fact.

Almost as soon as the riddle he speaks of began to be widely asked, some of the acutest of modern thinkers supplied the world with an answer to it; that answer has hitherto been all but universally accepted; and in certain essential points that answer is wrong. We have missed the truth, because we have rested content with falsehoods. These falsehoods are no vague things. They are two well-defined doctrines, which at present form the basis of all Political Economy. They are, the current theory of wages, and the current theory of population. Now, in these theories, were they only true, we should, no doubt, find exactly what we are looking for,—a full and sufficient explanation of poverty keeping pace with progress. Unfortunately, however, we should find more than that. We should find not only what was the cause of the evil, we should find also that there was no possible cure for it. We should have to regard it as something ordained by Nature; and, however the benevolent might still continue to deplore it, none but the ignorant would see any hope in attacking it. Such a conclusion Mr. George pronounces to be horrible. It is wholly repugnant, he says, to our inherent sense of the fitness of things; and it ought of itself to be enough to condemn the theories that support it. But what ought to be, is not always

what is. The impious theories — for so Mr. George describes them — still hold their own. They still lead the world to impute to God or Nature what is really the result of our own social injustice. The first step, therefore, is, fully to expose their falsehood. Before the reader can be shown the cure for poverty, he must be shown that it has never been really proved to be incurable.

Mr. George begins accordingly with the current theory of wages. This theory, to quote his own account of it, is, “that wages are fixed by the ratio between the number of laborers and the amount of capital devoted to the employment of labor, and that they constantly tend to the lowest amount on which laborers will consent to live and reproduce, because the increase in the number of laborers tends naturally to follow and overtake any increase in capital.” This theory, Mr. George maintains, is not only not the truth, but is the direct reverse of the truth; and no true conception of the social problem is possible till we have once for all put another in the place of it. His own counter-theory is as follows: “Wages,” he says, “instead of being drawn from capital, are drawn from the produce of the labor for which they are paid.” This, he tells us, is the great primary truth, which we must learn to substitute

for the hitherto current falsehood; and, the moment we have done so, a new light will break on us. "For if each laborer," he argues, "in performing the labor, really creates the fund from which his wages are drawn, these wages cannot be diminished by the increase of laborers; but on the contrary, as the efficiency of labor manifestly increases with the number of laborers, the more laborers, other things being equal, the higher should wages be."

This, however, says Mr. George, is only half the matter. It will avail us little to have demolished the current theory of wages, unless we demolish also the current theory of population. It will be observed, he says, that, in the inference just quoted, he has been obliged to make a proviso, — "*other things being equal.*" He supposes, that is to say, that the productive powers of nature do *not* tend to diminish "with the increasing drafts made upon them by increasing population." But that is the very thing which at present the economists suppose they do; and he is thus led to the second point, in which he declares the economists to be wrong.

"The current doctrine [he says] as to the derivation and law of wages, finds its strongest support in a doctrine generally accepted, — the doctrine to which Malthus has given his name, — that population naturally tends to increase faster than sub-

sistence; . . . so that doubling the application of labor does not double the produce.”

To put the case more plainly, he quotes Mill’s well-known statement of it:—

“‘A greater number of people cannot, in any given state of civilization, be collectively so well provided for as a smaller. The niggardliness of nature, not the injustice of society, is the cause of the penalty attached to over-population. An unjust distribution of wealth does not aggravate the evil, but, at most, causes it to be somewhat earlier felt. It is in vain to say that all mouths which the increase of mankind brings into existence bring with them hands. The new mouths require as much food as the old ones, and the hands do not produce as much.’

“All this [says Mr. George] I deny. I assert that the very reverse of these propositions is true. I assert, that, in any given state of civilization, a greater number of people can collectively be better provided for than a smaller. I assert that the injustice of society, not the niggardliness of nature, is the cause of the want and misery which the current theory attributes to over-population. I assert that the new mouths which an increasing population calls into existence require no more food than the old ones, while the hands they bring with them can in the natural order of things produce more. I assert, that, other things being equal, the greater the population, the greater the comfort which



an equitable distribution of wealth would give to each individual. I assert, that, in a state of equality, the natural increase of population would constantly tend to make every individual richer instead of poorer."

Such are the results of Mr. George's destructive criticism. Wages are not drawn from capital: population does not increase faster than do the means of subsistence. Having established, as he conceives, these two great principles, he appeals in triumph to the reader to note the consequence of his victory. He "has raised," he says, "an Antæus from the earth." He has shown that poverty, whatever its true cause be, is not caused by any permanent law of nature. What, then? The inference surely is simple: it must be caused somehow by some behavior of man. Again he asks, what, then? And the answer is simpler still: let governments for the future make men behave differently. Let us agitate a little; let us pass a few Acts of Parliament,—and, so far at least as material comfort goes, the earth will presently be turned into a garden of Eden. To Mr. George, all this seems exceedingly plain sailing. To say that an evil is caused by human conduct, is for him the same thing as to say that it is curable. Human conduct can, of course, be altered by legislation; and he has nothing now to ask but, *in what* human conduct is wrong.

The answer to this question forms the real gist of his book. The wrong conduct, the universal piece of injustice, to which all the poverty of the civilized world is attributable, consists, he says, in our treatment of land as private property. As laborers multiply, and machinery grows more perfect, not only is there more wealth in the world absolutely, but more, also, in proportion to the number of laborers. The laborer, however, still remains poor. What becomes of the wealth? Mr. George tells us that it is all absorbed in rent, and is thus drained away in the bottomless pockets of the landholders. A nation, he says, grows more and more productive; but wages do not rise, nor does interest on capital rise; the only thing that rises is rent; and the landholders are the only class that grow richer. They form, as it were, a waste-pipe low down in a cistern, which prevents the water, no matter what the supply be, from ever rising above a certain level.

Mr. George, in arguments which we shall by and by touch upon, supports this position with much labor and emphasis; and he then proceeds to his great practical message. If the rest of the world is poor because the landholders are rich, the cure for poverty is, to seize upon the landholders' property, and forcibly make it over to the nation at large, or to the state, with-

out, as he puts it, making any "bother" about compensation. Were the landholders to be compensated, or bought out, we might as well leave the matter alone. We should be simply paying out of one pocket, what we put into another. What we have to do is, not to buy, but to take. The proposal, no doubt, may at first sight seem startling to us; but Mr. George tells us we may make our consciences easy. The landholders, he says, are nothing but a set of robbers; and the state, in fleecing them for the good of the general public, would be doing nothing but again claiming its own. Let the state do this, he continues, and the thing we have dreamed of is accomplished. Poverty and misery will be at once cut at the roots. The change will be as great, and very nearly as sudden, as the transformation scene in a pantomime. Some colossal fortunes may perhaps shrink in the process; but all, save the very rich, will be seen to have grown richer. The tramp and the beggar will be men of leisure and affluence. Want will be unknown. It will be a thing of the barbarous past. All tears will be wiped away from all eyes: and even those who lose most in pounds, shillings, and pence, will be more than compensated by seeing how just their loss is; "for, in welcoming Justice, men welcome the handmaid of

Love." "Let imagination," says Mr. George, "fill out the picture: its colors grow too bright for words to paint."

Such, in outline, is Mr. George's argument, which thus resolves itself into the following five propositions:—

Firstly, As the production of wealth grows greater, the share that goes to the laboring-class grows less.

Secondly, The laboring-class creates its own wages as it receives them; it being wholly false that wages are drawn from capital.

Thirdly, Population does not increase faster than do the means of subsistence; and thus the current explanations of poverty are no explanation at all.

Fourthly, Poverty really is caused by the appropriation of land by individuals.

Fifthly, Poverty would be cured by the confiscation of the land by the state.

Each of these propositions we shall now discuss separately. The first we shall keep till last, but the other four we shall take in the order in which we have just stated them; and in each case we shall show Mr. George to be wholly wrong.

His theory of wages we shall examine with some minuteness,—not that it is really essential to the rest of his argument, but because it

will prepare us for the kind of blunderings that follow it. His statement of it naturally divides itself into two parts, — firstly, the proof that wages are *not* drawn from capital; secondly, the proof that they *are* drawn directly from labor.

He begins, accordingly, with reminding us, that, were the current theory true, the more abundant the capital, the higher would be the wages. "Higher wages," he says, "(the mark of the relative scarcity of labor) must be accompanied by low interest (the mark of the relative abundance of capital); and reversely, low wages must be accompanied by high interest." He then directs us to observe what actually happens, and declares with the utmost confidence that the above is "not the fact, but the contrary." The fact is, he says, "that interest is high where and when wages are high, and low where and when wages are low" (p. 17). To see that he is correct, he says, "We need only open our eyes to one of the plainest phenomena in the whole world of business."

"In those alternations [he says] known as 'good times' and as 'hard times,' a brisk demand for labor and good wages is always accompanied by a brisk demand for capital and stiff rates of interest. While, when laborers cannot find employment, and wages droop, there is always an accumulation of capital seeking investment at low rates."

Mr. George, however, is not content with generalities. He seeks to clinch the matter by one particular instance:—

“In California [he says], when wages were higher than anywhere else in the world, so also was interest higher. Wages and interest have, in California, gone down together. When, however, wages were five dollars a day, the ordinary bank-rate of interest was twenty-four per cent per annum. Now that common wages are two dollars, or two dollars and a half, a day, the ordinary bank-rate is from ten to twelve per cent” (p. 17).

Wages, therefore, he argues, are clearly not capital divided by the number of laborers; which is the same thing as saying that they are not drawn from capital at all. Mr. George takes little merit to himself for exposing this fallacy. His only wonder is, that any reasoning man should have been deceived by it. The grand truth that must replace it, is, he thinks, equally evident; and we have only missed it hitherto through some strange logical obliquity. That grand truth, as we have seen already, is, that wages are drawn directly from the produce of the labor for which they are paid, and that “the maintenance and the payment of this labor do not even temporarily trench upon capital” (p. 22). In certain cases, and to careless observers, Mr. George admits that they, no

doubt, seem to do so; but this is only because the observers *have* been careless, and, in examining the matter, have never begun at the beginning. Mr. George will show them what the beginning is.

“Supposing [he says] a hundred men to be landed, without any stock of provisions, in a new country. Will it be necessary for them to accumulate a season's stock of provisions before they can begin to cultivate the soil? Not at all. It will only be necessary that fish, game, berries, etc., shall be so abundant, that the labor of a part of the hundred may suffice to furnish daily enough of these for the maintenance of all, and that there shall be such a sense of mutual interest, or such a correlation of mutual desires, as shall lead those who in the present get the food, to divide (exchange) with those whose efforts are directed to future recompense. [That is to say, the crops of the ensuing year]” (p. 66).

There, exclaims Mr. George, is the whole matter in a nut-shell. This illustration will surely enlighten every one: it will explain his point, and at the same time show the truth of it. The point is, he says, to put it in different words, that wages are drawn from “*contemporaneous* production” of food, not “*previous*” production; and the men whose work will produce food in the future, or other objects of desire

which are not food, are virtually paying in advance those who give them food in the present. If, of the hundred men in the new country, half plough and sow, while the other half catch and cook enough rabbits for the whole of them, this arrangement only exists through the fact that the second half wish for the corn that will be produced by the labor of the first, and the first half wish for the rabbits that are caught by the labor of the second; each at the same time wishing for the results of its own labor also. Each, that is, wishes for rabbits and corn both; but both can only be obtained by this division of labor.

“ We [thus] see [says Mr. George] that each laborer is endeavoring to obtain, by his exertions, the satisfaction of his own desires: we see, that although the . . . division of labor assigns to the producer the production of but a . . . part . . . of the particular things he labors to get, yet, in aiding the production of what other producers want, he is directing other labor to the production of the things he wants — in effect, producing them himself. And thus, if he makes jack-knives, and eats wheat, the wheat is really as much the produce of his labor as if he had grown it for himself, and left wheat-growers to make their own jack-knives ” (p. 68).

In other words, his wages are drawn from a fund newly created by the very work for which



he is paid them. We shall, in fact, get a clearer view of the matter if we cease to say that he “*earns*” them, and say instead that he “*makes*” them. He makes them himself: they are not advanced by capital. To this, says Mr. George, there are never any exceptions; and the very cases which are most certain to seem so, are precisely those which prove the rule most clearly, not as exceptions to, but as examples of, it. A ship, for instance, may take two years to build; and wages are paid to the workmen long before it is finished. But these wages do not come out of capital; for, before the capitalist pays them, “his own capital has been added to by the value of the partially completed ship, . . . as is shown by the fact, that if he were asked, at any stage of the construction, to sell [it], . . . he would expect a profit” (p. 59). Thus the workmen have added to his capital before they take any thing from it, and the part that they have added is the precise part that they take from. They simply receive a proportion of what they have already given.

Such is Mr. George’s new theory of wages. Let us now see what its value is. To begin, then, with the first part of it, his demolition of the doctrine that wages are drawn from capital: his apparent easy triumph is here entirely due to his forgetting half the doctrine before he

begins attacking it. This doctrine, at starting, he says quite correctly, is that wages are fixed by the ratio between two quantities, — “the number of laborers, and the amount of capital devoted to the employment of labor.” This is the doctrine which he is going to prove false. But, when we come to the promised attack, we find, to our no small surprise, that the first of the said quantities has disappeared altogether; that for the *ratio between the two* he has substituted the *amount of the second*; that even from that he has taken its most essential qualification; and that, in place of the doctrine which he says has deceived everybody, he is tilting at one which was never even stated by anybody. Economists never said that the rate of wages in a country was determined by the amount of capital in that country, but by the ratio between the amount of capital seeking investment, and the number of laborers seeking employment. It is perfectly true, that in good times interest is high, and that in bad times interest is low. But this does not mean that there is less capital in the good times than the bad, in proportion to the number of laborers, but merely — and this is a very different thing — that there is less in proportion to the number of undertakings in which the employers of labor become anxious to use it. What we have here to deal with is,

not the sum-total of capital, but the sum-total of the capital that can be employed with profit. The theory of wages is concerned with this alone; and the very rise of interest, that Mr. George appeals to, proves that this is greater in good times than in bad. His position is refuted, and its absurdity shown, by the very fact which he cites to support it. We are not the first to notice this truly singular reasoning. It has been exposed already by M. Émile de Laveleye<sup>1</sup> in a brief review of Mr. George's book; and that review, though in most points insufficient and careless, contains one passage at any rate which we may quote with advantage here. It refers to what Mr. George alleges about California, "that *there* wages were high when capital was scarce, while in England capital is abundant, and wages low." To this statement, which, as a Californian himself, Mr. George brings out with a somewhat bullying air, M. de Laveleye, a complete master of the subject, calmly replies as follows:—

"I do not hesitate to say, that, relatively to the amount of wages paid, the amount of capital advantageously employed in California far exceeds that in England. In California, every field-laborer or small proprietor possesses his tools, his land, his

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<sup>1</sup> Contemporary Review, November, 1882.

timber, or his mines ; and there are scarcely any *hired* workmen, because every one sets up on his own account. In order to induce an able man to work for *wages*, you must offer him a very large share of the produce, which is considerable : wages are, therefore, of necessity high. In England, capital employs workmen only when they are to be had cheap, for the profit to be made is much reduced by competition. The demand for a laborer at two dollars a day, which was unlimited in California, could not exist in England ; for his labor there would not be worth two dollars. . . . We see, then, that, in California, capital demands hands at any price, and in unlimited number ; whereas in England the demand is limited, and at a low price. The theory of economists, therefore, holds good."

Such is Mr. George's famous outset. This is what he calls "raising an Antæus from the earth." He boasts, like Don Quixote, that he will cut a giant asunder ; and his blow, when it falls, merely knocks down a nine-pin. This beginning is hardly promising ; and, as we proceed farther, matters become worse. If he fails in showing that wages are not drawn from capital, he fails still more signally in showing that they are drawn from the produce of the labor they are paid for. His error here is of so crude and glaring a kind, that it can only escape detection from the very fact of its obtrusiveness.

To reveal it to all the world, nothing is needed but to point at it.

Let us take Mr. George's illustration of the workmen who build a ship. It is one which, he thinks, must prove his case conclusively. The ship, let us say, — speaking only of wages, apart from materials, — will be two years in building; and it will cost ten thousand pounds. Thus we shall have the capitalist every week paying the workmen (in round numbers) a hundred pounds in wages. Mr. George maintains, that, before even the first week's payment is paid by the capitalist, the hundred pounds has been already advanced him by the workmen in the shape, we will say, of the ship's keel. For just as the finished ship, or the produce of a hundred weeks' labor, is neither more nor less than the capitalist's ten thousand pounds, not lost or lessened, but merely changed in form, so, says Mr. George, the produce of one week's labor is neither more nor less than the capitalist's hundred pounds. It is simply so many sovereigns that have been handed to him over the counter, and which he has given change for in silver, minus the commission. The keel is the sovereign, the men's wages are the silver.

Now, the parallel here drawn, so far as it goes, is true; but, though true, it is signally incomplete; and it stops exactly at the point which

would have made it relevant to the discussion. A sovereign is a sovereign to the workman just as well as the capitalist, but the result of a week's work on the keel of a ship is not. That to the workman, if like a coin at all, is like the coin of a foreign country, which, until he has changed it, is merely a piece of rubbish to him, and which he can change only because the capitalist will give him change for it. In giving his work, then, to the capitalist, and, in return, getting his wages, he is not giving a sovereign, and getting twenty shillings, but giving a lump of dirt, and getting a sovereign; and the number of sovereigns he gets for the lumps of dirt depends on the number of sovereigns the capitalist has at his disposal. Give a penny apiece to a hundred starving beggars, and send them to a baker's late some Saturday night. If the baker in his shop has only fifty rolls, each of the men can get only half a roll apiece. Their pennies, were they shillings, would get them nothing more. The journeymen shipwrights are exactly like these men with the pennies: the capitalist they are working for is exactly like the baker. Now, what, in effect, does Mr. George say to this? Put into these terms, we at once see its absurdity. He says that the rolls are not drawn from the baker's shop, but out of the beggar's pockets. The beggar does

not give a penny for a roll, but he gives a roll for a roll; or, rather, he brings a roll into the shop for a moment, and then with the same roll simply walks out again. If that be the case, we may ask, why does he go into the shop at all? Why should there be any buying and selling in the matter? And so with the ships. If the workmen, in building it, really make their own wages, why do they work for the capitalist, and not for themselves? The essence of the transaction is, that there is an exchange. The gist of the question is, why should the change be made? Why is one thing given for another? And Mr. George's answer is, that the two things are the same.

This, were it true, would be merely half an answer; but, in point of fact, it is not true. It would not be true, even when the ship was finished. This, however, is not Mr. George's point. His point is, that it is true the very moment the ship is begun; and he thinks he proves this by saying, that, at any time during its building, the unfinished ship has a definite money value, and the owner would expect to be able to sell it at a profit. Very likely he would, but he would expect to sell it to whom? Plainly, to some other capitalist, who would only buy it that he might finish it, and who, until it were finished, could put it to no use whatever. Or

it might possibly pass through a dozen different hands, and at each transfer a higher price might be paid for it; but its value would still depend on the prospect of its being finished by some one, and until it was finished would be value in prospect only. Who would give a farthing for the finest keel in the world if the conditions of sale were, that it was to always remain in the dock, and that nothing more was to be added to it? Surely Mr. George must see, that, whatever it might have cost the capitalist, it would not be equivalent to the wages paid in making it; for it would not be equivalent to any value at all. Or let us put the case in a slightly different way. Let us suppose that the ship is an experiment, and, when finished, turns out a failure. Let us suppose, for instance, that it is like the Bessemer steamer. Does Mr. George think that this piece of floating lumber, which will never carry either man, woman, or cargo, nor add a fraction to the productive powers of any thing, is in any way the source of the seventy thousand dinners which a hundred workmen have eaten during the two years they have been engaged on it? So far as producing those dinners goes, the men might just as well have been paid to twiddle their thumbs. This surely must be evident to even the meanest capacity. And what is true of a finished ship, if only it sails badly, is true of any



ship before it can sail at all. We are not denying, that, if the ship succeeds, the work done on it during the first week will be worth the week's wages some day; but that they are not drawn from it now is at once proved by the fact, that the wages are paid the same, whether the ship succeeds or no. The work of the first week, if taken alone, is equally valueless in either case; and it will be so for a hundred weeks to come: but the value of the wages is complete the moment they are paid; and the beef, the beer, and so forth, which they are used to purchase, have been necessarily produced a hundred weeks previous to any practical return being made for them. That is to say, they have been drawn from capital.

We have more yet to add. Let the ship be successfully finished, and ready to take in cargo; and let us agree that at last the owner has his capital back again, — that the ship to him is now the same as £10,000. True, it is the same to him, but it is not the same to the shipwrights. It is capital only to one who has more capital to expend upon it. Unless it can be manned and victualled, it would be as valueless still as ever; so that, even had it been completed before a penny had been given in wages, the wages would still be determined by what the capitalist was able to pay for it. If *he* could pay little, nobody

else could pay any thing. The value of the ship would be, therefore, its value to him; and each workman's wages would be a fraction of that value. Even on this supposition, wages are drawn from capital. Mr. George's case is so bad that it cannot be proved, even from his own erroneous premises.

Surprising, however, as his position with regard to this question is, we can easily trace the false steps that have led him to it.

“The fundamental fault [he says], that in all economic reasoning must be firmly grasped, and never let go, is, that all society, in its most highly developed forms, is but an elaboration of society in its rudest beginnings, and that principles obvious in the simple relations of men are merely disguised, and not abrogated or reversed, by the more intricate relations that result from the division of labor, and the use of complex tools and methods” (p. 29).

And he then proceeds to the illustration we have already quoted of the hundred men who settle in a new country. In this small compass the whole matter is before us. What Mr. George calls his “fundamental truth,” is about the most fundamental falsehood that it was in his power to formulate. No doubt, society in its most highly developed forms is the same as society in its rudest beginnings in some points; but there are other points in which it is altogether different,

and of these the most important is precisely the point in question. No one ever said that capital was essential to all production. All that is said is, that it is essential to some production; that is to say, the production of civilized men, by which they are distinguished from, and not assimilated to, savages. That the man goes behind the wheelbarrow, is no proof that the horse does not go before the cart. A savage, no doubt, may live from hand to mouth, picking fruit and catching game as he requires it; but he can only live thus where Nature is always prodigal; and, even then, only his lowest wants are satisfied. Let his wants expand a little, and there is the germ of a change at once. If he is content with eating dates, and the crop of dates is unfailing, he, of course, need not accumulate them: his storeroom may be the trees. But if he wishes to get a crystal, which is two days' climb amongst the mountains, accumulation begins in an instant: dates for two days are collected. The exact moment when such an event takes place varies with different climates and the wants of different communities, and the bounty of Nature always tends to postpone it. It is, however, only a question of time. Thus Mr. George's supposition with regard to the hundred settlers is not impossible: it is simply quite irrelevant. All it shows is, that, under certain

specified circumstances, civilization can begin without previous accumulation of capital; but Mr. George fails to note that these circumstances are exceptional, and that, though they may foster a civilization as long as it is in its cradle, they will be at once destroyed by it as soon as it begins to toddle.

For let us note what these circumstances are. They are a supply on the spot of "fish, game, berries, and so forth," so easy to take that it might just as well be in a larder, and so abundant that nothing need be done to maintain it. Now, no doubt there are some new countries where a state of things like this actually does exist; but it exists only so long as the countries are new. By and by, as population increases, the game and the berries, though they may increase also, will increase only because labor is now applied to them; because game is bred as well as merely caught, and fruit-trees planted as well as merely rifled. Thus, though the food of the first year may be the produce of "contemporaneous" labor, that of the fifth, the tenth, or the twentieth, will be the produce of "previous" labor. Wages are only not drawn from capital so long as the food-supply needs no human care to maintain it. So much, then, for Mr. George's case. Let us now remind him that that case is exceptional, and let us ask him to

consider the normal case instead of it. Let us suppose, that, in the new country, there are no game and berries at all. Some of the finest corn-land in the world was in this condition when the first settlers came to use their ploughs upon it. On what does Mr. George think that these settlers lived? There is no room either for doubt or quibbling here. They lived evidently on food they had brought with them; that is to say, on capital, and nothing but capital. Or let us take a clearer example still. A trading-ship is sent on a six weeks' voyage. During those six weeks, on what do the crew live? Mr. George delights in illustrations, and with illustrations we have answered him. His are exceptional, and do not prove his point: ours are normal and homely, and altogether disprove it.

We will not be content, however, with confuting Mr. George ourselves. We will make him do it out of his own mouth.

“In the great San Joaquin Valley [he says], there were [in 1877, owing to a total failure of the crop] many farmers without food enough to support their families until the next harvest-time, let alone to support any laborers. But the rains came again in proper season, and these very farmers proceeded to hire hands to plough and sow. For every here and there was a farmer, who had been holding back

part of his crop. As soon as the rains came, he was anxious to sell before the next harvest brought lower prices ; and the grain thus held in reserve, through the machinery of exchanges and advances, passed to the use of the cultivators, — set free, in effect *produced*, by the work done for the next crop.”

We will request the reader to consider this passage well. Had Mr. George expressly designed it to destroy instead of supporting his theory, he could have written nothing better adapted to his purpose. The farmers, he admits, are enabled to go on with their labors only because some other farmers have corn already accumulated. But this last year's corn, he actually goes on to declare, is the produce of the ploughing done for the crop of next year. Surely, if this be the case, the result will be somewhat singular. If this year's ploughing produces last year's crop, then this year's ploughing can multiply last year's crop. The more acres the farmer ploughs, the more of last year's bushels will appear in the padlocked barn. This absurdity, of course, needs no comment. But, though this is not true, the exact reverse is ; and, what is more, Mr. George himself admits it. Though this year's ploughing cannot increase last year's corn, the amount of last year's corn does limit this year's ploughing. Thus once more we see that wages are drawn from

capital. Mr. George's enemy here has found him out with a vengeance. His illustration is like a Balaam, which he has invoked to curse the economists, and which, as soon as he has got hold of it, blesses them altogether.

But we have already dwelt too long upon this branch of our subject. Let us now pass on to the next. It will afford the reader a very similar spectacle. Mr. George attacks the Malthusian theory exactly as we have seen him attacking the theory of wages, — with the same weapons, the same ferocity, and with the same ill-success. He begins with declaring, much as he did in the former case, that the falsehood he is about to expose is the most palpable thing conceivable, and would never have become current but for certain adventitious circumstances. One of these was, that it flattered and soothed the rich, by assuring them that they were not to blame for the vice and misery of the poor. The other, which is far more important, is, that it seems to fit in with the Darwinian theory of evolution. Darwin, it has been said, "is Malthus all over;" and, conversely, it is supposed that Malthus is "Darwin all over." Mr. George admits that this view of the matter is plausible, and further, that, if true, it would be all in favor of Malthus. His first care, therefore, is to show us that it is not true, and that, however Malthusianism may

resemble Darwinism on the surface, it is at bottom a wholly different thing. His point here he makes with considerable skill, and it is with pleasure that we acknowledge that he does so; though, as we shall see presently, it is really no use to him afterwards. Darwin, he says, asserts that there is a struggle for existence among the animals; Malthus, among men: but the first assertion may be true, and the latter wholly false, because in a special way men and animals differ.

“Of all living things [Mr. George writes], man is the only one who can give play to the reproductive forces, more powerful than his own, which supply him with food. . . . Both the jay-hawk and the man eat chickens; but, the more jay-hawks, the fewer chickens; while, the more men, the more chickens. Both the seal and the man eat salmon; but, when the seal takes a salmon, there is a salmon the less; . . . while, by placing the spawn of the salmon under favorable conditions, man can so increase the number of the salmon as to more than make up for all that he may take. . . . Within the limits of the United States alone, there are now forty-five millions of men, where there were only a few hundred thousand; and yet there is now within that territory much more food *per capita* for the forty-five millions than there was there for the few hundred thousand. It is not the increase of food that has caused this increase of men, but the increase of



men that has brought about the increase of food. . . . In short, while all through the vegetable and animal kingdoms the limit of subsistence is independent of the thing subsisted, with man the limit of subsistence is, within the final limits of earth, air, water, and sunshine, dependent upon man himself" (pp. 116, 117).

Now, in all this, with the exception of one parenthesis, Mr. George is as true as he is lucid; and even in that parenthesis the error is implied rather than stated. It is a sin, not of commission, but of omission. But that omission, as we shall presently see, is fatal; and, though what we have just quoted may be very fine writing, it will turn out to be very poor reasoning. Mr. George says, that, as men multiply, they widen, *pari passu*, the limits of their subsistence, and will continue to do so till every mile of the earth is peopled; therefore, he says, till this remote event be accomplished, the limits of subsistence can never be pressed against by population. The premise is true, but not the implied inference. It by no means follows, because the limits of subsistence are elastic, that very great pressure may not be required to stretch them. Mr. George argues as though they must be one of two things,—so absolutely rigid that they can be bent by nothing, or so absolutely yielding that they can be bent by any thing. If he

can prove that they are not like the trunk of an oak-tree, he thinks he has proved that they must be like the twig of a hazel. It never occurs to him that there is yet a third alternative, and that they may possibly be like the bow of Ulysses. Because they are not a ridge of mountains which no one can climb, they need not be a chalk-line which anybody can step over. They may instead be like a long succession of forts, which are always being taken, but always being taken with loss. This third alternative Mr. George utterly misses, and it is this third alternative that represents what is really the case. The earth, he says, "*could*" maintain "a thousand billions of people" as easily as at present it maintains its thousand millions. Mr. George declares that no one can doubt the fact, and for our present argument we have no wish to dispute it; but he seems hardly aware what the fact he has stated is. The earth could, he says, maintain a thousand billions of people. This in itself, however, is only half a sentence. The word *could* is conditional, and is wholly without meaning, except as referring to some implied clause of conditions; and this clause Mr. George has altogether forgotten. The earth *could* maintain a thousand billions of people, only *if* the thousand billions of people knew how to extract their maintenance from it. The

whole of New York might be built upon cooked beefsteak; but, unless the New-Yorkers knew that the steak was there, it would not keep a single beggar from starving; and beggars might starve and die in the streets for centuries, before chance revealed the abundance they had all this while been walking on. The earth, five hundred years ago, was as large as it is now; but, before Columbus discovered America, it was but half its present size to the then population of Europe: and, though America has been yellow with corn from Long Island to San Francisco, the European limit of subsistence would not have been an inch the wider for it. "The final limits of earth, air, water, and sunshine," though they may some day prevent the limit of subsistence from expanding, are simply the limits of its maximum: they are no measure of its minimum. Because a quart-bottle will hold no more than a quart, it does not follow that there need be in it so much as a wineglass. The question is, not how much food exists, but how fast is it found? not whether hunger is in advance of the powers of nature, but whether it is in advance of the powers of human invention and enterprise.

We will come back to this point presently. We must first observe how Mr. George reasons in neglect of it. In particular spots, even over

very large districts, he admits that population may be too dense for the soil to nourish. Nay, it may not only outstrip, it may even destroy, the food-supply. He cites London as an obvious case in point. The corn and mutton consumed by the inhabitants of the city are not sown and fattened on the asphalt pavement. But the inhabitants of London might be doubled on its present area, and yet they would press on the limits of subsistence no more than they do already. For though they did not grow corn, or breed sheep, they would be producing objects of human desire of some kind; and that is virtually producing corn and sheep somewhere. And what is true of London may some day be true of England: indeed, it is partially true now. English soil will not produce enough food for the English people, but the English people virtually produce enough food for themselves. Though they may not have worked directly in the furrows, they have worked for the workers; and that comes to the same thing. The Lancashire manufacturer who clothes the American ploughman, is, in effect, increasing the world's harvest himself. For the economic condition of no place is of any private interpretation. That is the essence of Mr. George's doctrine. We must regard the earth as a whole, not country by country; and, as

long as food is raised on the planet somewhere, it is altogether a minor question where. The more factories there are in one place, the more cornfields there will be in another; and, if there is corn in Egypt, there cannot be famine in Palestine. “[Thus],” says Mr. George, “the globe may be surveyed, and history may be reviewed, in vain for any instance of a considerable country in which want can be fairly attributed to an increasing population” (p. 95)

It is, of course, plain that the foregoing arguments are closely bound up with Mr. George’s theory of wages; and that in itself is enough to show that they must be false. But, besides his theory of wages, there is another error involved in them,—another distinct stone added on to the fabric of falsehood; and it is that error which we are now about to expose. Mr. George, as usual, does all he can to help us. He supplies us himself with the exact arguments we are in want of. We have only to do the one thing that he does not do; and that is, to draw from them the only rational inference. The reader will have observed, that, in the sentence we just now quoted, the author slips in a certain word of qualification. Never, he says, during the whole course of history, has want in any country been caused by the pressure of population; that is to say, he adds, in any *considerable* coun-

try. Now, to this word *considerable* Mr. George appends a footnote. It is as follows: —

“ I say considerable country, because there may be small islands, such as Pitcairn’s Island, cut off from communication with the rest of the world, and consequently from the exchanges which are necessary to the improved modes of production resorted to as population becomes dense, which may seem to offer examples in point. A moment’s reflection, however, will show that these exceptional cases are not in point.”

Now, that is the very thing we propose to show they are; and we fear that Mr. George cannot have bestowed the moment’s reflection he speaks about, or he would certainly have given a very different account of the result of it. A country like Pitcairn’s Island is, he says, an exceptional case. However true may be his own theory generally, it is, at all events, false there. He has driven Malthus ignominiously out of Europe and America; but the dishonored philosopher has found one refuge, at any rate, where to this day he reigns like a fallen angel; and Mr. George describes him in the remote southern seas, still sitting on his dolorous throne, and watching one wretched population pressing against the limits of subsistence. In Pitcairn’s Island, as Mr. George admits, Mr. George is wrong, and Mr. Malthus

is right. Now, what is the reason of this? The reason, says Mr. George, is that the island is "cut off from communication with the rest of the world." Plainly, however, he cannot mean this statement absolutely. Pitcairn's Island is not in the moon. It is washed by a terrestrial sea. Ships have touched at it, and ships do touch at it. All, then, that Mr. George can possibly mean, is, not that it is cut off from communication with the rest of the world, but that it cannot communicate with it without a certain effort and difficulty. But Pitcairn's Island is not peculiar in this. The condition is essentially that of every other country, and the difference between it and them is one of degree only. Of all other countries, England and America are perhaps the two which are now most closely connected; but the connection was not established without infinite pain and effort, and it costs constant effort every day to maintain it. All we need here speak of, is the question of the American food-supply. This reaches England only through the most complex and delicate machinery, which was slow in construction, which is easy to derange, which it is possible to ruin, and which it is difficult to add to. England only gets from America because it gives to America; and what it gets depends, not on what America grows, but on

what the Americans desire of the things that England makes. Thus, so far as Englishmen subsist on the produce of American cornfields, it is not the extent of the cornfields that forms the limit of this subsistence, but the wants and the tastes of the Americans as related to England's powers of supplying them. Now, such wants and tastes are of all things the most liable to vary. There may be a point beyond which they cannot shrink, as there is certainly a point beyond which they cannot expand; but, though they may never entirely disappear, yet any day they might dwindle; and, did they dwindle, what would happen is obvious. The limits of subsistence for England would be suddenly narrowed, and the population of England would at once be pressing against them. England would partially "be cut off from communication with the rest of the world." It would be advancing within measurable distance of the condition of Pitcairn's Island.

Mr. George, therefore, in speaking of the limits of subsistence, has wholly mistaken what those limits are. They are neither the powers of nature by themselves, nor the hands and hunger of men by themselves. They are something far more complex, and far harder to deal with. They are conditions of society and civilization in one country as compared with



another: they are ignorance and knowledge, cowardice and courage, force of habit, and local attachments. In a word, they are the limits of the human character, — the limits, not of the wants, but of the wills, of men; not of the number of hands that could work for food, but of the enterprise, the knowledge, and the genius, that directs them where to work for it. Many men starve in their own country because they love it too well to leave it, or because they are too weak to make the effort required to do so. Many men starve, not because there is no work to be done, but because they do not know where the work is; and, the more civilization advances, the more labor is divided; and, the more densely the world becomes peopled, the more fatal does such ignorance become, and such knowledge the more difficult.

Here, then, are two limits, at least, that population tends to press against, — the limit of habit and local attachment, and the limit of knowledge; and it is by limits of this kind, that, practically, the limit of subsistence is prescribed. Thus it is not, as Mr. George supposes, one thing, but many. There is a separate limit, not only for every country, but for every district, and for every town. There are limits within limits, circles within circles, like so many india-rubber rings enclosed in larger ones, and the

thickness and elasticity of no two alike. Sometimes one may yield and enlarge suddenly, and then for a time the pressure against it ceases: again, another, instead of expanding, may contract. The Malthusian theory does not deny this. All that it asserts is, that, in expanding the india-rubber rings, some pressure has to be always exerted; and that, on the average, a certain proportion of people are always injured by the pressure before they are able to relieve it. To put the Malthusian theory into these terms is not only to show that it is notoriously and indubitably true, but that it is the very truth that Mr. George himself has all along been asserting. The limits of subsistence are widened by discovery or invention; but the mother of invention is necessity, not comfort; and the child is conceived in sorrow, and brought forth in pain.

What, then, have we seen thus far? Merely that Mr. George, for all his pains and his bravado, has left the economists exactly where he found them. Instead of showing that there is no connection between poverty and the limits of capital and poverty and the limits of subsistence, he has unintentionally shown us how strict this connection is. Here, however, is a point important to notice. Neither has Mr. George shown unintentionally, nor the econo-

mists intentionally, that *all* poverty is due to the above-named causes, but merely that some is, and probably always must be. The most bigoted Malthusian would not dream of maintaining, that, because some poverty was caused by the increase of population, more could not be caused by the increase of pick-pockets, and that a great deal more might not be caused by fires. Thus, though Mr. George has failed in proving his first two points, it does not follow that he is not partly right in his third. His third point is, that the cause of all poverty is the private ownership of land; and that, if private ownership were abolished, poverty would cease. Now, it is plain from what we have just seen, that this cannot be true of all poverty; but we have seen nothing as yet to show that it may not be true of some. That is a question on which we have yet to enter. Like the one we have discussed already, it divides itself into two parts. First, does private ownership in land, as a fact, cause any poverty at all? and secondly, would any poverty be lessened by making all land over to the state?

We begin with the first. With regard to this, we have already stated Mr. George's general position. Private property in land causes poverty, because it diverts rent into the pockets of the landholders. That is to say, it perpetu-

ally mulets the productive workers of the community of a certain part of their produce. Now, let us at once say that thus far Mr. George is entirely right. We not only concede his point, but we cannot conceive how any one could doubt it. If a tenant's rents are every year remitted to him, *cæteris paribus*, he is, of course, a richer man. If they are not remitted to him, *cæteris paribus*, he is poorer than if they were. A beggar would be a Cræsus if he had never to pay his bills; and, if our zero-point of wealth is fixed by our getting any one thing without payment, we, of course, become poor relatively the moment we have to pay for it. Poverty thus used, however, is wholly a relative term; and whether it means any thing or nothing in respect of the present inquiry, depends wholly on the absolute meaning we attach to it. The question is not, are men poorer because they pay rent? That, of course, they are. The question is, how much poorer? The main point of Mr. George's argument is, not that rent robs tradesmen of truffles, but that it robs beggars of bread. It is only when we come to this question of quantity, that we join issue with him; and here we affirm that he is not only wrong, but grotesquely and absurdly wrong. His errors, as he puts them, are diffused over so many paragraphs, adorned with so much ex-

cited rhetoric, and intermixed with so much acute reasoning, that their true character may escape the ordinary reader; but let them only be put into a brief and comprehensible form, and to any sane man they will sound like the ravings of a lunatic.

For what Mr. George asserts is this. As population increases in a country, there is not only more wealth in that country actually, but more in proportion to the increased number of inhabitants. Each thousand pounds of capital naturally yields higher interest: each laborer naturally earns ("i.e., is maker of") more wages. But the whole of this increase is swallowed up by rent. The landholders alone get richer, and capitalists and laborers remain just where they were. Let us take an example. There is a small farm in a remote country district, bringing the farmer in a hundred pounds a year, out of which hundred he pays thirty in rent. By and by a town springs up in the neighborhood: the small farmer becomes a large market-gardener, and his hundred pounds a year soon mount to a thousand. His gross annual profits, before his rent is deducted from them, are thus nine hundred pounds more than they were before; and if to these profits his rent bore the same proportion as formerly, his net income would be seven hundred, not seventy, pounds

a year. It would have increased by an annual six hundred and thirty pounds. But, according to Mr. George, nothing of this kind happens. The whole of the six hundred and thirty pounds are confiscated by the landholder. This is ridiculous enough, but Mr. George means more than this. Add six hundred and thirty pounds to the original rent of thirty, and the tenant's profits are still three hundred and forty. His original income still would be nearly five times as much as before. But Mr. George maintains that it actually remains the same, — that it is not increased at all. That is to say, out of the annual thousand pounds of produce, the landholder takes, not six hundred and thirty pounds, but nine hundred and thirty; and the tenant still remains with nothing but his original seventy.

The particular illustration we have just given is our own, but it includes nothing but what Mr. George actually says. We can well imagine that the reader may doubt the fact: we therefore present him with Mr. George's own words. Having devoted an entire chapter to impressing on us the obvious truth, that "when productive power increases, as it is increasing in all progressive countries," the value of land proportionately increases also, and rents become proportionately higher, Mr. George proceeds solemnly

to draw from it the following inference: "If the value of land," he says, "[thus] increases proportionately, *all the increased production will be swallowed up by rent, and wages and interest will remain as before*" (p. 154). Nor does this statement stand by itself. Mr. George repeats it over and over again, first in one form, then in another. He makes it wholly impossible for a moment to doubt his meaning.

A more astonishing piece of reasoning than this, we venture to say, cannot be found in literature. Let us apply it for a moment, not to the rent of land, but to the wholly analogous case of the interest on borrowed capital. It is, of course, true, that, the more money a man borrows, the more annual interest he will have to pay. Supposing he is able to borrow at five per cent, if he pays fifty pounds a year for the use of one thousand pounds, he will pay a hundred pounds a year for the use of two thousand. That is to say, the sum he pays the lender will increase proportionately<sup>1</sup> to the sum he borrows

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<sup>1</sup> The word *proportionately* may perhaps be somewhat ambiguous; but Mr. George expressly uses it in its ordinary and obvious sense, as equivalent to *in the same ratio as*: for, in the sentence that follows the one just now quoted, he says, that if the value of land, *instead of increasing proportionately*, "increases in *greater* ratio than productive power, rent will swallow up even more than the increase" (p. 154). The error to be guarded against is the misuse of the word *proportionately* for increasing *in an increasing ratio*.

from him. But Mr. George's meaning is nothing of this kind. He asserts, indeed, that the sum will increase proportionately; but that is his premise; it is very far from being his conclusion. His conclusion is, that, *because* it will increase proportionately, *therefore* it will not increase proportionately at all: on the contrary, it will increase out of all proportion. In other words, because the first thousand pounds are borrowed at five per cent, therefore the second must necessarily be borrowed at fifty, or at whatever rate will swallow up the borrower's profits.

Now, a state of things like this is, no doubt, not inconceivable: indeed, under certain exceptional circumstances, and in certain places, it may be actual. And just as there may be usurers in the lending of money, so also there may be usurers in the letting of land. We do not assert the contrary. What we do assert is, that, though private ownership of land may produce such a result sometimes, the result is accidental, and in no way necessary; and the only question before us is, not, must it take place always?—for then it certainly need not,—but does it take place, as a fact, in the times and countries we are dealing with? The two countries Mr. George specially deals with are England and America. It will be quite enough if we ask,



does it take place there? We have no need here for theories and deductions. Mr. George's formal reasonings may be cast to the four winds. We have merely to look notorious facts in the face, and ask, not, what must be? but, what is?

Is it, then, a fact in England and America, that the landholders, as production increases, pocket all the increase, and that all the rest of the community, so far as wealth goes, remain stationary? Do merchants, manufacturers, and bankers starve, and do landholders alone make fortunes? Is *nouveau riche* a synonymous term with landholder? To ask this question is to answer it, and to answer it with a derisive negative. Have the men, whom we hitherto supposed to have made fortunes in cotton-spinning, been, not really cotton-spinners, but merely the ground-landlords of factories? Have Mr. Bright and Mr. Chamberlain made neither screws nor carpets, but wrung their fortunes in rack-rents from anonymous firms that have? Are these Sauls really among the prophets? So far are landholders from being the only class that gain by material progress, that they are not even the class that gain most by it. Mr. George alludes continually to the wealth of the Duke of Westminster. Let him compare that with the wealth of the house of Rothschild. Even in towns where land is most remunera-

tive, it brings more per foot to the occupier than to the owner. Or let us take a case from the history of the midland counties. An embarrassed squire discovers coal on his property. A company is formed, a pit is opened; and the embarrassed squire suddenly rolls in riches. Mr. George, no doubt, would find this a fine theme for his eloquence. If we wanted to see where the newly found wealth went, he would tell us to look into the squire's stables, at the new wing of his house, or at his wife's jewels and carriages. All, he would say, that the coal should have added to the well-being of the country, is diverted to himself by this rapacious and useless blood-sucker. But let us put this wretched rhetoric to the test of facts, and how much truth shall we find really at the bottom of it? What proportion of the value of each ton is, as a fact, paid to a man like the squire in question? If a ton of coal at the pit's mouth be worth eight shillings, of that eight shillings the squire would receive about sixpence. Instead of receiving the larger part of its value, he would receive but one-sixteenth of it; whilst, if we measure its value by its cost to the general public, instead of one-sixteenth he would receive little more than one-fiftieth. Men who have coal on their property become, no doubt, extremely rich; but they are rich, not because

out of each ton they appropriate much, but because there are many tons out of which they appropriate little. Finally, let us pass to a case, which, though not really so strong as this, is perhaps here more forcible, because it is more notorious, — the normal case of the owners of agricultural land. Of all securities in which money can be invested, agricultural land is the one which yields the lowest return. There is no need to substantiate this fact. It is so well known as to be proverbial. We are at the present moment speaking more particularly of our own country; but, as Mr. George says that his theories are exemplified better here than anywhere else, our own country by itself is quite sufficient to refute him. We say, to refute him; but it seems almost an abuse of the word to talk about refuting an assertion so monstrous as Mr. George's. Even M. de Laveleye, whose hatred of large landlords is as great as Mr. George's own, who avowedly sympathizes with the aims of the Irish Land League, and who would in England be ranked with the extremest Radicals, puts aside Mr. George's statement on this point, as a thing below the level of criticism. "A single glance round," he says, "is enough to show its falsehood."

"Who [he exclaims] occupy the pretty houses and villas which are springing up in every direction

in all prosperous towns? Certainly more than two-thirds of these occupants are fresh capitalists. The value of capital engaged in industrial enterprise exceeds that of land itself, *and its power of accumulation is far greater than that of ground-rents.* The immense fortunes amassed so rapidly in the United States, like those of Mr. Gould and Mr. Vanderbilt, were the results of railway speculation, and not of the greater value of land. We see, then, that the increase of profits and of interest takes a much larger proportion of the total value of labor, and is a more general and powerful cause of inequality than the increase of rent."

We do not quote this passage to corroborate our own denial of what Mr. George has said, so much as to convince our readers that Mr. George has actually said what we have denied, and thus to bring home to them what an extravagant falsehood underlies the main argument of this mischievous book.

We do not say that what Mr. George asserts could not happen: we do not even say that it never has happened. All we say is, that it does not happen. Much of the money of England once went to Rome. Possibly some day much may go again, but we are perfectly certain that much does not go at present. Mr. George would be quite as much in accordance with facts, if he said that modern poverty was due to the grow-

ing exactions of the Pope, as he is in saying that it is due to the growing exactions of the landlords. So far, indeed, are the exactions of the landlords from growing, that, though rents increase absolutely, they tend to decrease relatively. They become less in proportion to the ability of the people to pay them; and though the landlords may still, as a class, be the richest people in the country, that is not because their rents are higher, but because they themselves are fewer in number. A district, which, if rented at four pounds an acre, would barely keep two thousand attorneys in villas, might be rented at two, and keep ten dukes in castles. This will show that what we assert is not in contradiction to reason, whilst an appeal to history will show that it is in accordance with fact. Once more let us refer to M. de Laveleye. "In the Middle Ages," says that gentleman, "the number of persons living on the interest of capital was exceedingly few. Nearly all the rich lived on the produce of land. Now, in countries where civilization is advanced, as in England, more than half the rich live on the interest of their capital."<sup>1</sup> Had Mr. George been a person of the least historical information, he would have known this fact without requiring to be

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<sup>1</sup> Contemporary Review, November, 1882, p. 795.

told it. Had he known it, he could scarcely have missed perceiving, that, put in another way, it simply amounts to this: that his own theory is not only false to facts, but that it absolutely inverts them; and that the history of progress, so far as land is concerned, is virtually the history, not of the rise of rent, but, as related to progress generally, of its constant and steady decline.<sup>1</sup>

Now, how is Mr. George's position affected by our recognition of the true state of the case? Something of what he asserts is still left to him, and to that something we bid him welcome. Though rent declines, it certainly does not cease; and, as we have said already, if all rent could be abolished, rent-payers certainly would be so much the richer. So much we concede, and willingly. But it is evident from the facts we have been just considering, that the increase of riches thus gained to the public, though it might do something to alleviate poverty for the moment, for the moment even would only do little, and each succeeding year it would do less and less. To attempt to cure poverty by the abolition of rent would be the attempting, in the case of a leaky cistern, to remedy the waste from a hole in the side, by checking evaporation

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<sup>1</sup> This fact is dwelt upon at greater length in the essay on *The Statistics of Agitation*.

at the surface. Something might be done in that way, but not much. In a small and in a decreasing percentage of cases, the evil might be nipped in the bud, but it would not be even so much as touched at the root.

If Mr. George, then, likes to assert the above theoretical proposition, he is, we say, welcome to do so. Even theoretically it means exceedingly little. But our main objection yet remains to be made to it; and that is, that practically it means nothing at all. Having shown that the cure, supposing it to be applied, would be inadequate, we shall now point out that it is wholly impossible to apply it.

Mr. George proposes to abolish rent by making the state the universal landlord; and rent would thus virtually cease, he says, not by ceasing to be paid, but by being paid for purposes that would benefit those that paid it. It would, in other words, be transformed into a land-tax, which would take the place of all other forms of taxation. The way in which he says such a change would be most easily effected will explain, perhaps, more exactly what the change he contemplates really is.

“I do not propose [says Mr. George] either to purchase or to confiscate private property in land. The first would be unjust; the second, needless. Let the individuals who now hold it still retain, if

they want to, possession of what they are pleased to call *their* land. Let them continue to call it *their* land. Let them buy, and sell, and bequeath, and devise it. We may safely leave them the shell if we take the kernel. *It is not necessary to confiscate the land: it is only necessary to confiscate rent.*

“Nor, to take that for public use, is it necessary that the state should bother with the letting of lands, and assume the chances of favoritism, collusions, and corruption, that it might involve. It is not necessary that any new machinery should be created. The machinery already exists. Instead of extending it, all we have to do is to simplify and reduce it. By leaving to land-owners 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 change in our modes of taxation to take it all.

“What I propose, therefore, as this simple, yet sovereign, remedy, which will raise wages, increase the earnings of capital, extirpate pauperism, abolish poverty, give remunerative employment to whoever wishes it, afford free scope to human powers, lessen crime, elevate morals and taste and intelligence, purify government, and carry civilization to yet nobler heights, is *appropriate rent by taxation.*”



It is not essential to Mr. George's scheme that it should be carried out exactly in the way thus indicated, but the means he recommends will illustrate the end he insists on. Now, let us suppose that end accomplished: let us suppose all rent to be appropriated by taxation. How will this tend to produce the effect he prophesies? We gather from Mr. George that it will do so in four ways, — firstly, by abolishing all existing taxation, and thus making living incalculably cheaper to every one; secondly, in case the land-tax should exceed the existing revenue, by returning the surplus to the tax-payers, in the shape of public works or otherwise; thirdly, by preventing land-owners from keeping land unoccupied in expectation of a rise in its value; and lastly, by making rents themselves lower. Let us take these four ways in order.

As to the first, we may grant Mr. George his point. His programme, if carried out, would, no doubt, make living cheaper; and, for a time, certain classes might be really the better off for it. But it would be for the time only: for, if living became cheaper, soon wages would become less; and things would again be just where they are now.

As to the second point, it is, no doubt, conceivable that the proposed land-tax might yield a surplus to the government, which they might

expend, as Mr. George suggests, partly in public institutions, and partly in direct assistance to the poor, — such, for example, as endowing their children on marriage. But nothing would be really gained by this in the end. For it is the very essence of the case, that the surplus thus employed should be returned to the community as a gift, not as wages for labor. Now, such a gift must take one of two forms. It must be either of the nature of a free library or museum, or else it must be of the nature of a free largess of corn. Only in the latter case, however, will it bring any relief to what Mr. George means by poverty. Starving men cannot eat books or fossils; and beggars are beggars still, though they beg under marble porticos. The only gift — for we repeat, it is a gift we are dealing with<sup>1</sup> — that could in any way save from poverty those that would else be poor, is not money spent on the public generally, but money given to individuals for the purposes of private consumption, — such, for instance, as the marriage-portions Mr. George speaks of. If the land-tax, therefore, were to yield any surplus revenue, this would

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. George is essentially not a state Socialist. He emphatically does not mean that the state is to be the one capitalist, and that all the nation are to be either clerks or operatives in the national house. He further expressly repudiates the doctrine, that every one should work according to his ability, and be paid according to his wants.

enable the state to touch the suffering classes, only by converting it into a vast charitable institution, ready to give inexhaustible outdoor relief. The state would be thus doing, only on an infinitely larger scale, what it did with such disastrous effects for the populace of ancient Rome. In the very act of relieving poverty, it would be creating it. It would be quenching thirst with sea-water. As to this fact, there is no room for doubt. The evidence of all experience is in agreement, and is conclusive; and even Mr. George himself, by implication, admits the truth of it. One illustration, however, happens to occur to us, which is so singularly apposite, and also so little known, that it may be worth mentioning here. Mr. George's expedient for the abolition of poverty was actually tried in England, on a small scale, some eighty years ago. A certain philanthropic gentleman left an estate of four thousand a year to the inhabitants of three villages in Herefordshire. He did, that is to say, just what Mr. George recommends. He nationalized (as it were) amongst the tenants what was once the revenue of the squire. Before many years had elapsed, these three villages had become three warrens of paupers. More misery was produced by this ill-advised generosity than could have been possibly caused by the most merciless rack-renting; and so wretched and

scandalous did the state of things become, that a special Act had to be passed through Parliament to revoke the gift that had caused so much misery. There is yet another case, also not generally known, in which Mr. George's programme has again been virtually anticipated. It has been alluded to recently in a slight but most sensible work by Mr. John Polson, entitled "Affluence, Poverty, and Pauperism." "There is a fund," says Mr. Polson, "raised every year by Jews throughout the whole world, for the benefit of the poor Jews in Palestine. . . . This fund is called the 'Haluka.'" A correspondent of the "Jewish Chronicle, writing from Jerusalem in August, 1880, says, —

"In regard to the Haluka — here at Jerusalem, the rabbis, the heads of the Hebrew communities, and the converts, distribute money and provisions, and sometimes pay *taxes and house-rents*, ostensibly in charity, but practically in support of indolence, and in encouragement of poverty. . . . If the regeneration of Syria is to be attempted, . . . the first step would be to regulate the Haluka, . . . which at present corrupts and demoralizes the Jewish population."

We may therefore dismiss at once Mr. George's dreams of a possible surplus revenue as a means for the cure of poverty. It would do less in the desired direction than even the nominal cheapen-

ing of the cost of subsistence which might result from the re-adjustment of taxation. Nothing, then, now remains for us to consider, but the two last of the four ways mentioned, in which Mr. George declares that his magnificent scheme will operate.

These two are really the most important; and, could Mr. George make good his case with regard to them, it would be of comparatively little matter that he lost it with regard to the two others. For the deepest root of poverty, according to him, is, not that private property in land makes living dear, but that it tends to shut out an increasing portion of the population from the only means of making any living at all; that is to say, it keeps land idle, or put to relatively unproductive uses, which millions of the poor are longing at this moment to occupy, and out of which, if they occupied it, they could make an excellent living. Mr. George's exact meaning as to this point, it is somewhat difficult to define. Indeed, it seems he has not been at the trouble to make it very exact to himself. Sometimes his language suggests that he contemplates every citizen becoming a tenant of the state to some extent, and drawing some advantage *directly* from his occupancy of a part of the soil; and, again, at other times, he speaks of farmers and farm-laborers as though the

existing system would still continue, and the latter would benefit only through the increased wealth of the former, and their increased number, which would cause a competition for labor. Were Mr. George's proposal really worth any thing, it might be worth while to examine this particular question more closely; but, as matters stand, the reader will see presently that one confusion more, or one confusion less, does not affect the result one way or the other. It is enough for us to grasp what Mr. George does make clear: having examined this, we shall have little need to go farther. Now, his general meaning, or argument, is plain enough. He means, that, if land were the property of the state, any one who wished to get land would be able to get as much land as he could use; and that, having got it, he would be able to thrive on the use of it far better than he would now.

He would be able to get land because it would no longer pay large holders to monopolize it. It would enable him to thrive because the sum he would have to pay would be less in proportion to his earnings than what he would pay now.

On these two points Mr. George is quite explicit. We will quote his words as to each of them. As to the first he says, —

“Land speculation would receive its death-blow; land monopolization would no longer pay; for, . . .

if the men who wished to hold land without using it would have to pay very nearly what it would be worth to any one who wanted to use it, . . . no one would care to hold land unless to use it; and land now withheld from use would everywhere be thrown open to improvement."

As to the second he says, —

"Everywhere that land had attained a value, taxation, instead of operating, as now, as a fine upon improvement, would operate to force improvement. Whoever planted an orchard, or sowed a field, or built a house, or erected a manufactory, no matter how costly, would have no more to pay in taxes than if he kept so much land idle. . . . Thus, the bonus, that, wherever labor is most productive, must now be paid before labor is exerted, would disappear. The farmer would not have to pay out half his means, or mortgage his labor for years, in order to obtain land to cultivate; the builder of a city homestead would not have to lay out as much for a small lot as for the house he puts upon it; the company that propose to erect a manufactory would not have to expend a great part of their capital for a site. And what would be paid from year to year to the state would be in lieu of all the taxes now levied upon improvements, machinery, and stock" (pp. 392, 393).

Hereupon Mr. George breaks forth into a pæan of triumph.

“Consider [he exclaims] the effect of such a change! . . . With natural opportunities thus set free to labor, the spectacle of willing men unable to turn their labor into the things they are suffering for, would become impossible; the recurring paroxysms which paralyze industry would cease; every wheel of production would be set in motion; demand would keep pace with supply, and supply with demand; trade would increase in every direction, and wealth augment on every side.”

To all this we reply, — as Mr. Burchell did to the fashionable gossip of Miss Carolina Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs, — “Fudge!” We maintain that Mr. George’s scheme would have none of these effects that he enumerates; and that, though for a moment some classes might benefit by it, even they would benefit by it for the moment only, and that these classes would emphatically not be the poorest. We maintain, that, in the long-run, so far as the general public is concerned, the evils Mr. George complains of would remain wholly unaltered; that rents would be no lower; land no easier to get; and that the beggar might go houseless in the streets, exactly as he does now. And we make use of Mr. Burchell’s exclamation, because Mr. George is not only talking nonsense, but nonsense which so clever a man as he is ought himself at once to have seen through.



To make this perfectly clear to the reader, we must ask him to dwell for a moment on a point we have not yet touched upon. Though Mr. George would turn all land-owners into tenants of the state, he does not propose to turn them into tenants at will. On the contrary, he asserts, with all the emphasis possible, that one of the first essentials to making the most of land, is complete security of tenure; and the effect of this scheme, so far as the occupiers are concerned, would be, he says distinctly, to make them practically "the owners, though in reality they would be the tenants of the whole people."<sup>1</sup> Now, bearing this in mind, let us take a simple example. Mr. George's scheme, we will say, has been put into operation; and a man under its provisions possesses a farm, for which he pays a certain rent, or tax. Now, Mr. George tells us, that no matter what use the man put his farm to, whether he "planted it as an orchard, sowed it as a field, or built on it a house or manufactory, no matter how costly, he would have no more to pay in taxes than if he kept so much land idle." Let us suppose that he builds on part of it, not a manufactory, but a town. What would happen then? As Mr. George himself has most forcibly

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<sup>1</sup> The Irish Land Question, by Henry George, p. 32. In this pamphlet Mr. George applies the views put forth in Progress and Poverty to Ireland.

pointed out, there would be a rise in the value, not only of the land built upon, but in the value of the rest, which is still, we will say, in pasture. On Mr. George's supposition, how will the man be situated now? This pasture-land is still in his possession. He cannot be evicted by the state. He cannot have his rent raised on what are practically his own improvements. But, though he pays for this pasture-land no more than he did originally, other people, he knows, would be willing to pay more to him; nor is there any thing in the nature of the case to prevent his holding this land on speculation, and sub-letting it on exactly the same terms as he would do were he the owner of the fee-simple. Mr. George says that the value of the land would be determined by the highest bid that would be made to the state for it at any given moment. But the answer to this is, that a given piece of land is not in the market at any given moment. As soon as a lot was knocked down to a buyer, it would be his till he chose to part with it. Meanwhile, no matter how its value increased, this increase would be his also; nor does Mr. George's scheme provide any means of taking it from him, unless any Naboth at any moment might have his vineyard bought over his head by any speculating Ahab. The smallest attention to the commonest of existing facts would have

taught Mr. George this. He need only inquire of the first house-agent he comes across, to learn, that, rich as are the owners of town-land, by far the larger proportion of the unearned increment goes in many cases into the pockets of middlemen. And, whatever these men do under their present landlords, they would do all that, and more, supposing their landlord to be the state.

As to the next point, our case is clearer still. Even supposing true what we have just shown to be impossible, that rents would become less, owing to the state being the landlord, how would this benefit either of these two classes, — men who wished for land in a district already occupied, or men too poor to pay any rent at all? Mr. George does not pretend that rent would cease, and he does not pretend that acres would be multiplied. No matter who owned the ground of Bond Street, and no matter how low the rents were, for all that, there would not be a shop the more. If all the shops were occupied, the street would be barred to any new tradesman, no matter how anxious he was to set up business there; nor would the fact of the street being really national property, in which he himself therefore had some infinitesimal share, give him any more right to the use of a single inch of it, than the fact of his having a share in the Great Northern Railway would

enable him every day to go from York to London for nothing. So, too, with regard to the poor: is it easier for a beggar to pay a pound to the state than to pay it to a private landlord? Mr. George tells us that the main merit of his scheme is the benefit it will confer upon men in the plight of beggars, — not on the moderately rich, but on the extremely poor. But not once, in the whole course of his pages, does he attempt to answer the question we have just asked. Supposing a tradesman fails, and can no longer pay his land-tax. The state will evict him, just as a private landlord would. He will be as completely houseless and homeless in the one case as in the other. Supposing in his misfortune he met Mr. George at the street-corner, who informed him that he had an inalienable right to the soil of England. Perhaps, at first, he might see some hope in this; but we doubt much if he would continue to do so, when he learned that this inalienable right was nothing but an inalienable right to pay rent to the government — and even that for a site only, without so much as a shed upon it.

But it is impossible here to criticise Mr. George's meaning; because, so far as we can see, there is absolutely no meaning to criticise. From the beginning of his argument to the end of it, we seem to have been going from bad

to worse. But this, the most important part of it, eclipses all the rest. His other fallacies, however grave in reality, are all defended with some show of argument, and many of them with extreme ingenuity; but this he supports by nothing but vehement and repeated assertions, which, though sometimes they may wear a false appearance of calm, are always in reality on the verge of becoming hysterical. Such being the case, there seems but one course open to us. False arguments can be met by true arguments; attempts at proof can be met by disproof; but a mere assertion, which has no proof to back it, which is plainly made only in the blindness and excitement of passion, and which is in direct defiance of every principle of common sense,—such an assertion can be met by nothing but a curt and contemptuous contradiction. Where Mr. George attempts to prove himself right, we have proved him wrong: it is here sufficient if we simply assert him to be so. We appeal from Mr. George in hysterics to the public in a state of sobriety, and we have every confidence that the public will bear us out.

We have now followed Mr. George through all his main positions; and, one after another, we have shown them to be wholly untenable. In doing this, we have sincerely regretted one

thing, that, in showing how unsound he is in all that is essential to his case, we have had no space to show how justly and how brilliantly he reasons on many points that are accidental to it ; but this omission has been unavoidable. At some future time we may possibly find occasion to supply it, but that time is not now. At present we must content ourselves, not with extending our criticisms, but merely with summing them up, and completing them. What, then, we have seen is this. Mr. George's book is in a double sense a failure. He has not destroyed any of the theories of the economists : he has not established any theory of his own. He has not shown that wages are not drawn from capital. He has not shown that population does not press against the limits of subsistence. He has not shown that private ownership of land is the cause of poverty ; and, finally, he has not shown, that, even if it were, it would be possible to abolish it. On the contrary, he has shown just the opposite. He has shown, that, however a robbery of the present generation of landlords might for a time benefit the more opulent and influential of the robbers, private property in land would itself remain untouched. It would change hands, and it would change in name. But it would certainly not pass into the hands of the poor ; and, if it changed in any

thing but in name, it would be merely a change for the worse. We go even farther. We cancel the "if" we have just used; and we assert that the change would be for the worse — absolutely. We assert, that if the existing landed aristocracy of the United Kingdom were dispossessed, and the land taken by the state, whilst town-land would be no cheaper than it is at present, all other land would be dearer; and we shall prove this from Mr. George's own admissions. Were the state the landlord, then, according to Mr. George, as we have just seen, rent would be fixed by the "highest bidder:" it would be, as he elsewhere puts it, "the full competition rent." Remembering this, let us turn to the following passage, which occurs in the opening chapter of Mr. George's pamphlet on Ireland:—

"Miss C. G. O'Brien, in a recent article in the 'Nineteenth Century,' states that the tenant-farmers generally get for such patches as they sub-let to their laborers twice the rent they pay the landlords. And we hear incidentally of many 'good landlords;' i.e., landlords not in the habit of pushing their tenants for as much as they might get by vigorously demanding all that any one would give.

"These things, as well as the peculiar bitterness of complaints against middle-men and the speculators who have purchased encumbered estates, and

manage them solely with a view to profit, go to show the truth of the statement that the land of Ireland has been, by its present owners, largely underlet, when considered from what we would deem a business point of view. And this is but what might be expected. Human nature is about the same the world over, and the Irish landlords as a class are no better nor worse than would be other men under like conditions. An aristocracy such as that of Ireland has its virtues as well as its vices, and is influenced by sentiments *which do not enter into mere business transactions, — sentiments which must often modify and soften the calculations of cold self-interest.* But with us the letting of land is as much a business matter as the buying or selling of pig-iron or of stocks. An American would not think he was showing his goodness by renting his land for low rates, any more than he would think he was showing his goodness by selling pig-iron for less than the market-price, or stocks for less than the quotations. So in those districts of France and Belgium where the land is most subdivided, the peasant proprietors, says M. de Laveleye, boast to one another of the high rents they get, just as they boast of the high prices they get for pigs or for poultry.”<sup>1</sup>

This points its own moral. According to Mr. George’s scheme, the landlords would be dispossessed, and the middle-men would be left.

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<sup>1</sup> Irish Land Question, p. 4.



The state would be harder than the landlords, and the middle-men would be harder than the state.

We have one observation more to make; and that relates, not to Mr. George's economic theories, but to the general proposition with regard to modern society with which he sets out. As wealth increases, he says, the poor not only get absolutely more numerous, and relatively more poor, but relatively more numerous, and absolutely more poor. The poor get poorer, he says, as the rich get richer; all intermediate conditions are being eliminated; society is fast dividing itself into "the extremely rich and the extremely poor." Now, we cannot discuss this assertion at any length. We can only say, that though it is continually made, and though to superficial observation there seems much to justify it, all who have studied the subject carefully are unanimous in declaring that it is wholly untrue. The poverty that underlies civilization, is, no doubt, a terrible evil; it may easily develop into a dangerous one; but, so far is it from being *relatively* an increasing evil, that there is every reason to believe it to be somewhat diminishing; whilst as to the middle classes, instead of being destroyed by modern progress, they are, on the contrary, its special and most evident product.

Such, then, is the wretched tissue of falsehoods which forms the integral part of Mr. George's book. Such is the book which an Irish agitator takes for his gospel, and which has actually passed for a new revelation in the science of political economy. We have no fear that thinking men will be long deluded. But the danger of Mr. George's book is, that it does not appeal to thinking men. The popularity it aims at, the popularity it has attained, is due, not to the keenness of its arguments, but to the peculiar character of its rhetoric, and the policy of confiscation which it advocates. Mr. George distinctly says that what he trusts to for the success of his doctrines is their appeal to the "popular imagination." "Even the most prejudiced," he adds, "can be relied on to listen with patience to an argument in favor of making some one else pay what they now are paying."<sup>1</sup> But he is far from relying only on the naked passion of covetousness. He does all he can to clothe and ally this with the combined excitement of religious and of class feelings. His pages bristle with allusions to Dives and Lazarus, to the goodness of God, and the cruelties of rich men, to the agonies of white slaves, and the orgies of white slave-owners. Current political economy,

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<sup>1</sup> Irish Land Question, p. 41, from a chapter entitled How to Win.

he says, is "blasphemous" and "cynical;" and his "blood boils" when he thinks of the theory of Malthus. Now, all this is intelligible to the lowest class of readers; and it has this double danger, that it excites their worst passions by a false appeal to their best: whilst the arguments of the book, as distinguished from its rhetoric, are to such readers nothing but a sort of logical hocus-pocus, — a magical formula in a tongue they do not understand, which justifies the counsels given them in a tongue they do.

We do not believe Mr. George to be insincere. We believe, on the contrary, that his first and most complete dupe is himself; and as this is the best, indeed the only, excuse we can make for him, we shall present the reader, at parting, with a specimen of his singular simplicity in the face of his own arguments. Mr. George tells us, and we believe him to speak quite honestly, that the sight of all the poverty and distress in the world have led him to doubt in the possibility of a wise and benevolent God. But now, he proceeds, since he has found out how to remedy poverty, since he sees prospectively vice and misery dying away from the earth, his faith in God, and in God's goodness, is coming back to him. There is something pathetic in this *naïve* avowal, but it is surely one which no sensible man would have made. Does not Mr.

George see, that, if the vice and misery that have so long existed in the world is any valid argument against the goodness of God, the argument would be strengthened, not destroyed, were this evil to come suddenly to an end? As it is, the Theist accepts its presence as a mystery, believing that there is some reason for it beyond his powers of comprehension; but, could it be really abolished by Mr. George's "simple expedient," he would at once ask why it was not abolished before? So far as regards the Deity, there is but one possible answer. He either did not wish to abolish it, or he did not know how to abolish it. Thus, in the one case we should have to regard Mr. George as more benevolent than the Deity; or, in the other, the Deity as more stupid than Mr. George.

Mr. George's vindication of God's ways is on a par with his vindication of his own scheme for amending them.

## SOCIALISM IN ENGLAND.

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ENGLAND FOR ALL. By H. M. HYNDMAN. London, 1881. SOCIALISM MADE PLAIN. London, 1883.

POLITICAL ECONOMY has been called "the dismal science;" and the phrase, when we consider how far it has become proverbial, seems to us to be very full of significance. We are inclined to question, indeed, if, in the whole English language, there can be found another which expresses, with equal brevity, such a mass of general ignorance on a subject of equal moment.

We trust the reader will be good enough not to mistake us. We do not imply for a moment that a treatise on the subject in question can ever possess the attractions of light literature, or that a discussion on rent can be made as exciting as a love-story. But Political Economy has been called the dismal science, *par excellence*, not because the public have found its details dry, but because they have failed to see how its conclusions affect themselves. Few studies could in themselves be dryer than those of the geologist, or the philological critic of the text of

Scripture. Yet neither of these has ever been called "dismal." The public recognized almost instantly how much was involved in each, that profoundly affected the inmost life of everybody; and even the simplest Christians heard in their hearts an echo of what seemed on the surface merely the distant disputes of specialists. But, with regard to Political Economy, all such perception has been wanting. To students, no doubt, it is allowed to be a subject of interest, and to tradesmen and politicians one of serious practical importance; but its importance and its interest are supposed to end with these narrow limits. It has not yet dawned on the average well-to-do Englishman, that the problems which this science deals with are problems which have the most vital connection with himself, and that there is hardly a home which might not be wrecked or revolutionized if some day or other they were to receive a new answer.

Yet such is indeed the case. What Theology was to the religious struggles of the Reformation, and the yet deeper religious disquiet that has prevailed during the present century, Political Economy is to the analogous social disquiet which during the same period has been spreading itself all through Europe; which, now in one place, now in another, is continually filling the air with dim rumors of revolution; which more

than once has deluged Paris with blood; which keeps German cities at this moment in a state of minor siege; which imbitters the conditions of civilization even when it lacks vigor to menace them; and which certain politicians who call themselves English statesmen, having done their best for a time to excite and use it in Ireland, are now endeavoring by every art in their power to make the inspiring principle of the "Liberalism of the future" in England.

The disquiet we allude to is a thing of which all are sensible. To say that we are surrounded by a spirit of social revolution is as much a commonplace as to say that we are surrounded by a spirit of scepticism. But whereas, in the case of the latter, the educated English public sees perfectly well the scientific questions that are implicated, in the case of the former it sees nothing of the kind whatever. Any school-boy can tell us that the denial of the soul's immortality is closely connected with the discoveries and the disputes of physiologists; that our whole conception of man's position in the universe is affected by the extent to which we accept the doctrines of Darwin; and that whether or not we are in any way morally responsible, depends on whether or not we are in any way free agents. But when Birmingham capitalists denounce landlords as robbers, and

far more logical Socialists denounce Birmingham capitalists; when, in one form or another, it is on all sides being said, or insinuated, that property is at present distributed in wrong proportions; that these proportions are capable of being wholly and permanently altered, and that nothing is progress that does not tend towards such an alteration, — how few people there are who would be able off-hand to tell us what scientific questions are at the bottom of these incendiary doctrines! Most members of the upper and middle classes would pronounce such doctrines fatal to all existing society, but we much doubt if they would be able to indicate why and where they are false.

And yet, if they are false, they must be false for some distinct reason. They must be false, not merely because the upper and middle classes are shocked by them, but because they are founded on scientific falsehoods — the perversion or rejection of some broad natural facts; and they must be capable, as such, of being stated in accurate terms, and confronted with the truths, equally distinct, that correspond to them. In like manner, supposing these same doctrines to be true, they would not be true because they were acceptable to the poor, — because they promised to comfort Lazarus, and to torment Dives, — but because they were in harmony



with the actual order of nature, and were parts, as such, of a true scientific system. Common sense might suffice to show us thus much; but we do not insist on it here because it is shown us by common sense, but because it is expressly recognized and insisted on by the modern revolutionaries themselves.

The real leaders of the Socialistic movement of to-day are so far from regarding fanaticism as a substitute for thought, that thought with some of them has apparently been the origin of their fanaticism. They have not been content to attack society as it is, merely on the ground that it contains so much misery; nor have they sought to justify the various measures they advocate, merely by appeals to a general sense of justice. They have approached the subject, in the first place, as *savants* rather than philanthropists. Before declaiming against the rich, they have tried to satisfy themselves as to the real origin of riches; before attempting to excite a rebellious feeling amongst the poor, they have with equal care examined into the causes of poverty; and they profess, as the apologists of social revolution, to stand or fall, not on passion, but on proof.

English Radicals, in moments of militant enthusiasm, delight to inform the world that "they care nothing for Political Economy." The lead-

ing Socialists of the day indulge in no such silly bravado. They know that for a man to say he cares nothing for Political Economy is about as sane as for a man to say that he cares nothing for arithmetic. For their part, Political Economy is the very thing that they do care for; and the estimate they have formed of the present, and the hopes they entertain of the future, would have in their eyes no value whatever, except as parts of what they conceive to be a true economic system. Nor in forming this system for themselves, as the basis of society as it is to be, have they shown any disrespect for those older economists, whose theories assume or assert the perpetuity of society as it is. On the contrary, they endeavor to found their most revolutionary conclusions on the same methods as those followed by Mill and Mr. Fawcett. Most of the old science is actually appropriated by the new; and the latter depends for its distinctive character and tendency, less on what it has substituted for the former, than on what it has added to it. Thus in the forces, whatever be their real magnitude, that are now arraying themselves against the existing social order, the main thing to be reckoned with is not a conspiracy, but a creed. If we may borrow a phrase from Mr. Michael Davitt, the only dynamite that really threatens society is the "moral dynamite" of a new economic science.

That the educated classes in England should be so little aware of this fact, is due, no doubt, to a very obvious cause. Although the chief revolutionary theorists of the present epoch have declared that the wrongs and evils, from which they are going to redeem humanity, have reached their extremest and most horrible development in England, England has till lately been, of all European countries, the one in which such theorists have met with least response from the people. It is therefore not altogether surprising, that the upper classes amongst us should have paid but little attention to doctrines which were received so coldly, even by those in whose direct interest they were promulgated, and that they should have failed to trouble themselves about the scientific basis of conclusions which seemed to belong practically less to English life than to dream-land.

But the excuse for this apathy unfortunately exists no longer. During the last few years events have moved quickly in England; and the attitude of the masses with regard to the social problem is no longer what it was, even in a very recent period. Those theories, which, in countries like France and Germany, have already been recognized by statesmen as a source of such serious danger, have at length

begun to make appreciable way amongst ourselves. As the reader will see presently, we are as far as possible from being alarmists : but, if it is foolish to exaggerate facts, it is equally foolish to ignore them ; and we have no hesitation in saying of the fact we are now asserting, that it demands our closest, and even our most anxious, attention.

There are many persons, who, when this view is suggested to them, seek to re-assure themselves by comparing the popular temper of to-day with the popular temper as it was during the times of the Chartist agitation, or during the earlier years of the trades-unions : and we are far from denying, that, in mere point of ferocity, the discontented classes of this generation contrast favorably with those of the last. This fact, however, really proves precisely what it seems to disprove. What constitutes the danger of social discontent to-day, is, not its intensity, but its basis. It represents, not the presence of any exceptional suffering, but the growth of a speculative conviction ; and the fact that its temper is less ferocious than previously, shows, not that it has lost in strength, but that it has gained in confidence.

There is a singular illustration of what we are now saying, which we have lately dealt with in the pages of this "Review." We refer to Mr.

George's book, "Progress and Poverty," and the sale it has met with amongst the poorer classes in this country. Now, that book, despite its constant outbursts of rhetoric, is yet, in the main, an elaborate economic treatise, which no human being would have either written or read, who did not believe that the great questions discussed in it can be settled only by strict scientific methods. It is, therefore, in two ways at any rate, full of instruction of the most important kind for us. It illustrates, in the first place, how, amongst the revolutionary leaders themselves, it is recognized, that the fulcrum of the lever of social revolution must, of necessity, be some definite economic theory; and it shows us, in the second place, by its enormous sale in England, how large a section of our own lower classes is familiar with the idea that some social revolution would be desirable, and is eagerly waiting to be assured on scientific grounds that it is practicable.

Such is the moral of Mr. George's book, and a very plain and a very instructive moral it is. We allude here, however, to the book and to its author, merely because they illustrate influences of far more importance than themselves. It is a mistake to think that such doctrines as Mr. George's can be popularized only by means of open advocacy. Before they can bear their full

and final fruit, it may, no doubt, be necessary that they should be explicitly stated and recognized; but people may be practically more than half converted to them before they have received any conscious recognition at all. History illustrates this by the analogous case of religion. Wherever Science has successfully made war upon Faith, it has generally undermined it by cautious and vague implication, before it has been able effectually to deal it any direct blow; and it has suffered, nay, enjoined, the retention of prayers and symbols, whilst it has all the while, in secret, been sucking the life out of them. It is precisely this, which in the region of social politics is to a great extent taking place in England now. Though there may be at present among us, even in spite of Mr. George, but little open propagandism of revolutionary<sup>1</sup> doctrines, yet such doctrines are at this very moment being propagated all around us in a far more insidious way. Our modern English Radicalism, in so far as it appeals to the people, is nothing more than an unavowed

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<sup>1</sup> We are quite aware that Mr. George does not call himself a revolutionist, but he certainly is so in the general sense of that word. For not only does he base all his reforms on the complete spoliation of a class, but his avowed aim is to alter the whole structure and appearance of society; and he believes that this transformation can be accomplished by an alteration of certain laws.

and undigested socialism; and it assumes, like socialism, to speak in the name of science. To its middle-class exponents, such as Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. John Morley, it seems, no doubt, to be something entirely different; but its real character, as a living force in politics, is to be sought in its relation, not to the middle class, but to the people; and on the people its general effect is as follows: its favorite method being to set class against class, it conveys to them, as it were in solution, the belief that there should be no classes at all. By constantly praising the poor at the expense of the rich, it similarly conveys the belief that the rich are plunderers of the poor; and, from doing this always in connection with the stir of practical politics, it conveys the further belief, that classes and property are things which can be equalized by the government, and that any good government will make it its aim to equalize them.

Such being the case, we may compare English society, we do not say to a house that is on fire, but to a house that is full of exceedingly inflammable materials. In other words, when we consider the intellectual condition of a large section of the English working-classes; the spread amongst them of what is popularly called education; the consequent ferment in their minds

of thoughts, hopes, and ideas, that have been schooled into activity, but have not been schooled into order; the respect for scientific authority, without the ability to test it; together with the fact, that a powerful political party is constantly implying to them that the calm teachings of science correspond with the promptings of their own most dangerous passions, — when we consider all this, it is impossible not to see that any successful attempt to propagating in this country those explicit theories of revolution which have already had such fatal effect upon the Continent, might be fraught with effects hardly less fatal here, or might at all events bring us face to face with very serious social dangers.

We propose, therefore, in the present article, to inquire what these theories of revolution are; or, rather, since they all of them rest on some theories of political economy, to inquire in what precise points the political economy of the revolutionaries is peculiar, and how far in these points they are in agreement or disagreement with fact. Nor let any one think that this is a superfluous task. The strength of the revolutionary cause is, as we have said, its supposed basis in science; and since at the present moment it is winning its way by argument, by argument only is there any chance of meeting



it. It is an enemy, let us remember, to be discredited rather than crushed.

It may also be salutary to remind a considerable number of persons, that, however false and hollow the revolutionary science may be, its falsehood is apparent only on near inspection; and we defy any one to prove, on a distant or cursory glance, that it is not in reality as true as it professes to be. We may think those foolish who believe in it after they have examined it, but those are more foolish who laugh at it before they have examined it. A further consideration yet remains to be added. Not only do the economic theories of socialism deserve to be studied, in order that we may be competent to refute them, but we believe that the study of them, besides showing their falsehood, will lead to the elucidation of a number of corresponding truths, which have never as yet received any accurate statement, and which, once recognized, will in a very important way enlarge the boundaries of economic science.

Should any thing be still needed to quicken the interest of our readers, and bring the subject before us still more nearly home to them, it may be well to call their attention to the following fact: those who have watched, during the course of the last few years, certain processions that have defiled through Pall Mall and

Piccadilly, on their way to this or that demonstration in Hyde Park, may, perhaps, have noticed the presence here and there of a banner inscribed with the proposition that "Wealth is the creation of labor." These banners, we have reason to believe, were the ensigns of a certain body which calls itself the "Democratic Federation." It is, at all events, a fact that such a body exists; that its members are so numerous as to be counted by tens of thousands; and that their main object is neither more nor less than to imbibe and disseminate the principles of advanced Continental Socialism. Our readers may thus learn that the theories on which we propose to engage their attention are not only theories that might be propagated in England any day, but such that a propagation has already actually begun.

We have alluded, however, to the Democratic Federation, not only to show how near to us is the danger we are about to analyze, but because it happens to introduce us to something which will most conveniently aid us in our analysis. For this band of apostles and converts does not derive its principles from any such vague sources as oral tradition or exhortation. The main points of its creed have been all of them written down for it, and embodied in a succinct treatise. There we find a perfectly unmistak-

able statement, not, indeed, of all the constructive schemes of Socialism, — for the name of these is Legion, — but of the fundamental principles on which all these schemes repose, and on the truth of which all revolutionists agree that the very possibility of any real revolution depends. The title of this treatise is “England for All;” and its author, Mr. H. M. Hyndman, who is, we believe, the chairman of the aforesaid Democratic Federation, though apparently destitute of any literary ability, is exceptionally well qualified to treat his subject with authority. He is not only a person of considerable reading and of education, but he has been a diligent student of socialistic literature in general, and of the writings of Karl Marx in particular; and we may be perfectly confident that we meet, in the main principles laid down by him, not merely with the opinions of a Socialist, but with the foundations of all socialism. It is to his book, therefore, that we shall principally refer, in setting before our readers the views that we propose to criticise.

First, however, let us turn for a moment to a slighter literary product that emanates from the same source. What we refer to is a certain half-penny pamphlet, called “Socialism made Plain;” which has been published very recently, and which purports to be “The social and political

manifesto of the Democratic Federation." This aims at setting forth, in as brief a compass as possible, the special application of Socialistic principles to England; and the following extract from it will form, in our opinion, a useful introduction to a more detailed examination of the subject:—

“All wealth is due to labor; therefore to the laborer all wealth is due.

“But we are strangers in our own country. Thirty thousand persons own the land of Great Britain, against the thirty millions that are suffered to exist therein. A series of robberies and confiscations has deprived us of the soil which should be ours. The organized brute-force of the few has for generations robbed and tyrannized over the unorganized brute-force of the many. We now call for nationalization of the land. We claim that land in country, and land in towns, mines, parks, mountains, and moors, should be owned by the people, for the people, to be held, used, built over, and cultivated, upon such terms as the people themselves see fit to ordain. The handful of marauders, who now hold possession, have, and can have, no right, save brute-force, against the tens of millions whom they wrong.

“But private ownership of land in our present society is only one, and not the worst, form of monopoly. . . . Out of the thousand millions of pounds taken by the classes who live without labor, out of the total yearly production of thirteen hun-

dred millions, the landlords who have seized our soil, and shut us out from its enjoyment, absorb little more than sixty millions as their direct share. The few thousand persons who own the national debt . . . exact twenty-eight millions yearly from the labor of their countrymen for nothing: the shareholders, who have been allowed to lay hands on our great railway communications, take a still larger sum. Above all, the active capitalist class, the loanmongers, the farmers, the mine-exploiters, the contractors, the middle-men, the factory-lords, — these, the modern slave-drivers, these are they who, through their money, machinery, capital, and credit, turn every advance in human knowledge, every further improvement in human dexterity, into an engine for accumulating wealth out of other men's labor, and for exacting more and more surplus value out of the wage-slaves whom they employ. So long as the means of production, either of raw materials or manufactured goods, are the monopoly of a class, so long must the laborers on the farm, in the mines, or in the factory, sell themselves for a bare subsistence wage. As land must in future be a national possession, so must the other means of producing and distributing wealth. By these means a healthy, independent, and thoroughly educated people will steadily grow up around us, . . . ready to organize the labor of each for the benefit of all, and determined, too, to take finally the control of the entire social and political machinery of a state, in which class distinctions and class privileges shall cease to be.

“The land of England is no mean heritage ; there is enough and to spare for all ; with the powers mankind now possess, wealth may easily be made as plentiful as water, at the expense of trifling toil.”

To the details of this passage we shall return hereafter. All that at present we have occasion to remark, is, that, besides illustrating the application of Socialistic principles to England, it points us directly to what these principles are, when reduced to their simplest elements. Every form, it will be found, of modern revolutionary system, has for its foundation the following three doctrines, on the truth of two of which it depends for even its speculative justification, and on the truth of the third for the probability of its ever having any practical influence. These doctrines, though in reality they are exceedingly complex in their contents, are treated by the Socialists as though they were almost axioms ; and they are capable of being stated in exceedingly simple terms. The first of them stands at the head of the passage we have just quoted. It is the doctrine, that, apart from the raw materials of nature, labor is the sole cause of wealth. The second is the doctrine that the land of any given country belongs of right to the people of that country collectively. And the third is the doctrine, or rather the historical estimate, which is expressed by the common

saying with regard to our national progress, that its necessary tendency, as matters now stand, is to make the rich constantly richer, and the poor poorer. In these three propositions, for the Socialists, lie all the law and the prophets.

How this is so, if not at once perceived by the reader, can easily be made clear to him by a very brief explanation. Let him be careful to remember, then, that the Socialistic doctrine of labor is always to be taken with an expressed or implied reservation; that it is by no means meant to exclude from the causes that produce wealth those natural sources that supply us with raw material; and that the Socialists admit, as fully as the most orthodox and conservative of economists, that all such wealth as comes in the form of rent represents, not the labor of the cultivator, but the bounty of the soil he cultivates. Unless, then, the right of private owners to the soil be denied, there can be no ground for attacking a non-laboring landed aristocracy. Whilst if, in addition to the bounty of the soil, there be yet other causes of wealth besides labor, there will, in addition to the landed aristocracy, be another non-laboring class, to attack which will be equally impossible. But the Socialists, as we have seen, represent all the evils of civilization as due to the diversion of wealth from the laborers to the non-laborers, and the only

hope of improvement as lying in the extinction of the latter. It is thus plain that Socialism, as a theory, necessarily rests on the only two premises on which such an extinction can be proved to be either just or possible. The third proposition, as to the tendency of the existing social system, though not, like the two former, essential to Socialism as a theory, is essential, for the following reason, to the practical hopes of the Socialists. If it were the tendency of things, as at present constituted, to bring about naturally a better condition for the laborer, then clearly the laborers would have other hopes besides those held out to them by Socialism, and hopes which would require on their part far less trouble to realize; whilst even if things tended merely to remain as they are now, the Socialists are doubtful, and with good reason, whether, supposing the people to know there was nothing worse in store for them, they would risk a revolution, in the hope of any thing better. The Socialists know that such changes as they advocate are changes that can be accomplished only by a strenuous and continued struggle, and that such a struggle requires, not conviction only, but passion. Thus their chief ground of confidence that the required passion will develop itself, is the belief that the condition of the people is getting every year more intolerable;



and that by and by, whether they like the exertion or not, sheer misery will force them to combine in earnest to alter it. This, however, is not all. Almost equally important to the practical calculation in question is the corollary to this belief that the poor, in the process of becoming poorer, become, not poorer only, but at the same time more numerous; that the rich, conversely, are becoming, not only richer, but fewer; and that thus the party of revolution is increasing, not only in determination, but in strength; whilst the party that is interested in resisting it, is becoming less capable of resistance.

We shall now proceed, under Mr. Hyndman's guidance, to examine in detail these three doctrines, whose general scope and bearing are thus sufficiently intelligible. We shall keep till last the estimate of the existing situation, and shall begin with the two propositions on which Socialism reposes as a theory. Of these the most important, beyond all comparison, in its consequences, is that which relates, not to the land, but to labor. But, as it requires to be dealt with at much length, we shall be best consulting the intellectual comfort of the reader if we dispose of the former and simpler question first.

Let us take, then, the cry, to be heard on so many sides, "The land for the people," and

ask, What do the Socialists mean by it? and how is this meaning justified? Its meaning, we think, is by this time perfectly clear; and it is far from being so absurd upon the face of it as many people suppose. No doubt, during the late land agitation in Ireland, such insane phrases were continually to be heard, as that the "land ought to be as free as the air;" but it may safely be said, that this kind of rabid rhetoric was never for a moment believed in, in its literal sense, by the most ignorant demagogue who ever mounted a tub or a table. Pastureland, it is true, may be free within certain limits; but it is perfectly clear, that agricultural land cannot: and we may be sure that the staunchest of Mr. Parnell's supporters, though he may have thought his neighbors free to breathe as much air as they pleased, never meant that they should be free to dig up his own potatoes. Those who maintain the doctrine, that the land belongs to the people, mean no such nonsense as this. Instead of denying the necessity of secure and permanent possessions, their grand aim is to multiply secure and permanent possessors. Neither do they mean that these possessors individually should be able to appropriate so many acres for nothing. Their programme, when translated into plain practical terms, is simply that the state should be the universal

landlord, and that every citizen has a right to rent directly from the state at least as much land as he can himself profitably occupy. Now, we have shown already, in our article on Mr. George's volume, that these principles, if acted on, would fail wholly of their intended result; but it is perfectly clear that they fully vindicate in theory the collective ownership of the land by the whole people. For, *ex hypothesi*, every citizen who desires it may have direct access to the soil; and, *ex hypothesi*, the money he pays in rent is more or less directly spent for his own benefit.<sup>1</sup>

Having thus shown that the doctrine before us involves no practical absurdities that can make it not worth discussing, we may proceed to inquire seriously on what grounds it is justified. Now, we must be careful, in so doing, not to confuse two things. The conception we have

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<sup>1</sup> This might happen in three ways. If the aggregate rental of the land sufficed only to pay the common expenses of government, the rent of the landholders would be simply a necessary tax; whilst the interest in the soil of those who were not landholders, would be proved by the fact that they paid no taxes themselves. The land paid the taxes for them. Supposing, however, the rental of the land more than covered the common expense of government, the surplus might be expended in public buildings and institutions, in free education, and so forth; or, as Mr. George has suggested, the citizens might receive an annual bonus from the government, in some form or other. That is to say, the value of the land would be annually distributed amongst them.

to deal with is the people's *right* to the soil, not the expediency of the people's buying the soil. They are not represented by the Socialists as in the position of a railway company, applying for power to purchase what is admitted to belong to others, but as in the position of proprietors, applying for power to eject trespassers from what is already their own. On no other ground than this can the existing landlords be called, as Mr. Hyndman calls them, "marauders." It is true that certain Socialists, and Mr. Hyndman himself is amongst them, would not object under certain circumstances to the expropriated landlords being in some degree compensated. This, however, does not alter the matter. Such compensation would, according to their principle, be an act of generosity, not an act of justice. The thieves might deserve to be treated tenderly, but they would none the less be thieves. Mr. George, who, in this matter, merely follows the Socialists, puts the case very plainly, as follows: "To the landed estates," he says, "of the Duke of Westminster, the poorest child that is born in London to-day has as much right as has his eldest son. Though the sovereign people of the State of New York consent to the landed possessions of the Astors, the puniest infant that comes wailing into the world, in the squalidest room of the most miser-

able tenement, becomes, at that moment, seized of an equal right with the millionnaires; and it is robbed if this right is denied." And again, "Natural justice can recognize no right in one man to the possession and enjoyment of land, that is not equally the right of all his fellows."

This, then, is the doctrine that we have to examine, — this supposed principle of natural and universal justice. Now, Mr. Hyndman, in explaining it with special reference to England, spends much time in dwelling on what he thinks the nefarious enclosure of the commons, on the reduction of the land-tax, and the doubtful titles of many existing landlords. But though all these points may, no doubt, admit of discussion, he merely weakens his case — not strengthens it — by introducing them here. It is as though a preacher were maintaining that the wearing of all clothes was a sin, and, in support of his position, were to adduce the fact, that certain dandies in London had not paid their tailors' bills. The view which the Socialists really take of land-owning is very much like the view which other people take of slave-owning. The special immorality of possessing a slave is supposed to consist, not in the owner's not having paid for him, but in the fact that a slave is something which cannot in justice be sold. So the real point for which Mr. Hyndman is contending is,

not that certain landlords have acquired their estates unfairly, but that it is unfair for any one to acquire any estates at all. The historical facts he alludes to are thus nothing more than accidents. They do not constitute the offence he is denouncing: the utmost they can do is to aggravate it. What we are concerned with is the doctrine that all land-owning is robbery, — not the charge that this robbery has been, in some cases, accompanied with violence.

For argument's sake, then, when we speak of private land-owners, we may presume, that, historically, there is no flaw in their titles, and that, however unjust it may be that they should keep their acres, either they or their fathers have paid an honest price for them. We shall waive points of history as altogether irrelevant, and confine ourselves wholly to the question of natural justice.

On what ground, then, let us ask, does natural justice deny the right of a man to own all the land that he can pay for? And, supposing that six Americans had bought up the whole of England, on what ground would such justice, as apart from political expediency, maintain against these men that the land still belonged to the nation? The answers to this question, on general grounds, are so numerous, that there was certainly no need for Mr. Hyndman to

resort to history for more. We believe, in fact, that, when looked at from a certain point of view, there are few general propositions with respect to social subjects for which, at first sight, there seems so much to be said, as for this one with regard to the property of a nation in its native soil. There is hardly a situation insulting to the instincts of patriotism, hardly a picture of destitution shocking to the instincts of humanity, which a little imagination, and a little loose logic combined, may not easily present to us as the legitimate consequences of a denial of it. England in the hands of six rich Americans, the Highlands made a desert for another six to sport over, bloated idleness, starving industry, and the bulk of a nation mere tenants-at-will in the country of whose greatness they are themselves the authors, — it would be perfectly easy, unless our judgment stopped us, to multiply images of this kind indefinitely, and to cite them as proofs, one stronger than another, of the essential injustice of the private appropriation of land. We may content ourselves, however, with an extract from Mr. George, who, in the following sentences, gives the gist of all, and says better than Mr. Hyndman what Mr. Hyndman means: —

“The comparative handful of proprietors who own the surface of the British Islands would only

be doing what English laws give them full power to do, and what many of them have done on a smaller scale already, were they to exclude the millions of British people from their native islands. And such an exclusion, by which a few hundred thousand should, at will, banish thirty million people from their native country, while it would be more striking, would not be a whit more repugnant to natural right, than the spectacle now presented of the vast body of the British people being compelled to pay such enormous sums to a few of their number, for the privilege of being permitted to live upon and use the land which they so fondly call their own, which is endeared to them by memories so tender and so glorious, and for which they are held in duty bound, if need be, to spill their blood, and lay down their lives. . . . To this manifest absurdity does the recognition of the individual right to land arise when carried to its ultimate [conclusion], — that any one human being, could he concentrate in himself the individual rights to the land in any country, could expel therefrom all the rest of its inhabitants; and, could he thus concentrate the individual rights to the whole surface of the globe, he alone of all the earth would have the right to live.”

But Mr. George reduces all this to a yet briefer compass, and puts it into its proper scientific form, when he says, in the same chapter as that from which we have just quoted, “that private property in land can, in the last analysis,



only be justified on the theory, that some men have a better right to existence than others."

Now, let us take the converse of this proposition, and we shall at once find the very thing we are looking for. If the ultimate justification of private property in land is the theory that some men have a better right to existence than others, the first principle of justice, by which such property stands condemned, is the opposite principle that the right of all men to existence is equal. This alone, however, is not sufficient. It would prove but half of what is wanted. For what natural justice is supposed by the Socialists to inform us, is, not merely that the human race are the collective owners of the earth, but that special sections of the human race are the collective owners, severally, of certain special parts of it. The Americans are the owners of America; the Indians are the owners of India; the Irish are the owners of Ireland; and, when Mr. Hyndman calls his book "England for All," he does not mean "England for all the world." He means "England for all the English." The above principle, therefore, as to the natural right to live, is, in the logic of Socialism, evidently accompanied by another. The Socialist must maintain, not only that every man has an equal right to live, but that every man has a right to live in his own country.

Now, to neither of these principles can we ourselves assent unconditionally. Our exceptions to the first, however, are so unimportant, that for argument's sake we will treat it as though it were absolutely true; and as to the second, though it requires to be strictly limited, we freely admit that there is a great deal of truth in it. Agreeing with the Socialists thus far, what we shall seek to show is this: that the equal right of every man to live, is in no way incompatible with private land-owning; that the equal right of every man to live in his native country, can be maintained only with limitations that are of a very serious nature; and that, in so far as it can be maintained at all, it is an argument, not for the injustice of private land-owning, but for its justice.

Let us return for a moment, then, to one of Mr. George's illustrations. A man, if he owned the soil of a whole country, might expel, Mr. George says, all the rest of the inhabitants; or, if he owned the soil of the whole world, he would have at his mercy the lives of the whole human race. But either of these positions, Mr. George continues, would be monstrous: and yet private land-owning might conceivably lead to either; therefore private land-owning is a monstrous piece of injustice. Now, the above extreme illustrations are, no doubt, useful in one way;

but they are useful, not as showing the injustice of private land-owning, but as showing the absurdity of this whole method of argument. They expose something, but that something is themselves. For if there be any thing sound in the principle on which they are founded, that a man may own nothing which it is conceivable he may misuse grossly, then not only is it unjust that a man should own land, but, with very few exceptions, it is unjust that he should own any thing. If a squire may not own the land of a parish, because it is conceivable he might expel the villagers, the baker may not own the bread, because it is equally conceivable that he might starve them, because any one with a sharp weapon might conceivably commit a murder, therefore a schoolmaster can have no property in a penknife, and it is plain that nobody may buy a cartload of building-materials, because a great contractor conceivably might heave half a brick at a clergyman.

This argument is false for two reasons. In the first place, it involves a completely wrong notion of what constitutes the justice of any law or institution. In the second place, it involves a completely wrong notion of what constitutes private property. The justice of a law or an institution is altogether relative, not to what those affected by it conceivably might do, but

to what they probably will do. The Duke of Westminster *might* make Belgravia a desert. Mr. George, when he was in England, *might* have stabbed the Duke of Westminster. But it no more follows from hence that the duke has no right to his land, than it follows from hence that Mr. George ought to have gone about London in handcuffs. We shall be told, no doubt, that the two cases are not parallel; because the law forbids murder, whilst it does not forbid wholesale evictions. This, however, is no answer to our argument. Some evictions, we quite admit, might be monstrous. Our point is, that the law has no call to forbid them, because it does not appear that such monstrous evictions are probable. When the Duke of Westminster shows any desire to expel all the Belgravians, when the Duke of Bedford proposes to turn Covent-Garden into a game-preserve, and when it comes to be the ambition of English landlords generally, not to get their rents, but to get rid of their tenantry, then we may be certain that the English land-laws will be altered; and we should ourselves be the first to admit they ought to be. But, on precisely the same principles, if Mr. George bought a knife, with the avowed purpose of murdering every second person he met, he ought to be locked up, and his knife taken away from him; whilst if any large sec-

tion of the public were to buy knives likewise, with an avowedly similar purpose, the right to buy knives at all would have to be very speedily limited. The fact, that a crime or an enormity is not forbidden by the law, shows, not that the law sanctions it, but that no sane man apprehends it.

Absurd, however, as is the conception formed by the Socialists of what constitutes justice in a law or a legal principle, the conception they have formed of what constitutes private property is more absurd still. Private property, they seem to imagine, is such property, and such property only, as its possessor can be allowed to use in any way he pleases. Hence, any thing that might be used to the detriment of the public in general, and the use of which must consequently be limited by legislation, is, they argue, not private property at all. Now, this conception of private property is the conception, no doubt, of boys playing at marbles; but that it should ever have imposed itself on a rational and thoughtful man, we confess is beyond our comprehension. For, so far is the private ownership of an object from being inconsistent with the use which the owner makes of it being limited, that it is precisely the limitations on the use of such objects that make up the substance of more than half the laws of the

world. Is not a knife a proper object of private ownership? Mr. George and Mr. Hyndman both admit that it is. Yet what can be clearer, as we have already pointed out, than that the use of a knife must be subjected to the very strictest limitations. Or let us take the case of a cabman who owns his own horse and hansom. Does the English law, or does any human being, fail to recognize these as the cabman's private property? Yet is the cabman legally able to do as he likes with them? Can he drive them down Piccadilly at the rate of twelve miles an hour? When standing in the rank, can he refuse to take a passenger? Can he exact half a sovereign for going from Hyde Park Corner to St. James Street? or can he, to work off his temper, beat his horse to death in the stable? If, then, a man may still own a knife, though he may not stick it in his neighbor's back; if a cabman may own a horse, though he may not cruelly maltreat it,—there is no shadow of proof that a man may not own land in the fact, that, under certain circumstances, he cannot be allowed to denude it wantonly of its inhabitants. The utmost that could be proved from the arguments we have been just considering, would be that the law, under certain circumstances, should compel a landlord to let his land, just as it compels a cabman

to take a passenger in his cab, and perhaps compel him to let it on certain fixed conditions. But unless all private property be inadmissible, which the modern Socialists do not maintain,<sup>1</sup> it is impossible to deduce from the principle that all men have a right to live, that, even if a landlord should be compelled to let his land, he has not a right to own all the land he can buy, and, having bought it, to demand a full rent for it.

The theory, however, that we are now engaged in combating, does not merely deny that land can be the property of the individual. It asserts that it is by nature inalienably the property of the nation. Hence, as we have seen already, we had the two first principles to examine into,—not only the principle that all men have a right to live, but the principle that every man has a right to live in his own country. The first we have disposed of: it remains for us to examine the second.

This, then, we are told, is a self-evident truth: every man has a right to live in his own coun-

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<sup>1</sup> "There is to every thing produced by human exertion a clear and indisputable title to exclusive possession."—*Progress and Poverty*.

"Do any say we attack property? We deny it. We attack only the private property of a few thousand loiterers and slave-drivers, which renders all property in the fruits of their own labor impossible for millions."—*Socialism made Plain*.

try; the English, for instance, have a right to live in England; and we can hear the Socialists, as they fling down the moral gauntlet, asking with confidence what Englishman will deny it. Now, if population were altogether stationary, we certainly should not be disposed to deny this ourselves; and, even as matters stand, we shall make it appear presently that we are prepared to defend the right of the English to England, to the utmost length that is demanded by patriotism, or permitted by common sense. When we reflect, however, that population is not stationary, but increasing, we cannot but see that this supposed natural principle is far from being true in the universal way claimed for it. For whether we be Malthusians, or whether we be anti-Malthusians, it must be clear to us all, that, in any given country, the population will, if it goes on increasing, be too large for that country to nourish some day; and thus, in every country, which, according to modern notions, is prosperous, a time will come when a certain proportion of the citizens must inevitably lose this right which is declared to be inalienable.

This consequence, and its bearing on the present question, will become clearer if we examine more closely what the Socialists mean by *country*. For the word *country*, when used



in one of its senses, means often some area so extensive that the possibility of its being overpopulated is apt to elude the imagination. It may, for example, mean all the Russias; it may mean the whole of the United States; or it may mean the British Islands. It may mean, in fact, any area, or group of contiguous areas, which are united under one government. But it is perfectly evident, that, when the Socialists use the word, they use it in a sense very much narrower than this; and it is evident, if for no other reason, from one very familiar fact. In illustrating this right, which they assert, of every man to live in his own country, the two cases they adduce as most strikingly to the point at this moment, are the case of the Irish, and the case of the Scotch Highlanders. Now, the Irish peasant is not told that he has a right to live in Birmingham, nor the Highland crofter that he has a right to live in Edinburgh. What is claimed for the one is, that he has a right to live in Ireland; and what is claimed for the other is, that he has a right to live in the Highlands. Clearly, then, what the Socialists mean by a man's country, is not an area co-extensive with the rule of the government under which he lives, but one much more special and definite. The question therefore arises, How far is it specialized? Has the Connemara peasant a right

merely to live in Ireland? or has he a special right to live in Connemara? Has the Ardnamurchan crofter a right merely to live in the Highlands? or has he a special right to live in Ardnamurchan? What are the boundaries, if driven beyond which, a man's inalienable right to his own country is violated? Are they the boundaries of his native country? or the boundaries of his native parish? or the boundaries of his native potato-patch? Are they an arm of the sea, or a chain of hills, or a river, or a hedge, or a gutter? Where does his right begin, and where does his right end? Now, though, if such a right exists at all, it may be impossible to give to this question any one universal answer, there are still certain cases in which it can be answered with the utmost precision. If we violate the right of a native of Ross-shire by expelling him from his native glen, we equally violate the right of a native of one of the Hebrides by expelling him from his native island; and one of the Hebrides (at least, if it be of moderate size) will be an example, at once complete and manageable, of what the Socialists really mean when they speak of a man's country.

Let us take, then, the island, or we may call it the country, of Rum, and apply the Socialistic doctrine of inalienable rights to that. The

island of Rum, which is about seven miles in length, contained, towards the end of the last century, a population of 300 inhabitants. Of these, subsequently, all were expelled but twelve, in order that the island might be turned into a deer-forest for an Englishman. Now, for argument's sake we will admit that this expulsion was every whit as unjustifiable as any Socialist can represent it to be. But it clearly does not follow from this admission, that the people of Rum, because they were the people of Rum, had an inalienable right to live on their native island. For let us suppose that the expulsion had never taken place, and the whole 300 had been left to increase and multiply: what would have happened then? Here we are on solid ground. We are dealing, not with imaginary quantities, not with vague quantities. We can say what would have happened, with certainty. The greater part of Rum consists of a barren mountain: it would be hopeless to establish there any kind of manufacture, and even Mr. George himself would not attempt to maintain that it could yield subsistence for more than 600 people. Now, if population had increased there, as it has done over Great Britain generally, this limit of 600 would have been reached a full fifty years ago; and, between that time and this, there would have

been born in the island nearly 300 people more than could by any possibility live there, or, what is precisely the same thing, could have any possible right to live there. In other words, during the last fifty years this one country would have produced some 300 citizens, who not only had no inalienable right to live in it, but whom their fellow-citizens had an inalienable right to expel.<sup>1</sup>

If, then, the people of Rum had any special right to remain in their native island at all, this was not only because, as a race, they had a better right to it than the rest of the world, but because a certain number of themselves had a better right to it than the remainder. And what is true of a small island like Rum, is equally true in principle of a great country like England. As Mr. George himself has repeatedly admitted in his arguments, the district is the image of the kingdom; and what is true in principle with regard to the soil of the one, is true in principle with regard to the soil of the other. The right, then, of the English to Eng-

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<sup>1</sup> Or we may look at the question in another way. If a man has an inalienable *right* to live in a certain country, it may be contended with equal justice that he has an inalienable *obligation* to live in it. Now, let us suppose for a moment that this obligation were enforced by our government, and that no Irishmen, for instance, were allowed to emigrate to America. It is perfectly clear that we should at once hear

land, no matter how valid, rests not on any inalienable natural right, which inheres by birth in all Englishmen equally, but is a right which depends on a number of variable circumstances, and which, even if it inheres in all Englishmen to-day, does so only by accident, and will certainly not do so to-morrow.

This national right, however, which is thus left us, is still far from insignificant. It is simply that right for which, from time immemorial, noble and peasant have fought side by side; and the Duke of Wellington valued it as highly as does Mr. Hyndman. This right, as we have already said, we admit; but if we consider it now, having examined its real nature, we shall see, that, in asserting it, we are so far from asserting any right in the nation as against the private land-owners, that we are really doing all we can to justify the right of the private land-owners as against the nation. For if the right to live on a certain portion of the earth's surface be vested, not in mankind in general, but in a certain special race, and not even in

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from the Socialists, that, in addition to the right to live in his own country, a man had also an inalienable right to leave it. But what would this come to? Either that a man has a right to live in any spot he pleases, wholly irrespective of the interests of others; or else, that he has merely a right to live *somewhere*, — a proposition which we have allowed to be true, but shown to be wholly irrelevant to the question of private ownership in land.

that race as a whole, but only in a certain section of it, how can it be contrary to any principle of natural justice that one set of men should possess rights, as owners, which are in their own way no more exclusive than the rights which another set are allowed to possess as occupiers? The Socialists say that 30,000 English landlords can have no right as against 30,000,000 English tenants. Surely we may ask, with equal justice, what right can 30,000,000 English tenants have, as against 1,200,000,000 other human beings, including amongst them many of their own countrymen? If one man may not appropriate a particular spot of land, why may a body of men? If a small body may not, why may a large body? Where does natural justice draw the line between 30,000 and 30,000,000? Or how does a nation, as against the rest of the world, differ from a landlord as against the rest of his nation?

The Socialists, no doubt, will say that a nation owns its soil because it does what the landlords do not: it collectively works upon it. This, however, is only evading the difficulty. Why should one nation have a better soil to work on than another? Why should one nation have silver, gold, coal, iron, and petroleum, while another has none of these? Why should one nation be basking in the sunshine of Naples

or Andalusia, and another be hiding in huts from the cold of the arctic zone? It is impossible to answer these questions by any appeal to the natural rights of man. If we regard men merely as men, the Chinese have as much right to the coal of England as the English: the Esquimaux have as much right as the Neapolitans to the climate of Southern Italy. All we can say is this, and this is quite sufficient. Unless it were recognized, with regard to the surface of the earth, that the rights of men to it are distributed, not equally, but unequally; that some men, without any personal merit of their own, have an exclusive right to its richest and most delightful parts, whilst others have a right only to the parts that are most barren and miserable; that for some is the healthy hillside, for others the pestilential plain; for some the harbors and the navigable rivers, for others the iron-bound coast and the rock-strewn mountain torrent; for some the perennial spring, for others the perennial winter; for some the fields of corn, for others the fields of ice, — unless this were recognized as the order and rule of nature, no progressive civilization of any kind would be possible; and mankind would consist of nothing but a multitude of warring and wandering tribes, perpetually either plundering or being plundered. We are not now attempting to

prove that the ownership by private persons of the fee-simple of the soil is expedient: we are only concerned to show that the modern Socialists are so far from having done any thing to prove the contrary, that the very argument which they have thought to be most conclusive against it, instead of being a proof of its inexpediency, is an analogical illustration of its justice.

We have dealt at such length on the Socialistic view of the land-question, not only because of its importance to the system of the Socialists themselves, but because a number of persons, who are by no means Socialists, appear to entertain some vague suspicion that it may be true. We must now, however, quit these high discussions as to natural justice and inalienable rights, and descend to humbler, but still more important, ground. We mean the question of the relation of wealth to labor. And we say this question is more important, not only because it is so in point of theory, but because, in an age like ours, it is so also in practice. According to the calculations of Mr. Hyndman and others, whilst the Socialistic theory of land would, if adopted in England, alter the existing distribution of but £60,000,000 annually, the effect of adopting the Socialistic theory of labor would be to alter the existing distribution of £900,000,000.



Such being the case, we shall perhaps make the discussion simpler if we put our difference with the Socialists as to the land altogether out of sight, and figure to ourselves, in dealing with the relation of wealth to labor, that our argument refers to a country in which the land has been already nationalized. All the rents, we will suppose, are paid to the state, and are absorbed in defraying the ordinary expenses of the government. Thus, so far as the individual citizens are concerned, the land has no longer any share in the production of wealth at all; and we may cease to complicate the problem by making any further allusion to it. All the wealth that the citizens can enjoy, that is to say, all the wealth of the country, except what goes in taxes, has been clearly produced, not by the land, but by some other agency or agencies.

The Socialists say it has been produced by one agency only, and that agency is labor. We have already quoted their formula. All wealth is due to labor: therefore to the laborers all wealth is due. This is the proposition that we are now about to examine; and, before discussing its truth, we must begin by making ourselves quite clear as to its meaning.

The first thing, then, that we have to notice in regard to it, is its difference from the proposition that corresponds to it in the theories of the

orthodox economists. It advisedly suppresses all mention of capital. It is this suppression, that, in the eyes of the Socialists, alone gives it its supposed meaning and value. Practically, therefore, the immediate question before us is, not how the Socialists assert the claims of labor, but how they manage to get rid of the claims of capital, and to prove, in so doing, that the capitalists are robbers and marauders.

It will be well to observe, then, that *capital*, as here used, is far from being synonymous with all accumulated wealth. It means only such wealth when used for a particular purpose. It is, as Mr. Hyndman says, "the saving of past labor *for the special purpose of increasing the future store.*" Thus the same sum of money will be either capital or not capital, entirely according to the use its possessor makes of it. Two men, we will say, have each £10,000. The one spends this sum in champagne and race-horses; and, at the end of a short time, the whole of it has disappeared. The other invests it in a cotton-mill; lives for the rest of his life on an income of £500 a year, and leaves the principal undiminished to his children. Of the two men the latter only is a capitalist; and strange as it may seem, alluding to the Socialistic theory, the latter only is a robber. For the mere possession of £10,000, or, for the matter of that, £100,000, is not neces-

sary, in the eyes of the Socialists, any crime whatever. Their theory of the relation of wealth to labor expressly sanctions a man's right to save every thing he can abstain from spending; and to give or bequeath this to whomsoever he pleases; and thus the heir of a large family of misers might have the possession of an immense sum of money, to which the Socialists would heartily bid him welcome. Mr. Hyndman especially says that a sum of this kind, in the possession of a single individual, need represent in itself no robbery at all, but "merely the result of past frugality on the part of some hard-working man, with a keen eye to the good of his species, as well as to his own immediate interest." The robbery begins only when this sum, instead of diminishing with each draught that is made on it, is so employed as to enable the owner to spend yearly a certain given proportion of it, and yet yearly, without any exertion of his own, to have that proportion somehow made good again. The capitalist is not a robber because he has his cake, and he is not a robber because he eats his cake. He is a robber only because, in eating one cake, he is making somebody else supply its place with another.

We will illustrate this by an example which Mr. Hyndman himself offers us, and which he tells us is taken from "the regular operations of

a factory." He supposes a man with a fortune of something over £10,000, to employ this fortune as follows: With the bulk of it, that is to say, with the £10,000, he buys a cotton-mill, containing 10,000 spindles; and with his remaining few hundreds he sets the mill going. Such a mill, says Mr. Hyndman, "produces every week a pound of yarn to the spindle. The waste of the cotton amounts to 6 per cent. Therefore 10,600 lbs. of cotton are converted [weekly] into 10,000 lbs. of yarn, and 600 lbs. of waste." The capitalist accordingly buys 10,600 lbs. of cotton, which cost him £342; £10 he spends in buying a week's coal and sundries; and he sets aside £20 to make good a week's wear and tear of the machinery, and £6 for a week's ground-rent of his premises. Thus the total weekly expense, exclusive of the wages of the hands, is £378. The weekly wages of the hands are £52. Accordingly, the capitalist, at the end of his first week of business, will have spent, inclusive of the original outlay, £10,430. Meanwhile, however, his mill will have spun 10,000 yarns of cotton; and the value of this will be £510. Let us now consider what his position at the end of the first week is. With regard to the bulk of his money, it is totally unchanged. The mill and the machinery, which represent his £10,000, are just what they were at starting; for he has spent £20

in keeping them so. His £10,000, therefore, is still his own, exactly as it would have been had he hidden it away in a stocking. It has neither been increased nor lessened. All that has changed, then, is the remaining £430; for, having spent this sum in the ways above mentioned, he receives at the week's end, in return for it, £510. He receives not only the whole of it back again, but £80 added to it. That is to say, the capitalist, during the week, has lost nothing; and, so far as work goes, he has done nothing. Simply £80, which he has not worked for, has come to him somehow. The question is, how? What is the origin of this additional £80?

This Mr. Hyndman undertakes to tell us, and he leads us up to it by the following train of reasoning. The cotton yarn which is sold by the capitalist could not possibly be sold by him for a less sum than the total of all the sums which he has himself spent in its production. What these sums are, we have seen already: £20 in deterioration of machinery, £10 in coal, £6 in ground-rent, £342 in raw material, and £52 in wages, making in all £430. Thus, of the £510 for which the yarn is sold, £430 simply replaces what the capitalist has spent on its production. Now, if the yarn were worth no more than this, and were sold for no more than this, then, says Mr. Hyndman, the

transaction would be perfectly fair. What had been paid out by the capitalist in securing the various means of production, and what was paid to him in the money's worth of the produce, would in that case be equal. The two sides of the account would balance. Such, however, is not the case here. On the one side is £430; on the other £510. That is to say, the capitalist has bought the means of production for £80 less than the fair value of the produce. Now, says Mr. Hyndman, what has happened becomes clear. For some one or more of the various means of production, the capitalist has somehow or other paid £80 too little; which means, translated into slightly different language, that he has got £80 worth of the means of productions for nothing. The only question is, which of the means of production are these? Which is it that he has stolen? This, says Mr. Hyndman, is very easy to answer, because for all the means of production, except one, we can be quite sure that he had to pay the uttermost farthing. The coal, use of the ground, the repairs of the machinery, the raw material, — as to all these things, says Mr. Hyndman, he has not been able to help himself: "he has bought them at their actual value, and paid for them at their actual price." They are worth as much as, and no more than, that price, just as the

yarn is worth the £510 for which he sells it. Since, then, he has paid £80 too little in something, it can only be that he has paid £80 too little in wages, or for the labor of the men employed by him. Their labor really should be worth £132, whilst what he has paid for it has been only £52. That is to say, Mr. Hyndman continues, of the ten hours a day for which these men will have worked, they have been paid for four hours only, and have worked six hours for nothing.

Having brought us to this point, Mr. Hyndman sums up as follows :—

“ There is a comparison at hand which philanthropizing capitalists — and there are many of them — will understand if they do not appreciate. Under the old system of *corvée*, a man was obliged to give, say one day's work in the week, or at most two, to his lord without any payment. Such a man, though he had the remaining five or six days wholly to himself, was thought little better than a slave. Nor was he. English capitalists would, of all men, subscribe largely to relieve human beings from continuing in such a shameful and degraded position. But here at home we have men, women, and children who are obliged to give four, five, and six hours a day to the capitalist for nothing, and yet are thought free. A factory-hand, who, as in the instance given above, provides six hours a day of extra labor, makes the capitalist a present of three days' work

in the week for nothing. He gives, in fact, three times as much labor for nothing in the week to his employer, as the serf who works one day in the week under *corvée* is obliged to offer in unpaid labor to his lord. But in the one case, under the system of daily or weekly wages, the necessary labor and the extra labor are lumped together, as so much paid-for labor: in the other they are divided. Thus the forced, extra, unpaid labor for the capitalist — the industrial *corvée* — escapes notice, though it is three times greater than the other; and the capitalist is thrice as heavy a master as the feudal lord.”

We are now in a position to understand what the Socialists mean when they declare that capital, as a thing distinct from labor, is not an agent in the production of wealth at all. They mean, in the first place, that all such capital as is invested in inert matter, such as machinery, raw material, and so forth, is, in Mr. Hyndman's words, “simply reproduced without increase.” Thus, out of the £510 worth of yarn produced in the cotton-mill, the machinery<sup>1</sup> is to be credited with the production of so many pounds' worth only, as represents the loss incurred in wear and tear; the coal, and the raw cotton, are to be credited, in a similar way, with the production of so many pounds' worth only, as

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<sup>1</sup> “The machine . . . adds no more value to the commodity produced than the wear and tear during the process of work.” — *England for All*, p. 73.



represents their own replacement; and so on with every part of the capital, except that spent in wages. "Ordinarily," says Mr. Hyndman, "the rate of surplus value is calculated on the total amount of capital employed, constant and variable, and is dubbed profit on capital. *But this is wholly incorrect.* The rate of surplus value produced, the proportion of labor turned to account by the capitalist, should be reckoned *only* on the amount of capital advanced to pay the owner for that labor." Thus, according to the Socialistic theory, one man might own all the machinery, and all the raw material, in England, and yet not be a penny the richer for it himself, nor any one else the poorer. As long as his wealth remained in this form, it would stand in his name: that would be all. He might just as well be the owner of a diamond spade, which he lent to a man for nothing, to dig up potatoes with.<sup>2</sup>

Here, then, we are confronted with a somewhat startling result. The great bulk of the wealth that we ordinarily consider capital, is, in the Socialistic Economy, not capital at all; for it does not in itself serve "the special purpose of increasing the future store." Strictly speak-

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<sup>2</sup> Thus, according to this theory, if a man invests part of his profits in adding to his mills and his machinery, he benefits by this only because it enables him to find employment for more unpaid labor.

ing, nothing is capital except the wages fund; and hence we are now able to define it more exactly. Instead of merely saying that capital is wealth "set apart for the special purpose of increasing the future store," we may say it is wealth set apart for the special purpose of buying labor at less than labor's worth.

And now follows the final question. How is it that the capitalists are able to accomplish this special purpose? It is all very well to say they are robbers; but what puts it into their power to rob? The answer is to be found in a further examination of the wages fund. Just as one part of the wealth of the capitalists consists of a monopoly of raw material and machinery, so the wages fund consists of a monopoly of the daily necessities of existence. These are theirs to give or to withhold: the laborers are, therefore, completely at their mercy, and can be forced to labor, not for their labor's worth, but for the lowest sum that will keep them in working-order. That is to say, they can be forced, as we have seen before, to give the capitalists the larger part of their labor for nothing; since, if they do not, the capitalists can leave them to die. And here let us pause once more, to consider that other portion of the wealth of the capitalists, which we have said is not capital. Practically, the fact of its being monop-

lized as it is, helps to keep the laborers in the grip of the capitalists, and, though not robbing them itself, holds them down while they are being robbed; but, theoretically, this wealth—that is to say, the raw material and the machinery—might just as well be owned by the laborers themselves. According to the Socialistic theory, that would in no way alter the situation. For a set of men who were absolutely starving would be none the less at the mercy of a man with food, and be obliged to take it at whatever terms he offered them, from the fact of their owning a cargo of raw cotton and a cotton-mill. They cannot eat raw cotton and spindles; and, unless they eat something, the raw cotton and spindles are useless. It will thus be seen that the raw material and the machinery in a country at any given moment are, according to this theory, virtually a part of the laborers. The three elements together form, as it were, one animal, in which the raw material is like the stuff out of which a silkworm spins its web, and the machinery is merely an enlargement of the organs by which this spinning is effected.

Such, then, is the train of reasoning by which the Socialists eliminate capital from the causes of wealth. They reduce it itself to a mere monopoly of the daily means of subsistence, which

enables the monopolists to drive an unjust bargain with the laborers; and they reduce its profits to the products of so many hours and days of forced or unpaid-for labor. In putting this theory before the reader, we have carefully abstained thus far from any comments on it of our own. We have been merely anxious to state, as clearly as possible, what the Socialists themselves mean. And we are bound to say, that if we look at only so much of the matter as they themselves look at, or choose to show us, their arguments seem convincing to a very singular degree. They are logical, ingenious, lucid; they convey to us a constant sense that they are exposing some time-honored fallacy; and, above all, they result in putting the situation before us in a form that can be grasped almost instantly by the imagination. We are, however, now about to examine them; and we shall have, we conceive, little difficulty in showing that their apparent force is due, not to their profundity, but to their partiality, and that they rest, in the last resort, on one of the most abject sophisms that ever imposed themselves on the meanest of human intellects.

We will begin, then, by directing the reader's attention to a certain point that will probably have occurred to him already. Since machinery, according to the Socialistic theory, is simply re-

produced without increase; since, in the words we have already quoted from Mr. Hyndman, "it adds no more value to the commodity produced than the wear and tear during the process of work," — it may seem doubtful why, according to this theory, machinery should exist at all; and one might be tempted to conceive of the Socialists as actually maintaining that it has left production exactly where it found it, and has done nothing for men, except just repay them for the trouble of keeping it in order. But though, as we shall see presently, what they maintain is something quite as absurd as this, still it is not this. "Machines," says Mr. Hyndman, "so vastly enhance the power of human labor," that, "at first sight," it would appear, that, by their aid, "men would be relieved from excessive drudgery, and yet wealth abound more than at any previous period. . . . And," he adds, "there is nothing necessarily chimerical in these ideas." Thus, to return to the figures he gives us from the typical operations of a factory, the labor that, with the assistance of machinery, produced 10,000 lbs. of yarn in a week, might, according to his own admission, without that assistance barely produce a thousand; and he would accordingly himself credit the machinery with nine-tenths of the whole weekly product.

How, then, it may be asked, can he possibly reconcile this with the seemingly incompatible doctrine, that all wealth is due to labor? He does so in this way: not by denying that the product of labor is increased by machinery, but by maintaining that the addition it thus receives adds nothing to its value. The 10,000 lbs. of yarn that are produced weekly, with the assistance of machinery, sell, he says, for £510; but supposing the machinery to be non-existent, and the weekly product to be reduced to 1,000 lbs. only, the weekly product in value would still be paid the same. A thousand pounds of yarn would be worth £510 then, just as 10,000 lbs. of yarn are worth £510 now. Conversely, could the machinery be so improved that the weekly product should be, not diminished, but doubled, its value would still remain at £510. Twenty thousand pounds of yarn would be worth no more than 10,000, just as the 10,000 were worth no more than 1,000. Thus, if a mill, with its present machinery, produces 10,000 lbs. of yarn weekly, yarn is worth about a shilling a pound; if there were no machinery at all, the yarn would be worth about ten shillings a pound; and, if the machinery had its present efficacy doubled, the yarn then would be worth about sixpence a pound. In other words, machinery cheapens commodities so exactly in pro-

portion-as it multiplies them, that its one effect on the wealth which it assists in producing, is, not to increase the value of the whole, but merely to diminish the value of the separate parts. Hence, argue the Socialists, a man who owns machinery, and allows laborers to use it, though he adds to the productiveness of their labor, adds nothing to its value, and has no claim whatever to any share in the results of it. Were this not the case, the Socialists themselves admit that their whole system would fall at once to the ground. For supposing that this theory of value were not true, and that machinery did what this theory says it does not, add value as well as bulk to the gross results of labor, then all, or, at any rate, most, of this immense added value would justly go to the men whose machinery had been the means of adding it. It is, then, this theory of value that is, as Dr. Schäffle says, "the great Archimedean pivot from which the modern Socialists would turn the economic world upside down;" and it will be seen, that, consequently, our whole present inquiry narrows and resolves itself into an examination of it.

Our first question with regard to it will naturally be, On what grounds do the Socialists themselves support it? And any one who has realized its full enormity and absurdity will, perhaps, be

little surprised to hear that they have, on their own confession, hardly examined into its grounds at all. Marx, who was the first to deduce from it the Socialistic theory of capital, assumes it as an axiom to be accepted, rather than as a conclusion to be proved; and Mr. Hyndman, who is simply an exponent of the views of Marx, follows and illustrates the exact procedure of his master. Having devoted a considerable part of a chapter to repeating, in various ways, that, "in all exchangeable value, the quantity of human labor is the measure," he complacently goes on to observe, that "there is, of course, nothing new in all this;" and that, "at this time of day, it needs no elaborate demonstration." He calls it "a generally admitted, though a little-regarded, truth;" and, if we may judge from one of his footnotes, he seems to think that Professor Stanley Jevons is the only person who ever questioned it. Although, however, he disdains to defend formally a theory which he thinks so little liable to attack, he gives, in passing, certain hints of the process by which he and his instructors have arrived at it. He quotes two passages, to which we shall recur presently, — one from Adam Smith, and one from Ricardo, — both of which he has entirely misunderstood, but in which he conceives it to be stated; and he takes the following



illustration to show its self-evident character:—

“Say that a coat is worth twice as much as ten yards of cloth. The coat is useful, and satisfies a particular want. Two kinds of qualities of labor are embodied in it,—that of the tailor who made the coat, and that of the weaver who wove the cloth. So far as its usefulness is concerned also, it makes no difference whether the tailor wears it, or his customer. The coat is assumed to be worth twice as much as ten yards of cloth,—worth, that is, twenty yards of cloth. In point of value, coat and cloth as well are two expressions of labor itself. Thus the coat is worth twice as much as the cloth, because the cloth contains only half as much human labor; and it needs twice the quantity of labor to produce the coat complete, cloth and all, as to produce the cloth alone. Reduce the quantity of labor needed to make a coat by one-half, and two coats are only worth what one was before. Double the quantity of labor needed to make a coat, and one coat is worth what two were before. . . . But, of course [Mr. Hyndman adds], if the labor is more productive, more values in use are obtained in a given time, and if less productive, less: only the value for exchange remains unaltered.”

The foregoing illustration Mr. Hyndman considers to be a perfect type of all productive processes, and the relation of labor to value, which it indicates, to be only obscured, not altered, by

the intricacies of the capitalistic system. And of one thing, no doubt, it is a perfect type, — not of all productive processes, but of the way in which Mr. Hyndman and the Socialists reason about all productive processes. We shall therefore make use of its assistance in showing how ridiculous their reasoning is.

Let us first observe, then, that, like many things that are false, Mr. Hyndman's illustration has a certain grain of truth in it. It is undoubtedly true, that in an exceedingly simple community, in which all the coats were made by one man, the exchangeable value of a coat, within certain limits, would rise and fall with the hours that are necessary to produce it. We will suppose, for instance, four men wrecked on a desert island, with a large cargo of cloth. A cave supplies them with shelter, but the climate renders coats a necessity. One of their number makes the coats: the three others procure food. Each of them requires three coats in the year; that is to say, they require twelve coats in all: and each coat takes a month in making. Thus, to supply the community with coats occupies the tailor for the entire year. Accordingly, since he can plainly do nothing to get food for himself, the lowest value that his coats can possibly have is the value represented by a year's supply of food, which must be given

him. This we will suppose to be worth £18. The community therefore requires during the year £72 worth of food in all; it takes each of the three men a year to procure £24 worth; and thus they are occupied the whole year in providing the needful food, just as the tailor is occupied in providing the needful coats. The value, therefore, of the twelve coats is necessarily £24; that is to say, £2 a coat.<sup>1</sup> This is not only the lowest possible value, but the highest possible value; for just as the tailor could make the coats for no less, so his companions could offer for them no more. Thus far, all is perfectly simple. Let us now suppose the situation slightly changed: A coat, we will say, takes the tailor a fortnight to make, not a month; and he can thus produce in the year, not twelve coats only, but twenty-four. What will happen now? If he produces twenty-four coats, it is perfectly plain that he can get no more than £24 for them, for there is no more than £24 available; and it is perfectly plain, also, that he can sell them for no less. Each coat, therefore, will, in this case, be halved in value. It will be worth, not £2, but £1. Thus

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<sup>1</sup> It will, of course, be recollected that the three others have to present the tailor with his own three coats, which they virtually do by feeding him whilst he is making them. Thus the income of each of the four is £24, £18 being in food, and £6 in coats.

far Mr. Hyndman is perfectly right, but we have now come to the point where his long course of error begins. We have just said that the coats would be worth £1 apiece *if* the tailor produced twenty-four of them in a year. The question arises, Would he produce twenty-four? This question, and its attendant considerations, the Socialists utterly neglect; and yet here really lies the key to the whole problem. Twelve coats, we have said, are all that are necessary to the community. The second twelve would be mere luxuries. Why should not the tailor continue to make twelve only, as heretofore, sell them, as heretofore, at £2 apiece, and live six months of the year in idleness on the labor of his companions? The Socialists would answer, that, were he to attempt to do this, his companions would soon remedy matters by making their coats for themselves. Why should they feed the tailor for a month to do what they themselves could do in a fortnight? Now, under certain circumstances, this reply might be perfectly valid; but its validity would depend altogether on one condition, that all the four men were equally capable of coat-making, and that the special productiveness of the tailor's labor was in the nature of the labor, not in the talents of the man. Were such not the case,—had the tailor alone the power of making a coat

in a fortnight, whilst none of the others could make it in less than a month, — the tailor's coats would still retain their old value in exchange, wholly irrespective of the diminution of the labor bestowed upon them.

If this is not sufficiently clear already, we have only to suppose our community somewhat larger. Instead of one tailor clothing four people with twelve coats a year, we will suppose ten tailors clothing forty with a hundred and twenty. At first, each of these tailors makes only twelve coats a year. They are thus, all of them, fully occupied; and they receive for their coats, as in the former case, £2 apiece, which, as in the former case, is the only price possible, — at once the highest and the lowest. By and by, however, one of the ten tailors so far outstrips the rest in dexterity, that, instead of making only twelve coats in the year, he makes sixty. But the utmost number of coats required in the year by the community being, as we have said, no more than a hundred and twenty, there would now, if all the tailors still continued working, be produced annually forty-eight coats too many. What would be the result of this on the value of the coats? It is plain, that, if it affected the value of any of them, it would affect those only that were made by the exceptional tailor; for, from the terms

of the proposition, those made by the others are as cheap as possible already. Let us suppose, then, that for a year this exceptional tailor sells sixty coats for £1 apiece, the others being unable to sell theirs for less than £2. What will happen is evident. The whole of the cheap coats will be sold to a certainty; and the other nine tailors will have a hundred and eight coats between them, of which sixty indeed must be sold, but of which not more than sixty can be. Here, then, are four tailors, whose work as tailors at once becomes superfluous, and is obliged to cease. The supply of coats again sinks, so as just to meet the demand; and those made by the exceptional tailor rise naturally in value to £2 as formerly.<sup>1</sup> Thus, thirty-six people now produce the same given income that was before produced by forty. Of these, thirty-five have still £18 a year in food, and £6 in coats: whilst the thirty-sixth has, like the others, £6 in coats; only, instead of £18 in food, he has £90. He has, therefore, every year £72 worth of food more than he can consume himself. Meanwhile the remaining four of the forty—

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<sup>1</sup> It would be impossible for the increased production of coats to lower the average cost of coats; because sixty of the requisite coats—those produced by the ordinary tailors—are already at their lowest price: nor could the exceptional tailor be forced to sell his coats at less than £2, because nobody else could undersell him.

the four tailors who have been thrown out of work — have been obliged to seek for food and clothing somehow. Their sedentary habits have made it impossible for them to produce food themselves; and, of the other inhabitants, one alone has more than he needs for his own personal consumption. This man is the rich tailor: he is the sole repository of the available food on the island. They have been accordingly obliged to betake themselves to him, and, in return for his supporting them, to put their services at his disposal. He divides between them his £72 worth of surplus food; that is to say, he gives them £18 apiece annually, and three coats; and sets them to work at making carpets, wall-hangings, and bed-furniture for himself, the total value of which is, as Mr. Hyndman would agree, the value of the food and coats of the four men who have made them; that is to say, £96. Thus the increased productiveness of the one tailor's labors has done precisely what Mr. Hyndman declared it would not do: it has increased the exchangeable value of his products, in exact proportion as it has increased their bulk and number. His labor for the whole year is worth not only his own three coats, and £18 worth of food, but it is worth his own three coats, £18 worth of food, and £96 worth of carpets and curtains besides.

The reader may easily elaborate this illustration for himself; but for our present purpose it is all-sufficient as it stands, and we should but obscure its point by adding to it. It proves, as it stands, with the force of a mathematical demonstration, that increased productiveness fails to enhance value, and that goods exchange according to the hours of labor embodied in them, only in a society where the talents of all the members are equal, and that, the moment a man appears whose powers are above the average, the Socialistic theory becomes from that moment an absurdity.

But we will not content ourselves with this imaginary case: we will now proceed to a real one. Our parable of the desert island, Mr. Hyndman may perhaps persuade himself, is nothing but a tissue of arbitrary assumptions of our own. We will therefore turn to an island, as to which he can be under no such delusion. We will turn to England, and to the history of English industry; we will imitate Mr. Hyndman in taking actual figures; and, to avoid the possibility of any dispute in the matter, the figures we will take shall be Mr. Hyndman's own. The following is the passage in which he gives them:—

“In these islands the comparison between what was and is, can scarcely be expressed in sober lan-



guage. . . . Taking the years 1848 and 1878, the period of one generation since last there was an agitation in favor of justice to the multitude, we find that the total gross annual value of property and profits assessed to income-tax in Great Britain and Ireland—about half the annual gross value or less—was, in round numbers, £275,000,000 in 1848, as against £578,000,000 in 1878, or an increase on assessment for income alone of upwards of 110 per cent in the thirty years. Yet the total population in 1848 was 28,000,000, as against nearly 34,000,000 in 1878. Here, then, in the United Kingdom an increase of annual assessed income of 110 per cent, or of £303,000,000, since 1848, has been accompanied by an increase in the population of only 6,000,000, or at the rate of less than 20 per cent in the thirty years.”

Mr. Hyndman cites these figures to prove that English poverty cannot be due to over-population. What they may prove in that way this is not the place to consider. We are about to use them for a very different purpose. First, however, let us add to them one detail more. Of the above-mentioned 6,000,000, by which the population has increased, the larger part, as Mr. Hyndman often remarks, have developed into a new non-laboring middle class; and the laboring-classes have increased by barely 2,000,000. Accordingly, when we consider, that, in 1848, the hours of labor were longer by one

fifth than in 1878, we shall find that the total number of labor-hours contributed by the laborers was considerably smaller during the latter year than during the former. Now, then, let us turn to the fact which Mr. Hyndman proclaims so loudly, that the value of the commodities produced during the latter year was greater by £303,000,000 than that of those produced during the former. Why was their value greater by this enormous sum? According to him, it can be for one reason only, that they embody a greater quantity of human labor. This, however, it is perfectly plain they cannot; for, on Mr. Hyndman's own showing, they embody not more, but less. What reply will Mr. Hyndman make to this? Perhaps in desperation he will seek to escape from the difficulty by declaring that his figures refer to value in use, not to value in exchange. But even this verbal refuge he has already closed against himself; for he says of those very commodities, in the very chapter we have quoted from, that "the whole world is laid under contribution" to furnish these islands for an equivalent for only part of them. The increased value that he speaks of is value in exchange, and it is essentially value in exchange. There is no room for a moment's doubt about it. And thus the crowning fact, that Mr. Hyndman insists

on as an agitator, is simply an example on a gigantic scale of the truth, on the denial of which he founds his entire system as a theorist. These are his words when he is laying his theory down: "To the working-classes I say, All wealth is produced by labor, and goods exchange in proportion to the quantity of human labor which is embodied in them." He asks the working-classes to look at the wealth of this country; and the wealth of this country shows them, again to quote his own words, that, to an extent "which can scarcely be expressed in sober language," goods exchange *out of* proportion to the quantity of labor which is embodied in them. No demonstration of any thing, we conceive, could be more complete and absolute than this demonstration of the fallacy of the great first principle of Socialism — and that, from the materials which a Socialist himself supplies us with.

And now, having settled thus much, let us carry our inquiry farther. Since all wealth is demonstrably not due to labor, but can go on increasing and increasing, whilst the quantity of labor remains stationary, or even diminishes, to what is the increase, when this happens, due? It is due to two things, — to machinery, and to the *direction* of labor. As to the part played by machinery, the truth of this becomes evident

the moment that we recognize the fact, that increased productiveness increases value in exchange, and not only value in use; for the enormous productive power it adds to human labor is a fact as much insisted on by the Socialists as by anybody: and, oddly enough, Mr. Hyndman himself, forgetting for a moment his theory, and lapsing into common sense, declares that what "has gone to the few" has been "*the riches due to machinery.*"<sup>1</sup> As to this point, then, we need have no further argument. But what varies the value of labor, even more than machinery, is that *direction* or *organization* of labor, for certain preconceived purposes, to which the existence of machinery is itself due. This question, indeed, forms the real heart of the matter, and we must consider it with our utmost care and attention.

Here, again, a large part of the truth is admitted already by the Socialists. Marx and Mr. Hyndman agree fully with all other Economists, that labor becomes more productive from being minutely divided, as well as from being assisted by machinery. But the singular point about

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<sup>1</sup> "The riches due to machinery have gone to the few."—*England for All*, p. 73. Evidently these riches are riches, not *in use*, but *in exchange*. A cotton-lord does not live amongst bales of cotton, nor does Mr. Chamberlain lie down upon screws. The screws and the cotton due to machinery are wealth to the capitalists only when exchanged.

the Socialistic theorists is, that, having said thus much, they think they have said all. Division of labor, they admit, increases production; but they never dream of inquiring what has caused division of labor. One would imagine, from the manner in which Mr. Hyndman speaks about it, that somehow or other it had taken place spontaneously, in accordance with some natural impulse on the part of the laborer; that so many thousands had instinctively taken to bricklaying, so many thousands to making pins' heads, so many thousands to painting china plates, and so many thousands to stoking the fires of steam-engines. One would imagine that the connection between various industries, and between the various parts of the same industry, was as simple as the connection between killing a sheep and eating it. One would imagine that a knowledge of the remotest routes of commerce, and of the products of the most distant countries, formed part of the ideas which the dullest peasant was born with; and that the details of the locomotive, with which even now but a few thousands are familiar, were evolved "like an exhalation" out of the common consciousness of millions. Of the real truth of the matter neither Mr. Hyndman nor any of his instructors seem, from their arguments, to have had the smallest glimmering.

They seem never to have suspected, that, in the advance of civilization, the division of labor will not take care of itself; and that the mere division of it is in itself nothing, except as improved and directed by some guiding-power from without.

And yet a very little reflection will convince us that such is the case. Let us consider first the necessity of the direction, and then consider the quarter from whence the direction comes.

It must be perfectly clear, then, that merely to divide labor need not of necessity increase wealth in any way. It need not even produce it. A thousand men might dig a trench; as fast as they dug it, another thousand might fill it up again; and a third thousand meanwhile might throw mud at the first two. Here would be division of labor, but there would certainly be no production of wealth. Three gangs of navvies might begin a railway at three different places, but the three fragments might never meet. A thousand men might be employed in fifty different groups, each group making some separate part of a watch; and each separate part might in itself be perfect; but, unless these parts fitted each other, for all their perfection they would be of no more value than pebbles. Division of labor increases the skill

of the individual laborer, but the limits of this skill are reached almost as soon as was perfection of form in the individual types of Caxton; and it does as little in itself to promote industrial progress as the beauty of Caxton's letters did to quicken the power of printing. There is nothing to show that the present generation of mechanics can individually do finer work than the mechanics of the last century. The workmen of Boule were as skilful as those of Gillow. One of Tompion's assistants, had he been born in this generation, might have become a foreman at the Swindon engine-works. Manual skill, no matter how great, is developed and dies with each generation that possesses it; it is not transmitted from father to son; it is not progressive. What is progressive, is not the faculties of the laborers, but the knowledge of the men by whom labor is directed. The laborers begin exactly where their fathers began. The directors of labor begin exactly where their fathers ended.

And now comes the question, Who are these directors of labor? and what are the causes, either within or without themselves, that have raised them to such a position? This is a question that can be answered only in one way; and that is, by an appeal to history. To judge from the language of Mr. Hyndman, one would

think that it was as easy a thing to have invented the steam-engine, as to file the head of a nut, or to plane the surface of a slide-valve; and that it was as much a matter of indifference who was the engineer of a railway, as who turned the first sod with a spade. One would think, that to have originated the alpaca manufacture had been an effort of the same nature as carrying a can of beer, and that the workmen of England had drawn lots as to who should do it. One would think that the laws of electricity had been discovered by a mob in Trafalgar Square, and been enunciated by acclamation. But what has really been the case? We have no hesitation in saying, that the industrial progress of the modern world, and that rapid growth of wealth which Mr. Hyndman justly says is so astonishing, has been the creation, not of the labor of many, but of the intellect, the ingenuity, and the perseverance of the few; and that, despite numberless cases of cruelty, of oppression, and extortion, it is, broadly speaking, at the present moment in the hands of the very men, or the heirs of the very men, who have created it, and are creating it. As we have observed, this is a matter of history and observation; and we refer Mr. Hyndman, and the entire school of Socialists, to the hard facts of the case, which may be easily ascertained by



any of them. It is not our purpose here to attempt, even in outline, an account of the progress of modern invention and manufacture; but we will take two events, which, from their evidently typical character, will, for our present purpose, be as good as a thousand. We will take the history of the railway system and the history of the alpaca manufacture.

Mr. Hyndman, in several places, declaims against the state for having allowed private individuals to "seize upon" the railways of this country. Now, who, does he think, made the railways? He himself of course answers, "The navvies;" and it is on their labors, he implies, that the private individuals have seized. We will therefore ask him for a moment to consider the origin of the word "navvy." He will find in it, to use the phrase of Archbishop Trench, a most instructive chapter of "fossil history." Navvies were originally the class of workmen who were employed in the making of navigable canals; and, had not their labors been given some new direction, the same class of workmen would be making navigable canals still. What, then, turned the makers of canals into the makers of railways, and worked, in doing so, a miracle like that of changing lead into gold? The navvies themselves were not the alchemists. They themselves were merely the individual

molecules. The workers of the change, the creators of the new wealth, were a set of men, whose numbers, when compared with the nation, were infinitesimal, and whose names, whose biographies, the parts they played, the rewards they reaped, could be all set down with exactitude in a pamphlet of fifty pages. Granting, which is not the case, that mere labor, without any direction, would suffice to make canals, all the difference between a canal and a railway, between a barge and a goods-train, is the creation, not of the laborers, but of this narrow and numbered minority.

The case of the alpaca manufacture is simpler still. This manufacture was the creation not even of a minority. It was, as Mr. Hyndman knows perfectly well, the creation of one single man. "Little could Pizarro have fancied," as Dr. Blaikie writes, "when he found the natives of Peru clothed from the wool of an animal, half sheep, half camel, and brought home specimens of it for the museums of the Old World, that, three or four centuries later, the vigorous brain of a Yorkshire spinner would fasten upon that material, gaze at it, tease it, think of it, dream of it, till he compelled it to yield its secret, and then, by means of it, supplied clothing for millions, and employment (that is to say, the means of subsistence) for thousands of his race."

These two cases speak for themselves. We have little need to point the moral to be drawn from them; and, before Mr. Hyndman again assumes labor to be the source of all value, we would recommend him to visit the Patent Museum at South Kensington, and meditate on the "Rocket" and "Puffing Billy," and, if that is not sufficient, to take the train to Saltaire, and ask himself where Saltaire would have been, but for the creative faculties that were localized in the brain of its founder.

We have said that a key to the errors of the Socialists may be found in the passages Mr. Hyndman quotes from Adam Smith, and from Ricardo. Adam Smith undoubtedly says that "Labor was the first price, the original purchase-money that was paid for all things." But, though Mr. Hyndman has quoted the sentence that follows, he utterly fails to perceive its real significance. "In that early and rude state of society," Adam Smith continues, "which precedes both the accumulation of stock and the appropriation of land, the proportion between the quantities of labor necessary for acquiring different objects seems to be the only circumstance which can afford any rule for exchanging them for one another." Here really is the whole point of the argument. "In that early and rude state of society," labor undoubt-

edly is the sole source of value; but it is the sole source of value in that rude state of society only. The Socialists err from the singularly unscientific procedure of taking a barbarism that is essentially stationary as a type of a civilization of which the very essence is movement. Mr. Hyndman's quotation from Ricardo shows this with equal clearness. "Labor," says Ricardo, "is really the foundation of the exchangeable value of all things, except those which cannot be increased by human industry." And again, "the quantity of labor realized in commodities regulates their exchangeable value." This is what Ricardo says. This is what Mr. Hyndman quotes. But Ricardo merely says that labor is the *foundation* of the value: Mr. Hyndman argues that it is also the superstructure. He does not see that the same rock or gravel will support either a Westminster Abbey or a Brighton Pavilion, and that the difference between a pig-sty and the Cathedral of St. Peter's consists in what is built, not in what is built upon.

The same astonishing oversight, the same *lacuna* in thought, is shown us with the same clearness in another part of his argument. We supposed just now three thousand men engaged in digging a trench, and filling it up again; and we asked if their labor would be produc-

tive of wealth. We, of course, said "No;" and Mr. Hyndman would say "No," too. But why? He admits that "use is an essential element of exchangeable value;" and things which are useless, whatever labor they may have cost, have no value at all. But he speaks of *use* as though it were an absolute thing, and as though all objects were divided into two classes,—those that are useless to anybody, and those that are useful to all. He regards *use*, in fact, as a single unchanging unit, which, to show us the value of any given product, need only be multiplied by the labor-hours taken in producing it. This view is merely another instance of how the type of all society is for him a stationary barbarism. For, in such a barbarism, his theory is perfectly true. When men require nothing but the bare necessities of existence, *use* is a constant unit; and *uselessness* has all the precision of a cipher in arithmetic. But, the moment a step in advance is made, this ceases to be true; with every farther step it becomes less true; and, long before civilization has come to maturity, it has become a grotesque falsehood. For the process of civilization is a double one. It consists, not only in satisfying wants that are inevitably felt, but in building up a fabric of new wants. It is a creation of the ingenuity and the imagination

of the few, acting upon the desires and on the character of the many. We can see this at this very day. Did any of us want the electric light before some few experts had shown it to us? Let us look at the windows of any shop in London, except those of the butchers and the bakers, and we shall see in the goods exhibited for sale a constant effort at creating some new want, whether it be for some new fabric, or for some new book, or for some new *bombon*.

We might pursue this subject farther, but space forbids us.<sup>1</sup> Before quitting it, however, for the present, there are certain remarks that we desire to make in conclusion. False as we have shown this Socialistic theory to be, there are not a few points of which we shall do well to let the Socialists remind us. We have shown, that to say that the profits of capital are essentially, or even mainly, the products of unpaid

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<sup>1</sup> The Socialistic estimate of the existing situation, — the doctrine that the yearly tendency of things, as they are, is to make the rich richer, and the poor poorer, — we must consider on another occasion. Whenever we do so, we undertake to show, by reference to authorities which Mr. Hyndman himself refers us to, that the case is the precise reverse of what Mr. Hyndman himself asserts it to be; and that, did he possess the candor of an ordinary man, or the arithmetic of an ordinary school-boy, the sets of statistics on which he avowedly bases his calculations would have been enough to show him this.

labor, is not only false, but ridiculously and demonstrably false. But there can, we fear, be little doubt, that, of a portion of these profits, it has in many cases been true. Of this the Factory Acts, carried in the teeth of the Radical party, are, we fear, an admission the truth of which cannot be doubted. But these very Factory Acts, though they form a sombre comment on the past, may form for the Constitutional party a model and an encouragement for the future. We, of all parties, should be the first to prevent labor from robbing capital; but we, of all parties, should be the first, also, to prevent capital from robbing labor. We do not profess to treat all men as equal now; we do not hope or promise to make them ever equal at any time; but it may be at once our effort and our hope, that even the humblest and the poorest shall be able to lead a life that shall be consistent alike with his happiness and his self-respect. The greatest danger that now threatens progress is the close connection, which such men as Mr. Hyndman are doing all they can to establish, between demands which are really made by misery, and can only be ignored by cruelty, and demands which could only be made by madmen, and only listened to by fools. It rests with us, if it rests with any party, to break this hateful and unhallowed association;

and to show, that, however far we differ from our opponents, we can at least echo those memorable words of Cobbett's, "There never yet was, and never will be, a nation permanently great, consisting for the greater part of wretched and miserable families;" to show that it is for others to trade on misery, but that it is for us to do all that can be done by laws, to alleviate it.



## THE STATISTICS OF AGITATION.

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SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM. *Letters to the "St. James's Gazette."* By H. M. HYNDMAN. January and February, 1883.

STATISTICAL ABSTRACT *for the United Kingdom*, 1883.

SUPPLEMENT *to the Thirty-fifth Annual Report of the REGISTRAR-GENERAL*, 1875.

CENSUS *of England and Wales*, vol. iii., 1883.

WE lately set before our readers, in all its main points, that general theory as to the production of wealth, on which all forms of Socialism, pretending to appeal to the reason, avowedly and ostentatiously rest. We approached the subject in a candid spirit; we did it full justice in stating it; we admitted it to be in some points so ingenious and plausible, that its inventors might well be the dupes of their own ingenuity, and numbers of honest men might well be the dupes of its inventors. We did more than this: we urged on our readers to reflect how highly dangerous these characteristics made it; and we earnestly entreated all true Conservatives not to allow themselves to despise it, until they were in a position to see, and to show to the people, exactly why it is despicable.

We did not offer this advice as a precept merely: we promised ourselves to put that precept in practice. Fully aware, for our own part, how mad and how monstrous the theory is to which we were then calling attention, and how easy to sneer, and to cause others to sneer, at it, provided only those others have an interest in deriding its tendencies, we handled it with as much deference as though it really were what it claimed to be,—a complete and coherent body of scientific doctrines; and not till we had set its arguments one by one in order, till we had localized exactly the points where the reasoning broke short or halted, till we could say with distinctness on every such occasion, “Here the logician ends, and here the dolt begins,” did we invite the reader to unite his judgment with ours, and pronounce what presents itself to us as the new Economic Gospel, to be at once the most specious, and yet the crudest, tissue of fallacies that has ever threatened society, or disgraced any modern thinker.

In doing thus much, however, we have only half completed the task which, in our last article, we marked out for ourselves. We there treated Socialism as though its doctrines were purely speculative; but, as we reminded the reader at the time, this is far from being the

case. Not only has the Socialist a distinctive theory of political economy, but he has a distinctive view of social history also, and more especially of recent and contemporary history. Not only does he say, that, as property is at present distributed, most property is theoretically robbery, but he declares, that as a fact, under the present system, society every year is becoming practically more intolerable. The rich, he says, are getting constantly richer, and the poor poorer; and hence we are fast hastening on to the inevitable social catastrophe. He expresses this statement; he reiterates it; he rings the changes on it; he illustrates it with long strings of figures; he emphasizes his figures with long strings of exclamations. Indeed, in addressing the populace, and in exciting the passions which he trades upon, he trusts more, at least in this country, to this method of representing concrete facts, than to his exposition of abstract theories. We purpose, in the present article, to approach him, in his capacity of historian and politician, in the same spirit in which we approached him in his capacity of political economist: and we engage to demonstrate, by the most ample and unimpeachable evidence, that his history and his statistics are even more false than his economy; that whereas his economy failed because, taken as a whole,

it had no relations at all to reality, his history and statistics fail because, taken as a whole, they are in direct contradiction to it.

It is our present intention, however, to do something more than this; and what we have to say of the professing Socialists will form the text, rather than the body, of our argument. The main point we shall seek to impress upon our readers is, that the ignorance, the perversion of facts, which we shall bring home to the Socialists, is by no means confined to them; but that in a less grotesque — and for that very reason in a more dangerous — form, it is infecting at this moment almost every popular movement that is started or countenanced by the so-called Party of Progress; and is so far from being confined to the manifestos of Socialistic federations, that it is reproduced in all its essential features by that bourgeois member of the present ministry, whom the socialistic federations most detest and despise.

After thus much of preface, let us proceed to our work. We take up the thread of our criticism where we dropped it in our last article; and we again make use of Mr. Hyndman as the representative and spokesman of the Socialism which is now trying to make itself a power in England. Indeed, he is, we believe, as a matter of fact, the source from which his followers and

associates take most of their detailed statements and figures. Let us see, then, how Mr. Hyndman fares, when, after we have listened to his menacing generalizations as to the course of modern society, in which the rich get constantly richer, and the poor poorer and more miserable, we examine in detail those various statements and authorities which he has publicly cited as the most signal proofs of his position. We said in our last article, of these pretended proofs, that many of them proved nothing because they are absolutely false to fact; that such of them as were true proved, not what Mr. Hyndman stated, but what Mr. Hyndman denied; and that, did he possess the candor of an ordinary man, or the arithmetic of an ordinary schoolboy, the materials on which he avowedly bases his calculations would have been in themselves enough to show him this. The reader shall judge if we have spoken with too great a severity.

As to his own view of the matter, Mr. Hyndman shall explain it for himself; and we are able to point to a place where he does so with the utmost plainness. During the course of January, 1883, he addressed to the "St. James's Gazette" a series of letters, under the heading of "Scientific Socialism."<sup>1</sup> In them the So-

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<sup>1</sup>The first of these letters appeared in the "St. James's Gazette" of Jan. 18, the last on Feb. 5, 1883.

cialistic doctrine, that the gulf between classes is widening, that the rich are getting richer, and the poor poorer, is stated with what purports to be scientific precision; and Mr. Hyndman commits himself to certain figures, in illustration of it, and gives for these figures certain well-known authorities. There is no room, therefore, here for any vague or doubtful generalities; indeed, the whole question, so far as Mr. Hyndman is concerned, can be settled as peremptorily, and very nearly as quickly, as a schoolmaster judges the correctness of a child's addition sum. It is to these letters, therefore, that we propose first to refer.

Mr. Hyndman states his position broadly thus. Speaking of society as at present organized, we have "as a result," he says, "on the one side a class working far too hard for health, and living in miserable social conditions; on the other side, a class which works not at all with its hands, and enjoys luxury in excess of what is reasonable; and," he adds (this is a most important part of the statement), "the gradations between the two are being gradually crushed out." The working-classes, he goes on to say, subsist, with very few exceptions, on "starvation wages;" and out of every 5*s.* which their work is worth, from 3*s.* 4*d.* to 3*s.* 9*d.* is pocketed by their employers, and from 1*s.* 3*d.* to 1*s.* 8*d.* is left for themselves.

A correspondent of the same paper, signing himself "M.," took occasion to question all these statements, to cite in opposition to them Professor Leone Levi, and to ask Mr. Hyndman on what authority he made them. He observed in particular, that, so far is it from being true that all gradations between the rich and poor are being gradually crushed out, the rise of the middle class is the main social feature of this century. Here then, urged "M.," we have a distinct question before us. Does Mr. Hyndman assert that the class of men with incomes of from two hundred to five hundred a year is now in process of being gradually crushed out? Does the number of such men either absolutely or relatively decrease in this country, from one census to another? The moment the question was put in this definite shape, Mr. Hyndman did not venture to utter another word with regard to it; but wholly ignoring the main point at issue, which was the direction in which the distribution of wealth was changing, he covered his retreat by citing a large number of figures as to the proportions in which it is distributed now. Now, it is hardly necessary to point out that statistics of this kind throw as little light on the movement, or on the tendency of society, as the mere statement, that at a given instant three sticks are floating under London Bridge,

throws on the question of which way the tide is flowing. Mr. Hyndman's figures, however, throw considerable light upon one thing: not, indeed, upon his main theory and conclusion, but on the private history of his own arithmetic, and the various other processes, mental or moral, by which that conclusion has been arrived at.

To begin with a point to which we shall recur presently, Mr. Hyndman supports his assertion, as to the wretchedness of the working-classes, by informing us that "the average age of the well-to-do has now reached fifty-five: the average age of the workers is twenty-nine;" and amongst the workers, as the most ill-paid and wretched of all, he especially makes mention of the agricultural laborers. Now, we shall not urge, as we well might, that an arbitrary division of society into the workers and the well-to-do is too vague to convey any definite meaning, is so vague as to cover almost any conclusion, and suggests the language of a gossiping girl rather than that of a serious and scientific man; but, attaching to the figures such meaning as they will bear, we will confront them with a few others, which are really definite and intelligible. We will take the average ages, as they are to be gathered from the latest census-returns, of eight different and distinctive classes of men, — colliers,



brick-layers, navvies and plate-layers, rag-gatherers, agricultural laborers, farmers, bankers, and peers. The first five of these are certainly classes of "workers," the two last are certainly classes of the well-to-do; whilst the farmers, as a body, must be given an intermediate place. Now, what are the average ages of the different classes of workers? Those of the two first, and of the two first alone, reach to a figure as low as that given by Mr. Hyndman. The average age of the navvies and plate-layers is thirty; that of the rag-gatherers is thirty-two; and that of the agricultural laborers, thirty-four. Let us next turn to the average age of the well-to-do, which Mr. Hyndman assures us is fifty-five. Now, it is of course possible that, animated by the same spirit that would call nobody happy till he was dead, Mr. Hyndman may call nobody well-to-do till he is past middle-age. In that case, of course, we cannot quarrel with his average; nor, indeed, could we do so, had he chosen to raise it to ninety. Since, however, it is only fair to suppose that he uses the word in something of its ordinary sense, we are justified in saying that of the well-to-do classes there could be no better examples than peers and bankers. Both, as classes, are exceptionally rich; and their average ages, if Mr. Hyndman were correct, should exceed fifty-five, rather than fall short of it. But what

is the truth of the matter, as we gather it from the census-returns? The average age of the peers is only forty-two;<sup>1</sup> the average age of the bankers is only thirty-six. And now let us pass to the intermediate class, the farmers. They, though compared with the bankers they are poor and live hardy, yet on the average live four years longer. Their average age is forty. We appeal to the reader if we have not here an excellent specimen of that inaccuracy, either dishonest or imbecile, which we have thought it our duty to lay to Mr. Hyndman's charge. His error as to the age of the working-classes, his virtual inversion of the position of the agricultural laborer, — this in itself may be a comparatively small matter: but it is not a small matter, that, in comparing the workers and the well-to-do, he distorts the situation by an error of eight hundred per cent;<sup>2</sup> and that whereas, according to

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<sup>1</sup> It is to be observed that this average is really too high; the average ages of the peers, as it is to be gathered from the census-returns, being raised artificially from the fact that a larger number of peers only succeed to their titles late in life, and very few of them become peers till manhood.

<sup>2</sup> According to Mr. Hyndman, a banker would, on the average, live fifty-five years; the agricultural laborer, twenty-nine: that is, the former would live sixteen years longer than the latter. As a matter of fact, he does, on the average, live two years longer. It is impossible, however, even could Mr. Hyndman defend his own statements, that any instruction could be got out of a classification that sets the workers on one side, and the well-to-do on the other, as mutually ex-

him, the life of an agricultural laborer is blighted and cut down to about half the length of a banker's, it in reality falls short of the banker's by only two years.

Let us next see how Mr. Hyndman deals with the English land question; and here we turn for a moment from the letters on which we are now commenting, to his treatise "England for All," which was our text in our former article. It will be enough at this moment to quote a single sentence. "The whole of the agricultural land in the kingdom," says Mr. Hyndman, "is practically owned by less than thirty thousand persons; and not all the systematic fudging resorted to in the Landlords' Returns, known as the New Domesday Book, has been able to

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clusive classes. Dr. Farr, in a letter to the registrar-general, which is prefixed to the Supplement to the Thirty-fifth Annual Report of the Registrar-General, states that "the mean lifetime in the healthiest districts of England, and in the healthiest ranks, is forty-nine years; and there is no evidence, that, under the most favorable conditions, it exceeds fifty years" (p. iv.). He adds: "The mean age at death of people in different businesses often furnishes very erroneous indications, as it is affected as much by the ages at which people enter and leave, as by the salubrity or insalubrity of any particular profession" (ibid. p. liii.). It may interest the reader to know the mortality per cent between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five of the following four classes, — agricultural laborers, solicitors, gamekeepers, and doctors. That of the doctors is 1.287; of the solicitors, .890; of the agricultural laborers, .892; and of the gamekeepers, .510. (Supplement to Thirty-fifth Annual Report, etc., Tables 63 and 64.)

shake that fact out of the minds of the people of England.”<sup>1</sup> With regard to this, we have to observe at present, that Mr. Hyndman must have either written about the New Doomsday Book without having ever seen it, or else he must have wilfully suppressed the following facts which the New Doomsday Book forces on the eyes of its readers. So far are thirty thousand people from owning all the agricultural land in England, that, in addition to the thirty thousand whose estates are most extensive, there are more than seventy-two thousand with estates of about twenty acres, more than twelve thousand with estates of about two hundred acres, and more than twenty-five thousand with estates of about seventy acres; and the rental of these men, whom Mr. Hyndman declares to be non-existent, is as great as the rental of the entire English squirearchy.<sup>2</sup> As we shall deal with the land question at greater length presently, we will pass on to some other of Mr. Hyndman’s statistics; and these, we think the reader will agree with us, are more remarkable still.

In order to show (we are returning to Mr. Hyndman’s letters) how iniquitous is the present division of the good things of life, he triumphantly cites the following figures from Mr.

<sup>1</sup> *England for All*, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> The exact statistics will be found later on.

Mulhall, which are really figures dealing with the distribution of invested capital. "According," he says, "to Mr. Mulhall's estimates, 2,046,900 families of the upper and middle classes possess together property to the value of £7,562,000,000; 4,629,000 possess only £398,000,000. The first class have thus £3,700 per family, in round figures; the second less than £90. But 222,500 families actually own £5,728,000,000, or nearly £26,000 per family. 'Mein Gott!' as old Blücher said, 'vat a city for to sack!' and what an array of physical force over against it!" We venture to affirm, that, considering the foregoing quotation with reference to the impression Mr. Hyndman desires to convey by it, it would be hard to parallel in the writings of any controversialist the unscrupulousness or the ignorance implied in Mr. Hyndman's use of it. Mr. Hyndman says that the richer classes "have" nearly four thousand pounds per family, the poorer "have" less than ninety; but what does he mean by "have"? He does not mean that they have these sums buried, or hidden away in a stocking: he means the sums to be taken as being, in some obvious way, an index of the income on which their owners live. But, as thus stated by him, this is no index whatever. According to those very tables of Mr. Mulhall's from which Mr.

Hyndman quotes, those who “*have*” ninety pounds enjoy annually a hundred pounds;<sup>1</sup> and those who “*have*” twenty-six thousand pounds enjoy annually only fifteen hundred; whilst as to the middle class, who “*have*” about a thousand pounds, what they enjoy annually is two hundred and sixty. Thus the income of the rich is one-seventeenth of what they “*have*” the income of the middle class something over a quarter of what they “*have*” and the income of the working-classes is ten per cent more than what they “*have* ;” and whereas for every pound that Mr. Hyndman attributes to the poor man, the poor man gets annually one pound two shillings, for every pound that Mr. Hyndman attributes to the rich man, the rich man gets annually something short of one and sixpence. Hence, if we express the proportion of wealth that goes to the poor man as 1, that which goes to the middle-class man will be  $2\frac{2}{3}$ , and that which goes to the rich man 15. Now, these results must have been before Mr. Hyndman’s eyes. Nothing could have hidden them from him, but an ignorance and a carelessness which would not only unfit him to be a leader of thought in England, but would unfit

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<sup>1</sup> According to Mr. Mulhall’s estimates, the average income of a working-class family in England is £100 a year. The average amount of capital owned by such a family, £86.

him for even a place in the fourth form in a school; and yet in dealing with this simple set of proportions, 1,  $2\frac{2}{3}$ , and 15, he contrives to distort  $2\frac{2}{3}$  into 11, and 15 into 300.

But the exact nature of the moral or the mental deficiency revealed in this method of dealing with statistics will perhaps be better realized by considering the following fable: A choleric Indian officer, retired on half-pay, has, we will say, an exceedingly pretty daughter, who is treated with marked attention by two rival young men. The father, not unnaturally, begins to feel an anxiety as to the fortunes of these would-be sons-in-law, and, as the easiest means of arriving at some conclusion, consults Mr. Hyndman, who knows the position of both of them. Now, the actual facts are these: One of the young men, Smith, has fifty pounds' worth of gas-shares; the other, Brown, has a thousand pounds in the Three per Cents. Smith, however, is an inspector of factories, and enjoys a salary of five hundred a year; whereas Brown is unable to get any employment at all, and, having only an annual thirty pounds of his own, is lodged and boarded by his maiden aunt at Clapham. Mr. Hyndman, however, for reasons best known to himself, is anxious to put Smith's case in the worst light possible; and replies accordingly, on being questioned by the father, that, whatever

Smith's means may be, to his own certain knowledge, where Smith has fifty pounds, Brown has at least a thousand. Acting on this information, and attaching to it its obvious meaning, the father repels Smith's advances, and smiles upon those of Brown. Brown proposes and is accepted; the father ratifies the engagement, and all goes well till the question comes of the settlement, when the man who was represented as being twenty times as rich as his rival is obliged to confess that he is nothing but an idle pauper. What the choleric officer will think and say of Mr. Hyndman, our readers can well imagine. We can only add, referring to actual facts, that we ourselves, with regard to the matter before us, are compelled to think of him in an exactly similar way.

But a yet more curious criticism still remains to be made. Mr. Hyndman, in the letters we are referring to, as he has since done elsewhere, committed himself with an arrogant dogmatism to the monstrous statement, that, the income of the United Kingdom being something like £1,300,000,000, rent and the interest on capital amounted to £1,000,000,000, whilst the wage-earning classes, or, as he called them, "the producers," had for their share only £300,000,000. It was immediately rejoined by Mr. Hyndman's critic "M.," that, if we consulted Professor



Leone Levi, we should find that Mr. Hyndman had again distorted the situation by attributing to the rich several hundred millions more than they possessed, and attributing to the poor some hundred and fifty millions less. To this Mr. Hyndman answered, with an air of magnificent and contemptuous superiority, "My figures as to the general production, and the earnings of the working-classes, were taken from Mr. Robert Giffen, the head of the Statistical Department of the Board of Trade, and President of the Statistical Society; and 'M.' may rest assured that, in the opinion of those best qualified to judge, Professor Leone Levi is a very inferior authority." Now, whether Mr. Hyndman means that he has arrived at his figures, through his own bungling in arithmetic, from the published figures supplied to him in Mr. Giffen's "Statistical Abstracts," or that he has had them, as his words might suggest, from Mr. Giffen privately, we are unable to say. If he means the former, we can very easily believe him; if he means the latter, we prefer to keep our opinion of him to ourselves. We can only say, that, as he has appealed to Mr. Giffen, to Mr. Giffen he shall go; and, if he really takes the trouble to understand what that gentleman says, he will find his own conclusion far more hopelessly stultified by it than by the figures cited by "M." from Pro-

fessor Leone Levi. Professor Leone Levi, as reported by "M.," puts the income of the "workers" at about £450,000,000, as against Mr. Hyndman's £300,000,000. Mr. Hyndman appeals from the professor to Mr. Giffen, that very superior authority; and Mr. Giffen replies that the income of the "workers" is not indeed £450,000,000, but £620,000,000.<sup>1</sup> If, then, Professor Leone Levi<sup>2</sup> be really an authority far inferior to Mr. Giffen, the extent of his inferiority is to be measured, not by the extent to which he differs from Mr. Hyndman, but by the extent to which he agrees with him.

Here at any rate, even from Mr. Hyndman's point of view, our case is plain. Mr. Hyndman cannot grumble; for we are testing his figures by the figures of one whom he acknowledges to be his own authority, and an authority further, as he expressly declares, unimpeachable "in the opinion of those best qualified to judge." We have seen the result. Accepting as we do Mr. Hyndman's opinion of Mr. Giffen, we have seen that Mr. Hyndman, in dealing with the

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Giffen, indeed, maintains that, using the word "workers" in its proper sense, the working income of the kingdom is £800,000,000. The £620,000,000, mentioned in the text, is the income of those "workers" only who have less than £150 a year per family.

<sup>2</sup> As a matter of fact, Professor Leone Levi's difference from Mr. Giffen, if any, is only apparent, and due to some unimportant difference in classification.

income of the Kingdom, writes 300 when he should write 620, and 1,000 when he should write 580. The whole sum in question being £1,300,000,000, to be divided into two portions, he is wrong as to one portion by £420,000,000, and as to the other by £320,000,000; making a total error of £74 in every £130 he deals with. To put the matter briefly, the real state of the case is, that the income of the wage-earners is £40,000,000 more than that of the rest of the nation: according to Mr. Hyndman's calculations, it is £700,000,000 less. Mr. Hyndman, in fact, is about as near the truth in this matter as he would be if, supposing that Lord Hartington is six feet high, and Mr. Gladstone five feet nine, he were gravely to inform the members of the Democratic Federation, that Mr. Gladstone was ten feet high, and Lord Hartington only three.

The reader may perhaps be tempted to ask why, if Mr. Hyndman's statistics be such a tissue of falsehoods; why, if Mr. Hyndman himself be so absurd and so wretched a reasoner, — it is worth while to consider and expose him at all; to expose a reasoner who has no logic, a statistician who has no arithmetic, a writer who has no style. When we were reviewing Mr. George's "Progress and Poverty," we imagined a similar question put to us with regard

to that work; and the answer we then made to it, we repeat in substance here. In dealing with theories and figures that are directly addressed to the people, no absurdity is too gross for instructed men to expose, which is not too glaring for ignorant men to entertain; and with regard to Mr. Hyndman, whatever his absurdities are, they are not absurdities that ignorant men would see. In the first place, his theory of production is not his own: he is merely the clumsy interpreter of it; and, even when seen through the medium of Mr. Hyndman's personal blunders, this theory, as we have said before, is specious to a high degree. It is as specious to those who think a little as it is contemptible to those who think much. In the second place, his statistics as to the distribution of wealth, and the position of classes in England, are absurd only because they happen to be utterly false, and because they involve certain errors in arithmetic, which only here and there accidentally come to the surface, and which, for the most part, it requires much special knowledge to detect. We may add further, that, low as is our opinion of Mr. Hyndman's intellectual faculties, extreme mediocrity of intellect is by no means inconsistent with a certain determination of character; and that dangerous error may become doubly dangerous, when

stupidity gives persistence to the zeal of its missionaries.

We have, however, dwelt thus long on Mr. Hyndman, and his errors, for reasons wider than any that are connected merely with himself, or, indeed, with the school whose doctrines he is trying to propagate. The Socialists proper form at this moment in England a body insignificant in point of numbers; and, easy as it may be to excite amongst the wage-earning classes the idea that their wages can be, and ought to be, higher, and that one or other political party can make them so, yet these classes generally neither know nor believe any thing of the Socialistic theory of capital; and, however strongly they may feel that the capitalist should not misbehave himself, they have no formal belief that the capitalist ought not to exist. But, though Socialism as a scientific theory has made but little way amongst the masses in this country, the case is quite otherwise with the moral and statistical estimates which the Socialists take of the existing social situation. It would be difficult to find two people in England more bitterly opposed to each other, from the very nature of their respective situations, than Mr. Hyndman and Mr. Chamberlain. Just as the Tory land-owner excites the envious hatred of the Radical capitalist, so does the Radical capitalist excite the

contemptuous hatred of the Socialist; and yet, when the two come to depict, for the benefit of their respective constituents, the aspects and tendencies of contemporary society, Mr. Chamberlain can find nothing better to do than to echo Mr. Hyndman's language, and, with a certain change or rather suppression of detail, to emulate his main mis-statements.

“Never before in our history [Mr. Chamberlain has written quite recently] was the misery of the very poor more intense, or the conditions of their daily life more hopeless and more degraded. . . . The vast wealth, which modern progress has created, has run into ‘pockets;’ individuals and classes have grown rich beyond the dreams of avarice, . . . but the great majority of the ‘toilers and spinners’ have derived no proportionate advantage from the prosperity which they have helped to create.”<sup>1</sup>

Here we have, in slightly different and in less precise language, the same view of society, as at present constituted, on which the Socialists explicitly found all their practical hopes, and to prove which Mr. Hyndman has been invoking his singular statistics. The Socialistic ideal, according to Karl Marx, the lately deceased

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<sup>1</sup> Laborers' and Artisans' Dwellings. (Fortnightly Review, December, 1883.) “We have already pointed out, in a previous part of our present number (see p. 147, f.), that this statement is not correct, even so far as the dwellings of the poor are concerned.” (Quarterly Review, January, 1884.)

leader of the sect, will realize itself through a process of necessary evolution, and through that only. It is a law inherent, he says, in the capitalist system of production, that capital, year by year, becomes centred in fewer hands; that a small number of great capitalists gradually swallow up the large number of small ones. It is a law also (he continues), and we may see it all round us in operation, that, just as these moneyed monopolists decrease in number, and increase in wealth, the toilers and spinners do the exact opposite: they decrease in wealth, and they increase in numbers. Thus on the one side are the rich, growing weaker and more luxurious; and on the other side are the poor, growing stronger and more miserable. Hence, the time must before long arrive, when the present forces of production will necessarily burst through their present capitalistic chrysalis. "Even now," he exclaims, "the final hour of the capitalistic system has struck. The expropriators are already on the point of being in their turn expropriated."<sup>1</sup> Mr. Chamberlain, of course, does not draw this final conclusion; but none the less does he adopt the premises

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<sup>1</sup> Marx says, "The misery, the oppression, the slavery, the degradation, of the working-class grows in proportion to the diminution in number of those capitalist lords who usurp and monopolize all the advantages of this period of social evolution." (KARL MARX on *Capital*, chap. xxxii.)

from which Marx draws it,—only differing from Marx in the loose way in which he thinks them, and the vague and rhetorical way in which he states them. Mr. Hyndman follows Marx; Mr. Chamberlain emulates Mr. Hyndman; and, just as Marx has been the instructor of Mr. Hyndman, so is Mr. Hyndman, in this point, the type of Mr. Chamberlain; and Mr. Chamberlain, in his turn, is the type of the Radical school at large. The rich are getting richer; the poor are getting poorer; those with small fortunes are being crushed out; those with no fortunes are being crushed down,—this is the constant cry to be heard through the whole country, not merely from a few avowed Socialists, but from every political sect, and from every individual politician who endeavors to promote what he thinks to be reform by agitation.

So persistent, indeed, is language of this purport,—from so many quarters, in so many forms, with such a voice of authority, is the same statement made,—that not only have the agitators more than half converted themselves, but they have apparently converted many soberer men also. Thus the growing impoverishment of the masses in this country has, during the course of the past few weeks, been assumed as a fact, and has formed the prominent theme, not only of Mr. Hyndman, of Mr. Chamberlain, and their



respective imitators, but of the Roman-Catholic Bishop of Nottingham in a pastoral, of an Anglican canon in an address to the Church Union, and of a sincere Tory in the pages of "The National Review."

Such being the case, the reader will now perceive that in dwelling, as we have done, on the views of existing society which are held by the Socialists generally, and stated for them by Mr. Hyndman in particular, we have been dwelling not merely on the eccentricities of a limited sect of doctrinaires, but on a set of opinions of the utmost practical moment, which are affecting the judgment, the temper, the hopes, the apprehensions, and the sympathies of a minority, which might soon become a majority, of the entire English people.

Some may think that our language on this last point must be exaggerated. They may think it impossible that such errors as Mr. Hyndman's can really be common to any large number of men. If a man, for instance, in dealing with a sum of £1,200,000,000, is wrong in his calculations, as Mr. Hyndman is, to an extent of £800,000,000, they may think that an error of so absurd a character cannot possibly be an example of any absurdity but his own. If any of our readers think thus, we have plenty of facts in store for them which will

disabuse them of their opinion; and one such fact we shall submit to their notice now. Mr. Chamberlain, in the article from which we have already quoted, writing with all the authority of a president of the Board of Trade, and with all the *prestige* derived from his assumed special information, declares that, "in the course of the last twenty years, the annual income of the nation has increased by £600,000,000."<sup>1</sup> Now, let us turn from this statement by the president of the Board of Trade, to the official figures which that board has issued, for the accuracy of which the president is himself responsible, and with which, presumably, he has at least some general acquaintance. From these we find, as Mr. Giffen himself shows us, that, so far is the national income from having increased by £600,000,000 during the last twenty years, that it has increased only by £574,000,000 during the last thirty; and that the increase which Mr. Chamberlain attributes to twenty years is short by but one-seventh of the actual increase during forty. Thus, an annual increase, which

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<sup>1</sup> The exact words of the sentence are these: "In the course of the last twenty years *it is estimated* that the annual income of the nation has increased by £600,000,000." But plainly, when the President of the Board of Trade uses the phrase *it is estimated*, he is referring to estimates for the accuracy of which he himself vouches,—those elaborate official estimates, in fact, which are prepared with his own special sanction, and by his own trusted subordinates.

has been in reality about £19,000,000, is in his estimate metamorphosed into £30,000,000; or, to put the matter in a yet simpler form, in every £1,000,000 that Mr. Chamberlain here deals with, he overstates his own case by nearly £600,000.<sup>1</sup>

After this example of the astonishing ignorance and inaccuracy of the modern agitator, even when in the highest of positions, our readers, we believe, will at length be prepared to follow us in the searching inquiry we are

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<sup>1</sup> An eminent statistician writes to remind us that Mr. Giffen estimates the national income as twelve hundred millions as a *minimum*; and that, therefore, the extent of Mr. Chamberlain's error is probably somewhat overstated in the text. In any case, it is sufficiently great to be instructive. But a far more striking instance of the same recklessness on his part is to be found in a comparison between his estimate of the condition of the people in the article alluded to in the text, and his estimate of the condition of the people made a few weeks afterwards in a speech at Newcastle. The reader is asked to compare the two following passages by the same person (the president of the Board of Trade), the date of the second being but a few weeks later than the first. "Never before," he said, in the Fortnightly Review, "in our history was the misery of the very poor more intense, or the conditions of the daily life of the great majority of the toilers and spinners more hopeless and more degraded." A few weeks later, he said at Newcastle, "The Conservative philosophers have for the last three or four years been going up and down the country, declaring that the country is going to the dogs. Meanwhile, the country goes on in the utmost unconcern. The funds keep rising, the revenue increases, . . . every one is in holiday garb. Nobody is in the least alarmed. Moreover, every one is so unconcerned."

now about to institute. We propose, first, to recur to that broad general proposition, as to the progressive enrichment of the few, and the progressive degradation of the many, on which we have just been dwelling; and, by reference to those very authorities which the agitators affect to be drawing upon, to show how grotesquely false this proposition is, as a whole. Then, having treated their proposition as a whole, we propose to submit it to a yet further analysis, and to show, with the added clearness that comes of minute detail, how grotesquely false it is in certain of its principal parts.

First, then, let us state the general proposition once over again, so as to put it in as clear and as definite a form as possible. When the rich are said to be getting richer, the poor poorer, and the intermediate classes to be suffering a gradual extinction, what is it that is, in most cases, meant? For such language, if examined seriously, will be found susceptible of various shades of meaning. And it will be seen that, alike on political and philanthropical grounds, the differences between these various meanings, which are at present confused together as though they were very nearly identical, are differences, really, of the most momentous kind conceivable, and that they point to social tendencies wholly incompatible with each other.

Thus it is surely of the very first importance, whether the growing poverty imputed to the poor is absolute or relative; whether the poor are asserted to have less and less in proportion to the rich, or less and less in proportion to the necessities of existence. A man who has £70 a year is poorer, as compared with a man who has £100,000, than a man who has £50 is, as compared with a man who has £10,000; but it would convey to most people a singularly perverted impression, were it asserted that the former was a poorer man than the latter. So, again, it is a question of importance, also, whether the growing riches imputed to the rich are corporate riches or individual; whether a few large incomes are asserted to be swelling into monster incomes, or whether a number of moderate incomes are asserted to be swelling into large ones; and, finally, whether those persons who are asserted to be lost to the middle class are asserted to be lost to it because their incomes increase, or because they diminish. It depends entirely on the way in which these questions are answered, whether we are to consider ourselves informed by the apostles of agitation, and their disciples, that riches are getting more diffused, or less diffused; or that the rich are getting stronger, or less strong; that the poor are becoming better fed, or worse

fed; that they are sinking to the level of misery, or only failing to rise to the level of vulgarity; that the tendency of things as they are is to turn England into a clique of millionnaires and a nation of beggars, or into a nation of well-to-do workmen and a second nation of well-to-do capitalists. The Socialists, no doubt, are for their part intelligible enough. Karl Marx distinctly says, and Mr. Hyndman, though with less courage, repeats, that the rich are getting richer as individuals, and fewer as a class; and that the poor are getting absolutely poorer as individuals, and absolutely more numerous as a class. But the Radicals who copy the language of the Socialists, and the timid Conservatives who are converted by the language of the Radicals, neither show what they mean, nor apparently know what they mean; and, whilst making certain statements with an air of the most profound conviction, they seem perfectly unconscious that their statements may mean wholly opposite things, or, at any rate, they never indicate which of these opposite meanings is their own.

We shall now introduce the reader to the real facts of the case, and shall show him, by unimpeachable evidence, that none of these meanings are true, — neither the explicit meaning of the Socialists, nor any one of the possi-

ble meanings of the Radicals. We shall show him that the current language used about the question before us, put on it what construction we will, is false and misleading to so extraordinary a degree, that it actually inverts — it does not merely overstate — every one of those social tendencies that it affects to describe; and that the picture of modern progress, which so many are now accepting as genuine, is no more than the fantastic dream of a madman.

To many people it may, perhaps, seem that the questions we propose to deal with are questions which do not admit of being answered with precision or certainty. The progress in wealth or poverty of the richer and poorer classes, the amount of the national income, and the proportions in which it is distributed, they probably think, can be dealt with only by some shrewd process of personal observation; and that the conclusion arrived at will be based on certain sets of impressions, — impressions derived from the squalor of “outcast London,” and the yearly increasing throng of carriages in Piccadilly or Bond Street. Such, however, is by no means the case. In dealing with vast sums, and with vast numbers of people, no doubt we cannot hope for absolute numerical accuracy; and, when a subject is susceptible of very many forms of analysis, many most instruc-

tive analyses may for many years be wanting. But our present knowledge is quite sufficiently detailed, and is more than sufficiently accurate, completely to revolutionize, were it only within the reach of the people, the view as to social tendencies which is unfortunately at present popular.

It is a common saying, that figures may be made to prove any thing: but this, when true, can be true only for two reasons, — either that the figures can be falsified without fear of detection; or that the matters to which the figures refer can be classified really on different principles, while they purport to be classified on the same. Thus the rich, the poor, the aristocracy, the working-classes, the middle classes, the bourgeoisie, are all terms, which, unless defined with accuracy by each disputant who makes use of them, will leave room for endless misunderstandings and endless contradictions. But if only we are definite in our use of terms, and if only we are honest and open as to our sources of information, the figures which relate to the question now before us are as absolute and unequivocal in their meaning as they are commanding in their authority. The whole case can be put with extreme simplicity.

To begin, then: the gross annual income of this kingdom is a sum ascertainable with such



accuracy, that, of those experts who have actually set themselves to ascertain it, all have arrived at conclusions so nearly identical, that the greatest difference between their estimates amounts barely to one-twelfth of the total.<sup>1</sup>

Now, as every one knows without being reminded of it, we can tell from year to year the total amount that is assessed to income-tax; that is to say, we can tell, with great minuteness, how much of the gross national income is, and has been, distributed amongst the richer classes, from the few who possess their annual tens of thousands, down to the many who possess from a hundred pounds to a hundred and fifty. We can also tell, with quite sufficient exactness, the proportion of the population amongst which these incomes are divided. With regard, then, to the income of the poorer classes, what follows must be clear. If we do two simple subtraction sums,—if we deduct the amount assessed to income-tax from the gross national income, and the number of those

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Leone Levi observes that such an amount of difference, though sufficient to confuse us in comparing the economic state of the country at periods closely succeeding each other, is yet insufficient to obscure or distort the truth the moment our estimates begin to extend its scope. Mr. Mulhall has published a table showing the various sources from which this gross income is derived, and the amount derived from each source,—e.g., from agriculture, from railways, from mines, etc.

who pay income-tax from the total national population, — we shall at once have before us two sets of figures, the one denoting the gross income, and the other the total number, of the poorer classes.

It is no doubt perfectly true, that, when we attempt to go into details with regard to the earnings of this and that class of laborers, we at once become conscious of an insufficiency of data; but even supposing, what is not the case, that we could do nothing more than, treating the poor as a whole, to express their individual incomes by a rough general average, yet the figures before us are such, and are so peculiar, as to give this average an exceptionally definite value. In the case of the rich, were our data equally scanty, it would be impossible to say that an increase in their collective income was any certain sign of an increase in their incomes generally, as individuals; for an unknown minority might be growing indefinitely richer, whilst the rest might be remaining stationary. But, in the case of the poor, this contingency is out of the question; for we know, from the terms in which their collective increase is stated to us, that no individual income is so much as a hundred and fifty pounds, and therefore a certain diffusion of the increased collective riches is a necessity. Thus supposing that ten

men twenty years ago were living on starvation wages of £20 each annually, their collective income being thus £200, and that now this collective income has to our knowledge increased to £1,000, yet the wages of no one man is as much as £150, it is easy to see that this increase, even if divided as unfairly as possible, must necessarily be divided amongst at least seven men out of the ten; and it will be seen presently, that, with regard to the exact figures in question, we have much to guide us beyond this deductive reasoning.

To actual figures, then, let us now turn; and, looking back over the last forty years, let us see what facts are definitely known and recorded, first, as to the increase in the gross income of the country, and secondly, as to the manner in which this increase has been distributed.

Let us begin, then, by taking the four following periods, as to which it so happens that we can speak with exceptional certainty, — 1843, 1851, 1864, and from 1880 to 1883; and let us note what, at each period, was the gross income of the nation.<sup>1</sup> In 1843 it was, in round

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<sup>1</sup> The figures given in the text rest not on our own authority only, but on that of the four following eminent statisticians, — Mr. Giffen, Mr. Mulhall, Mr. Dudley Baxter, and Professor Leone Levi. It will be found, on collating the results of their respective calculations, that they all corroborate each other in a very singular degree. As to the estimate

numbers, £515,000,000; in 1851 it was £616,000,000; in 1864 it was £814,000,000; and since 1880 it has reached, or perhaps somewhat exceeded, £1,200,000,000. These figures, directly or indirectly, are all of them guaranteed by those very authorities to which Mr. Hyndman refers as final. Let us now take, in each of the above-mentioned years, the amount that was assessed to income-tax. In 1843 this was about £280,000,000; strangely enough, in 1851 we find it still to have been about the same figure; in 1864 it was about £370,000,000; and in 1880 it was about £577,000,000.

Let us now subtract these amounts assessed to income-tax from the gross national income of the years that correspond to them, and see what light the result throws on the condition of the poorer classes. The figures our sum will yield us are as follows: for 1843, £235,000,000; for 1851, £336,000,000; for 1864, £444,000,000; and for the period subsequent to 1880, an amount certainly not less than £620,000,000. Now, here we have the gross income, at the different times specified, of all the persons or families, in this country, with annual incomes of less than £150; and we have only to set

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for 1843, Mr. Mulhall's calculations, and those of Mr. Giffen, result in totals that differ by little more than two per cent; and as to the estimates for the two last periods, Mr. Dudley Baxter's result and Mr. Mulhall's differ by but one per cent.

against each amount the corresponding numbers of the population, to arrive at once at certain very definite conclusions. In the case of the first two periods, this operation is perfectly simple, for the population in 1851 was practically precisely the same as it was in 1843. It had not increased by so much as 140,000 persons,<sup>1</sup> and may in each case be stated in round numbers as 27,000,000. In 1864 it was verging on 30,000,000, and at the present moment it is approaching 36,000,000. We know, however, that of this increase in numbers the larger part proportionally is to be attributed to the richer classes. They have increased by more than 200 per cent, or from 1,500,000 to 4,700,000; whilst the poorer classes, on the contrary, have increased by but 20 per cent, or from 26,000,000, in 1843 and 1851, to something over 30,000,000 now. Hence, the same number of them that in 1843 had £235,000,000, annually, had in 1851 £336,000,000; and a number that is barely greater by one-fifth has annually, by this time, some £620,000,000. Now, if we state this increase in terms of the average income per family, we find that each family, amongst the poorer classes in England, had in

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<sup>1</sup> The population in 1843 was 27,555,699, in 1846 it was 28,002,094, and in 1851 it was 27,393,337. Our figures include Ireland.

1843 about £40 a year, that in 1851 it had £58, and that at the present time it has between £95 and £100; that is to say, the incomes of those who have less than £150 a year have increased during the last forty years by 130 per cent.

Of course, however, this is a general average only, and does not correspond exactly to the real facts of the case. Some sections of the poorer classes have bettered themselves faster than others, and there is nothing in the figures we have just cited to show that a certain proportion may not have actually retrograded. But let us put on the figures in this way the worst construction we can; let us suppose the increase to be as partial as possible, and that, instead of all the incomes having risen to £95 or £100, a certain number have risen to £150: yet even in that case the increase would have diffused itself amongst nearly half of the population in question. It could not have done less than this, had the incomes of the remainder remained stationary; whilst, if the incomes of any section had diminished, the income must necessarily have diffused itself amongst a larger number still.

Or we may put the matter more forcibly, and with equal certainty, thus: We will make three suppositions, which pessimists as to the progress

of the poor are pretty certain to accept as actual truth. We will suppose, that, of the families of the poorer classes in this country, a quarter, at least, have incomes below £50; that not more than a quarter have incomes touching on £150; and that the half left remaining have incomes below £86. What will follow in this case? Something, we conceive, that will perhaps astonish the pessimist. It will follow necessarily, that of this half just mentioned, whilst no family have more than £85, no family can possibly have less.<sup>1</sup>

Amongst the thoughtless or ill-instructed it is not, perhaps, unnatural that conclusions such as these should be received with suspicion; and we have observed with regret that, even by those who should know better, they are sometimes set aside as "theoretical statistics," the falsehood of which can be proved by one walk through the streets of London. But in what we have just stated there is nothing theoretical whatever; and nothing that is invalidated, or even made paradoxical, by any recent revelations as to the want and the misery that is in the midst of us. To this appalling phenomenon

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<sup>1</sup> If the pessimist asks us by what process this result is arrived at, we answer that it is arrived at by the same process of arithmetic as that which shows us that if ten shillings be divided amongst ten men, in such proportion that no man has more than one shilling, no man can possibly have less.

we shall recur presently, and shall point out that the facts which we are now insisting on, though not lessening its horrors, yet set it in a new, and, we trust, a more hopeful light; but, at the present moment, all that we are concerned with is the certainty, within the limits specified, of the above facts themselves. Let us state them once more, so that the reader shall be unable to mistake them. Those who minimize or disbelieve in the general progress of the poor, must certainly maintain that the poorest fourth part of the whole number of the poor is *not richer* now by 25 per cent than the poorest fourth part was forty years ago. They will probably say that it is poorer; but to that statement we do not ask them to commit themselves: we will merely ask them to reflect that they are certainly committed to the statement, that it is, at all events, not 25 per cent richer. If, then, this be the case with regard to one-fourth of the poor, we may know with absolute certainty that, of the other three-fourths, there is not one family whose income is not double the average of forty years ago; and that, if the incomes of one-half are not more than double that average, the incomes of the remaining quarter must be more than three times as great. Thus let us make the advance of the poorer classes as partial as possible, and want



and misery as wide-spread and persistent as possible, yet on any calculation, and on any supposition, at least three-fourths of them during the past forty years — or 22,500,000 out of 30,000,000 — have grown, all of them, demonstrably richer by at least 100 per cent; and, unless amongst 15,000,000 the increase has been even greater, at least 7,000,000 must be richer by nearly 300 per cent.

Such being the facts with regard to the poorer classes, the families whose incomes are less than £150, let us turn to those whose incomes are above that figure, — from the families whose home is the ordinary suburban house or the semi-detached villa, up to those whose home is the Park or the Belgravian mansion, the ancient manor or castle, or the modern stucco palace. And here our task will be found to be far simpler. We do not mean that our conclusions will be more trustworthy; we certainly do not mean that they will be more instructive: but they will have the advantage of greater precision, and they are arrived at more easily. We need not content ourselves, as we have just done, with saying, If such a class has less than such a sum, then such and such a class must have more; but, taking the various incomes with which we shall have to deal, we can actually tell, in a large number of cases,

the exact number of families that are in receipt of such at this moment, and compare this with the number that were in receipt of the same income at a given date previously.

We are, as the reader is aware, extending our survey over the whole of the last forty years. During, however, the first eight years of this period, there was, as we have observed already, no continuous increase, either in the population of the country, or in the amount assessed to income-tax. Nothing increased except the income of the poorer classes; and the position of the richer in 1851 was practically the same as it had been in 1843. It will be sufficient, therefore, if, in our comparison of the present with the past, we take as our point of departure the more recent of these two dates, which will practically carry us back to the earlier.

And, first, let us recall to the reader the exact point we are to inquire into. We have already seen that the poorer classes are not growing poorer. We are now to inquire in what sense the rich are growing richer; and whether in any sense it can be said of the middle classes, that they are being gradually crushed out. Let us, then, begin by stating precisely what we mean by the rich, and by the middle classes; and let us be careful to adjust our definitions

to the most general meaning of the words. When an agitator is contrasting the rich with the poor, almost any one, in his sense, is rich who has more than a few hundreds a year; but, when the rich are contrasted with the middle class, it is plain that the line between them must be drawn higher than this. It is our own opinion, that, when the rich are thus signalized, what is generally meant, and what is generally understood, are men or families with not less than a thousand a year; and we conceive that, so far as money goes, all will be ranked in the middle class who have less than a thousand a year, and more than a hundred and fifty. In case, however, our readers should not agree with us, we will subdivide this division; and they shall choose their definition for themselves. We will divide those who have less than a thousand a year into three further classes: those whose incomes range from £150 to £300; those whose incomes range from £300 to £600; and those whose incomes range from £600 to £1,000. And we will divide the rich into the rich and the very rich; calling those the rich who have less than £10,000 a year, and those the very rich who have more.

Thus much being settled, let us turn to that section of the community in which the extinction of the middle class is declared to be most

certain and most noticeable ; we mean the section which is engaged in trade, in manufacture, and in the various professional callings. Here we are able to speak with an unusual degree of exactness, because we have not only records of the gross income of this section, and of the total number of its members, but we have records in which the incomes of the individuals are classified according to a graduated scale, and the actual number of persons is specified, enjoying, at various periods, each class of income. We are thus enabled to see, with regard to this section of the community, the exact changes, that, during the period under review, have taken place in the economic position and the numbers of those who are called the rich and the very rich, on the one side, and of those who are included under the term of the middle classes on the other. Let us treat these classes with reference, first, to their number. We find that, between 1851 and the present time, they have one and all — not the rich alone, but each grade of the middle class — increased enormously, not only in absolute numbers, but also in proportion to the increase of the whole population ; and that it is utterly false to say of any one of them, that it is in process of diminution even, much less of extinction. We find, however, that if to any class such language could

be applied with the least show of propriety, that class would be the rich; since, though all have increased, the rich have increased the least. The following are the exact figures: in proportion to the increase of the population as a whole, the class with incomes between £150 and £300 has increased during the past thirty years by 148 per cent; the class with incomes between £300 and £600, by 130 per cent; the class with incomes between £600 and £1,000, by 77 per cent; and the class with incomes above £1,000, by 76 per cent. But this is not all. We find further, if we except the handful of men — not more than 987 in all — whose incomes are above £10,000, and who have grown richer individually as well as more numerous, that, whilst the middle classes have been growing richer individually likewise, the bulk of the rich have been growing individually poorer. Thus the average income in the lowest grade of the middle class was £164 in 1851, and is £171 now; whilst the average income amongst all the rich, except the very rich, was, in 1881, £2,193, and it is now not more than £2,069.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Leone Levi, in his paper on Recent Changes in the Distribution of Wealth, classifies the population thus: income-tax payers, lower middle-classes, laboring-classes, — the lower middle-classes being composed of persons with an average income of £110. We think, however, that the classification made in the text is more in accordance with popular

These figures, it is true, apply only to incomes derived from industry; but, as Professor Leone Levi remarks, "there is reason to believe that they represent the condition of all descriptions of interests." "In a note," he continues, "to the appendix to Mr. Dudley Baxter's paper on national incomes, by Mr. Gripper of the Inland Revenue, it is stated that the number of income-tax payers, under Schedule A, may be taken to be divided in the same proportion as under Schedule D; and the same may be said as to Schedules B, C, and E." We need not, however, rest content with this piece of general information: we can, to a great extent, test its accuracy for ourselves. We cannot, indeed, with regard to the other classes of incomes, make the same exact comparison between the present and the past; but we can see that the distribution of them at present, in two cases at least, is practically the same as that which exists in the class just mentioned. The one is the case of the employees of the Government and corporate bodies, the immense increase in whose gross annual income is almost wholly the gain of an increased middle class; the other is the case, more important still, of the distribution of incomes derived from land. We touched

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usage, and brings out more clearly the contrast between the real facts of the case and the current fallacies.

upon this matter when we were dealing with Mr. Hyndman, and showed the absolute fallacy of the current belief concerning it; but it is now necessary that we should examine it more minutely.

The current belief, as we all know, — the belief which the Radical party are doing every thing that they can to foster, — is the belief that the whole ground-rental of this country is the portion of the national income that is growing most rapidly; and that nearly the whole of it “runs,” if we may indulge in a slight play on the elegant words of Mr. Chamberlain, “into the pockets” of the landed aristocracy. But what are the real facts? The moment we approach these, the moment we look them full in the face, this ridiculous and extravagant fiction dissolves into the air like a dream. In a country like ours, where high social position depends on so many things, either taken together or singly, — on wealth, on lineage or connections, on various personal qualities, — it is of course impossible, in arranging land-owners by their acreage, to be quite accurate socially in our definition of the aristocracy. We think ourselves, however, to be substantially correct in saying that the ownership of less than a thousand acres does not, apart from other claims to distinction, entitle a man to rank as a country

gentleman; and it is evident that the "landlord," when denounced in Radical oratory, is conceived of as a person of larger estate than this. We will therefore define the landed aristocracy as those land-owners who own more than a thousand acres; and we will divide those who own less than this amount into small rural owners, and into small urban and suburban owners. And now let us take the case of England, and compare facts with rhetoric.

The gross rental of England is about £99,000,000.<sup>1</sup> Of this amount, what goes to the

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<sup>1</sup> A most instructive instance of that inevitable perversity, which Radicals always exhibit when dealing with the land question, is to be found on p. 47 of *The Financial Reform Almanac for 1884*, — a publication, the almost avowed object of which is, by means of garbled statistics, to exhibit the aristocratic landlords in a light as invidious as possible. With reference to the holders of less than one acre, the compiler of the Almanac, though he cannot deny them to be numerous, declares that their rental, as stated in the *Doomsday Book*, is rental not for the land only, but for all "factories, buildings, workshops, and houses" which stand on it. This, he declares, is evident from the amount of rent recorded. A statement more stupidly or more wantonly false it is hardly possible to imagine. The average rental per acre of the small urban properties in question is about £190. Now, on an acre of land there would be room for fourteen large houses, each with a frontage of 30 feet and a depth of 105 feet. Does the compiler of *The Financial Reform Almanac* suppose that the rental of these fourteen houses would be only £190? There are few localities in which the rental of each one of these would not be a larger sum. The value of the small suburban properties, of three and four acres, is on the average about £13 an acre.



aristocracy is, in round numbers, only £30,000,000; what goes to the class of smaller rural owners, whose estates average from 700 to 20 acres, is £33,000,000; and what goes to the suburban owners, who, on the average, have four acres, and the urban owners, who, on the average, have the fourth of an acre, is £36,000,000. It will thus be seen that the landed aristocracy of England, the large proprietors, the "land-grabbers,"—that rapacious and profligate class who are represented as appropriating almost the whole rental of the country,—take of that rental really not so much as one-third; and that their gross receipts from their rural, their suburban, and their urban properties together is less by £6,000,000 than the receipts which the smallest class of proprietors derive from their suburban and urban properties alone.

Let us next consider these classes in point of numbers. The landed aristocracy, all told, number about 5,000. Just below them come 4,800 owners, with estates that average 700 acres; then come 32,000, with estates that average 200 acres; then 25,000, with estates that average 70 acres; and then 72,000, with estates that average 20 acres: the total number of the smaller rural proprietors being thus not less than 133,000. Finally, there come the urban and suburban proprietors,—the latter with their four

acres, the former with their fourth of an acre, — and the number of these is 820,000. To these facts we must add another, which is notorious, that, whilst the value of rural land has, during the last five or six years, been decreasing, the value of urban and suburban land has been constantly rapidly increasing. It will thus be seen that the classes of smaller land-owners, not only in point of numbers, are not far off from a million, and enjoy a gross rental more than double that of the aristocracy, but that, whilst the aristocracy have been growing as individuals poorer, the bulk of the smaller land-owners have been growing as individuals richer.

We can see this without going farther into details; but, if the reader is anxious to have figures, he will probably find it quite sufficient to learn that the rental of those owners, in England and Scotland, who own estates of less than fifty acres, is now greater by some four millions than the whole agricultural rental of both countries thirty years ago.<sup>1</sup>

And now we conceive that, with regard to the general question of how, under existing conditions, wealth tends to distribute itself, we

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<sup>1</sup> The gross income of the United Kingdom assessed under Schedule A, for land, in 1851 was £47,800,000. The gross income of the owners in England and Scotland, of under fifty acres, is at the present moment more than £51,000,000.

have said enough to convince even the most incredulous reader of the absolute falsehood of the view that is at present popular. As the most careful exponent of that view, we have cited the late Karl Marx. He, so far as we know, was the first person to state it in a scientific form, and the first person who had the courage, or the presumption, to declare that its truth was demonstrable by exact scientific methods. Marx' work on "Capital" was published in 1869,—in the very middle of the period whose economic history we have been examining; and we are now able to test the theories of the best-informed and most logical of all modern agitators by those actual facts to which he appealed with such arrogant confidence. A more crushing and contemptuous rebuke it is impossible to conceive, than that which these facts administer to one who, in the opinion of his disciples, is the profoundest social philosopher of this or of any century. So far as his estimate goes of existing economic tendencies, whenever he has written a plus sign, history has written a minus sign; whenever he has written a minus sign, history has written a plus sign. His assertion was, that the rich are growing richer and fewer; the middle class, poorer and fewer; and the poorer class, poorer and more numerous. History, on the contrary, shows us that the rich are

growing poorer and more numerous; that the middle classes are growing richer and much more numerous; and that the poor, in proportion to these other two classes, are growing at once less numerous and very much richer. Finally, we may place before the reader the following astonishing fact: Socialists and Communists of the extremest and most sanguine type imagine that we should secure a kind of economic millennium, could we only distribute amongst the many the heaped-up riches of the few. A Socialistic poet has described this operation as a "strange new wonderful justice;" and he declares that "wonderful days" would be ushered in by it, when "all should be better than well." But even the extremest Socialists hardly venture to maintain that it will be practically possible to despoil the few of every thing; and even the most sanguine Socialists have hardly ventured to hope that the process, when once started, can be completed in less than half a century. But let such men, and all who are inclined to listen to them, merely consult the simplest records of history, and they will find that this "strange new wonderful" piece of justice has actually accomplished itself during the past thirty years. If we look back to the income of the country in 1851, and make every allowance for the subsequent growth of the

population, we shall find that the entire wealth at that time belonging to the rich has since that time been virtually divided amongst the poor.<sup>1</sup> We shall find that the total income of the poorer classes to-day is equal to the total income of all classes in 1851, and exceeds by a hundred millions the total income of all classes in 1843. In other words, the poorer classes to-day are, as a body, in precisely the same situation as they would have been in, if, at the time of the first Exhibition, the income of every rich man then in the country had been made over to them in perpetuity.

So much, then, for the general proposition of the agitator, which we have shown conclusively to be either an ignorant or an impudent falsehood. It remains for us to examine certain particular applications of it, which are even more practically mischievous than the general proposition itself. Of these applications, the most important are those that deal with monarchy and our existing land-system. The case

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<sup>1</sup> In 1851 the gross income of the country was £614,000,000. The gross amount of incomes under £100 is at the present time over £620,000,000. The gross amount of incomes over £150 was in 1843 about £280,000,000; of incomes under £150, £235,000,000. Thus the income of these classes has increased during the past forty years by £385,000,000; i.e., by £185,000,000 more than the total income of the richer classes in 1843. The number of the poor, meanwhile, has only increased from 26,000,000 to 30,000,000.

with regard to the monarchy can be disposed of with extreme brevity: we will therefore touch upon that first. The few facts brought to light by it are singularly full of instruction.

Most persons who have taken the trouble to follow the received vagaries of Radical agitation are familiar with the statement, which rarely fails to meet with applause, that the monarchical institutions of this country are a growing burden on the people, and ought to be abolished on the grounds of their intolerable expense. Thus, to take one instance out of many, during the May of last year, the following remarks were addressed to a crowded meeting at Plymouth. The speaker, having prophesied the downfall of the territorial aristocracy, went on to say that:—

“The doubt would also arise whether we shall much longer be able to afford an almost equally expensive luxury, called monarchical institutions. [Loud and long cheers; and a voice, “Don’t divorce them: let them go together.”] Listen, please, carefully [the speaker proceeded] to what follows on ROYAL EXPENSES.<sup>1</sup> ‘If any one fault has been, in a thousand shapes, charged upon Tories, it has

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<sup>1</sup> This extract is taken from a speech delivered by Mr. Walter Wren at Plymouth, May 22, 1883. The capitals in the text are Mr. Wren’s own, and occur in an edition of his speech, which was republished by him at the request of his friends.

been a disposition to uphold the dignity and magnificence of the Crown. But notwithstanding the ardent economy of the Whigs out of office, their declared hostility to squandering the resources of the nation on royal personages, they no sooner breathe the air and eat the dinners of a palace, than a change comes o'er the spirit of their dream; and the immolation of the sinews and muscles of all Britain as a holocaust to the Queen is neither inconsistent with their former professions, nor a severe tax on national industry. We know not how it is that royalty in all ages seems an insatiable absorbent of money. . . . We humbly submit the necessity of severe economy, rather than unmerciful lavishness. In times of depression and dissatisfaction, of poverty and reckless crime, nothing is so much to be deprecated as needless waste of national resources.' [Hear, hear! and cheers.] These words are from a Tory magazine, — 'Fraser's,' of October, 1840. If 1840 was a time of depression, poverty, and crime, surely we are, if any thing, at a disadvantage with the men of 1840. Surely the country is beginning to make up its mind not to pay much longer this severe tax upon its industry."

Now, the foregoing extract is taken from the speech, not of an uneducated man, not of an illiterate man, but of a man whose knowledge is in many respects exceptional, and who had exceptional opportunities, had he only cared to use them, of knowing exactly what he was here

talking of: that is to say, half an hour's intelligent inquiry would have been enough to show him these easily ascertainable facts, — that the gross income of the kingdom being, as we have already seen, something over £1,200,000,000, the utmost cost of our monarchical institutions is something under £1,200,000; having realized which, he could have hardly failed to reflect that the institution which he denounced as such an insatiable absorbent of money, and one to which “the muscles and sinews of all Britain were immolated,” takes really from the nation no more than one pound out of each ten hundred; and that the most splendid and revered monarchy of which the world can boast is but half the expense, in proportion, to the great empire which it ornaments, that to a man with a thousand a year is the right to paint his crest upon a bicycle.

Such, then, when reduced to facts and figures, is the Radical attack upon the Monarchy. To numbers, even among the Radicals themselves, its absurdity must be apparent already; but we much doubt whether, even amongst Conservatives, it is commonly realized how great the absurdity is. The reader, at any rate, sees it now; and we beg to commend it to his very earnest attention, not so much for the sake of its own importance, as because it is a type of



the absurdity, often far better concealed, which underlies the onslaught of the agitator on existing institutions generally, and on the existing land-system in particular.

First, however, let us say thus much: We are not contending now that our existing land-system is perfect. We are not denying that, as time goes on, many changes may be needed. We are not denying this, and we are not admitting it. We are simply now dealing with the question: all that we are concerned to show is this, that, whatever may be the true view of the matter, the views popularized by our contemporary agitators are demonstrably and ridiculously false.

To begin, then: the falsehood most industriously spread, and most widely believed in, is precisely similar to the falsehood with regard to the Monarchy. It is a statement, or insinuation, that the wealth of the landed aristocracy bears so large a proportion to the gross wealth of the nation, that not only are their extortions the chief burden of the poor, but their wanton splendor and their colossal incomes dwarf into insignificance all other classes of the rich. Thus Mr. Walter Wren informed an admiring audience, that, whilst the workingmen of England were the creators of national wealth, "the hereditary aristocracy were the squanderers and

wasters of it." Similarly, Mr. Chamberlain has described them as the men *par excellence* "who neither toil nor spin;" and Mr. George and his many rivals and followers have declared explicitly that every increase in the income of the country goes of necessity into the pockets of this one class. We have already said enough, in our foregoing remarks, to show the reader something of the value of views like these. We have shown him, that is to say, that, whatever may be the gains of the landlords, the landlords who take most from the nation are the small landlords, not the aristocracy; but we have not yet exhibited the income of that aristocracy, in the exact proportion which it bears to the income of the rest of the community. Let us take, then, once again the £1,200,000,000 which constitute the gross income of the nation, and ask how many millions of this are paid annually in ground-rents. If Mr. George and Mr. Wallace were even approximately right in their theories, the ground rental of the United Kingdom—the income of the iniquitous landlord—would be by this time something over £900,000,000. This is plainly demonstrable from the explicit and reiterated doctrines that form the gist of Mr. George's "Progress and Poverty." We have merely to apply these doctrines to the income of the

country at the beginning of the present century, and compare that income with the income of the country now, to arrive at the above result. But if we turn from Mr. George's theories of what must be, and condescend to look at what is, we find that the income which Mr. George would estimate at £800,000,000 is in reality only £150,000,000; and that instead of amounting, as according to him it would, to two-thirds of the gross income of the nation, it is in reality barely one-eighth. When further we recollect that Mr. George and his fellow theorists invariably conceive that a landlord is synonymous with a large landlord, and that nearly the whole of this country is owned by squires and lords and dukes, their error becomes practically far greater still; for this particular class, this territorial aristocracy, to whom such writers impute nearly the whole of their £900,000,000, take in reality considerably less than £50,000,000. Thus the class that is represented as appropriating by far the larger part of the national income appropriates, in reality, not more than one twenty-fourth of it. In other words, Mr. George's entire theory is founded on an assumption, and recommends itself by an explicit statement, which is about as true with regard to the economic position of the landlords as a description would be of their

personal appearance, in which it was stated that they weighed nearly a ton and a half each, or that they were, on the average, a hundred and eight feet high.

Let us now turn from the school of Mr. George to the school of Mr. Chamberlain. The error we here encounter, if not so great, is, considering those who are guilty of it, even more inexcusable. We do not suppose that the President of the Board of Trade imagines, as Mr. George does, that the commercial classes have been stationary during this century of trade and manufacture, and that all the increasing gains of the merchant or the mill-owner have been wrung from them in rack-rents by those ogres, the lords of the soil. But Mr. Chamberlain certainly does insinuate, and his followers certainly say, that the incomes of the landlords, in the course of our recent progress, have increased proportionately far faster than the incomes of business-men and of shareholders; and that the latter, as time goes on, are becoming more and more dwarfed by the former.<sup>1</sup> Now to all this, as Professor Leone

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<sup>1</sup> This is the only meaning that Mr. Chamberlain's words can possibly bear, when he denounces, in his article on Laborers' Dwellings in Towns, the way in which wealth has "run into pockets," and urges that those into whose pockets it has run should be made responsible for the carrying out of certain measures he advocates.

Levi has shown, there is an exceedingly simple answer; and that answer is a reference to certain exceedingly simple statistics. Seventy years ago, of the income of the richer classes, the landlords took considerably more than half; thirty-six years later they took little more than a third; and at the present moment they take something less than a quarter. In 1864, for every pound that was taken by the landlord, the rest of the richer classes took only thirteen shillings. Now, for every thirteen shillings that is taken by the landlord, the rest of the richer classes take actually two guineas. If, therefore, the wealth of the nation tends, as Mr. Chamberlain says it does, "to run into pockets," it is sufficiently evident into whose pockets it runs.

The following figures will be of some interest to the reader, and will serve to bring yet more nearly home to him the wild and reckless nature of such fallacies as Mr. Chamberlain's. We will put out of the question all incomes like Mr. Chamberlain's own, — incomes derived by shareholders, or sleeping-partners, from the commerce or the manufactures of the kingdom: of the wealthier classes who are not land-owners, we will take that section only which is actively engaged in business, and we will compare the various incomes enjoyed by that single sec-

tion with the various incomes enjoyed by the entire body of land-owners. To begin, then, there are 66 incomes derived from land, of over £50,000: in this one section of the business world alone, there are 77. Of incomes between £10,000 and £50,000, there are from land only 800: in this one section of the business world alone, there are 910. Whilst of incomes between £3,000 and £10,000, there are from land only 1,634; and, in this section of the business world alone, there are no less than 4,065. Or, to put the matter in a slightly different form, there are about 5,000 men whom we have classed as the landed aristocracy, who have estates of more than 1,000 acres; and there are about 1,900 men actively engaged in business who have incomes of more than £5,000 a year. The gross income of these 1,900 business men is greater by £3,000,000 than the entire rental of the 5,000 aristocratic land-owners. These statistics are easily accessible to any honest inquirer, and would be enough at once, if the public were only aware of them, to cover with confusion the whole of this Birmingham faction, which is endeavoring to manufacture a false public opinion by supplying the public with a false series of facts. Words fail us to describe our amazement at that quality — whether it be ignorance or dishonesty — which

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enables the faction we speak of to lend themselves to such a proceeding. Dishonesty, indeed, we hardly like to impute to them ; and yet the ignorance, which is the only alternative, is a fault almost as gross and even more astonishing. For is there not something almost as gross as dishonesty in reckless ignorance which refuses to be enlightened, and presumes to give itself the dictatorial airs of knowledge? And is it not astonishing that a set of eager politicians, who are for the most part presumably men of education, should, in dealing with what they consider to be the most burning of social questions, have wholly neglected any system of study which would have fitted them to take a clear and comprehensive view of it?

And yet it is ignorance of this kind that we are obliged to lay at their doors. If they spoke absolutely in the dark, their position would be more intelligible ; but they do not do this. They do not think it enough to trust to their own impressions. They are perpetually giving the public chapter and verse for their statements ; they affect to be speaking from historical and statistical knowledge ; and their quotations and references, though in many cases wholly erroneous, do betray a certain amount of study. The astonishing thing is, the method on which their study is conducted. All that they bring

away from the domains of history and statistics is a smattering of isolated facts, wholly divorced from the facts most nearly connected with them, — facts which thus would have no significance whatever, unless cited in support of a theory that has been conceived independently of them, and which, so used, has but one connection with truth, that these theorists always pervert, and very frequently contradict, it. Thus, as an illustration of the special rapacity of landlords, it is a favorite commonplace with every Radical agitator, to say that the appropriators of so many millions of rent could stand in a room of such and such dimensions; but they wholly forget to set by the side of this fact another, that, if we take those whose income is derived from other sources than land, we could put in a yet smaller room the receivers of a yet larger revenue.

On statistics proper, however, we have dwelt long enough. We will now show the reader how the agitator deals with history. Ancient history, as we know, he does not deal with at all; and all allusion to that he regards as irrelevant trifling: but modern history he conceives to be very full of instruction, and he delights to point his moral with various startling extracts from it. Whereas, however, when it is appealed to by a Conservative, he calls every



thing ancient history that is more than six months old: modern history, when used for his own purposes, often extends as far back as the Norman Conquest, and generally as far back as the close of the fifteenth century. We do not mention this last period at random. We mention it because constant and pointed reference is made to it by Socialists and Radicals alike, in their agitation for land-reform. To it the people of to-day are told to look back in order to realize what their rights in the soil are, and how prosperous their condition would be if only these rights were vindicated. For this special application of history to the purposes of social agitation, Karl Marx is mainly responsible; and many a Radical, who has never even heard his name, is to-day parroting theories which he first brought into prominence. We will therefore refer the reader to the language of Marx himself; or, since the original passages in question are too long for quotation, to the abstract—in reality a translation—which Mr. Hyndman gives of them:—

“The fifteenth century was the golden age of agricultural England. Villenage had disappeared. The country, far more populous at that time than is commonly supposed, was occupied and cultivated by free men who tilled their own land, subject only to light dues, payable to feudal superiors. Such

day-laborers as there were, lived in perfect freedom, owned plots of land themselves, and shared in the enormous common land which then lay free and open to all. Landless, houseless families were almost unknown: permanent pauperism was undreamed of. The feudal lords who maintained around them crowds of retainers were at this time merely the heads of a free, prosperous society, which recognized them as their natural leaders alike in war and peace. Notwithstanding, or rather by reason of, the great subdivision of the land, the wealth of the bulk of the people was extraordinary. . . . Men so different as Cobbett and Fawcett, Thornton and Rogers, are all agreed on these points. They are of one mind, that the working agriculturist of the fifteenth century was a well-to-do free man. How do our present agricultural laborers figure in comparison? We can all of us judge of that, even if the reports of agricultural commissions were not at hand to tell us. . . . What is the reason of all this increasing penury, accompanied in rural districts by an astounding decrease of population? Unquestionably the entire removal of the people from the land is the chief cause of the mischief. . . . Between the fifteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century the whole face of England had been changed. The mere wage-earner took the place of the laboring petty farmer. Yet, even so late as the end of the seventeenth century, eighty per cent of the population of England were still purely agricultural. By the middle of the eighteenth

century, there was scarcely a yeoman of the old type left in a county.”<sup>1</sup> [The words of Marx are, “Towards the year 1750 the yeomanry had disappeared.”]

We have said that the agitator in his dealings with history is a smatterer, and, in proving the justice of this charge, the example of Marx has an exceptional force and value. For, in the ordinary sense of the word, — in the sense in which it applies to Mr. Hyndman, — it would be wholly inaccurate to call Marx a smatterer at all.

He was, on the contrary, a man of great reading and research; and his work on “Capital,” in spite of its errors, is a storehouse of curious facts. But, if we give the word *smatterer* its true, not its superficial, intention, then Marx was a smatterer of the most inveterate and mischievous kind. We mean, that, however diligent he may have been in accumulating facts, he is not only often inaccurate with regard to the facts which he accumulates, but these facts are of one order only; and others, which would change the whole meaning of them, are altogether ignored. Thus, it is, no doubt, true, that, towards the end of the fifteenth century, the people were enjoying a period of excep-

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<sup>1</sup> England for All, chap. i. The above extract is an abridgment from Marx's work on Capital, chaps. xxvii. and xxviii.

tional plenty. But, in the first place, this plenty is in itself exaggerated. Though there seems to have been a universal abundance of meat, there was a corresponding dearth of all vegetable food. Many of the peasants in the North had never even seen bread, and a diet of meat exclusively was a general source of disease; and, in the second place, the plenty, such as it was, was due to an extraordinary cause, of which Marx makes no mention whatever. The population of England, until a comparatively recent date, increased very slowly. At the time of the Conquest, it is supposed to have been about two millions; by 1348 it had risen to about three millions; but in 1349 the most dreadful pestilence recorded in modern history swept off more than a quarter of the English people; and, long before this loss had been made good again, one of a similar kind, though not of the same magnitude, was inflicted on the country by the wars of Henry V. with France. It thus happened, that, at the period to which Marx alludes, there was a scarcity of labor in England which is wholly without a parallel; and it was to this scarcity, more than to any other cause, that the rise in the wages of the laboring-class was due. But even had this not been the case, and had there been no such scarcity, the comparison of that time with this

would be almost equally idle. The population of England, then, whether suffering from any temporary diminution or not, was hardly more than one-seventh of what it is at the present time; and instead of saying, as Marx does, that, since then, "the people have been removed from the land," it would be truer to say, that, since then, six new peoples have been allowed to live on the land. Marx tells how minutely the land was then divided, and he urges on us the necessity of a like subdivision now; but he wholly forgets to inquire what minute subdivision means. An equal division then could have given every family forty acres: now an equal division would give every family less than six. This entire aspect of the question escapes Marx altogether; and he and his followers declaim aloud the "astounding decrease" in our rural population, forgetful of the fact that our rural population now is double the population of the whole of England then, and that what they are pleased to call an astounding decrease, is really an increase of more than a hundred per cent.

We will direct the reader's attention to two other points, which will put Marx as a student of history in a yet plainer light. The assertion, that towards 1750 the yeomanry had disappeared, is not, like the assertions we have just been considering, one-sided: it is absolutely

false. Large estates have been enlarging themselves ever since that date, and yet there are some hundred thousand yeomen proprietors still. Again, equally false, and even more misleading, is the assertion, that, at the period whose praise he celebrates, "landless families were almost unknown, and permanent pauperism undreamed of." He declares that landless paupers began first to make their appearance when the golden age was drawing to a close, and that they were not numerous enough to attract the notice of the law till the reign of Henry VII., when, he says, "they were treated like voluntary criminals; as though it depended on their own free will, as it once did, whether they would work or no; and as though no change had come over their condition." So far, however, is this from being true, that legislation of the very kind he speaks of, had been already begun some hundred and thirty years before. It was again and again renewed during the time when, he says, it never existed; and one of the most remarkable evidences that this was really the case, is to be found in a statute from which he himself quotes.<sup>1</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> In the Statute of Laborers of 1349, to certain provisions of which Marx himself alludes, it is commanded, because "many valiant beggars, so long as they may live of begging, do refuse to labor, giving themselves to idleness and vice, and sometimes to other abominations, none shall, under color of

point, which Marx is using every effort to prove, is, that pauperism first began with the growth of an oppressive *bourgeoisie*, and the spread of a *bourgeois* spirit amongst the aristocracy. What is proved by the historical facts, which he overlooks or suppresses, is, that pauperism began with that abolition of villenage which it suits his purpose to treat of as an unmixed social gain. We are not denying the importance of many of the facts he dwells upon. We are only concerned to show how profoundly

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pity or arms, give any thing to such which may labor." In 1376 the Rolls of Parliament contain a strong complaint by the Commons against beggars, stating that, despite high wages, they would run away from their masters, and lead an idle life in towns. In 1383 it was ordained and assented that "to refrain the malice of divers people, wandering from place to place, running in the country more abundantly than they were wont in times past," the justices and the sheriffs should compel them to find surety for their good behavior, or, in default, commit them to the nearest gaol, and then do to them "that, that thereof best shall seem to them by the law." Again, a statute in 1388 says, Beggars impotent to serve, shall abide in the cities and towns, where they may be dwelling at the time of the proclamation of the statute; and, if the people of the said cities or towns will or may not suffice to maintain them, then the said beggars shall draw them to other towns within the hundred, rape, or wapentake, or to the towns where they were born, within forty days after the said proclamation made, and there shall continually abide during their lives." It is not contended, that, in the picture drawn by Marx of England in the fifteenth century, there is no truth, but that a large part of the facts with regard to that period have been suppressed, and all the most important amongst its antecedent conditions.

their significance is altered by those which he virtually denies, and how little the most intelligent study entitles a man to be trusted, who goes to history, not that he may be taught by *it*, but that it, under his management, may, like a brow-beaten witness, be compelled to give evidence in favor of some teaching of his own.

The question of the historical origin of pauperism is beside our immediate point, but we have touched on the subject for the sake of the illustration which its treatment by Marx affords us. Our main reason, however, for thus referring to the fifteenth century, is the astounding way in which the question of population is wholly lost sight of in Marx's estimate of the period, and the fact that this oversight on the part of Marx is emulated to this day by every Radical agitator in England. The instinct of the Radical, the moment he hears this accusation, will be, we are well aware, to deny it; and he will remind us, that, with regard to the rural districts at least, population, or rather depopulation, is his constant theme. We reply, that, no doubt, he is busy enough with the words, but that, so far as we can judge by the statements in which he indulges, he has no comprehensive acquaintance of any kind with the thing. Let us take for instance the language of Mr. Jesse Collings. He, and the school of



which he is so prominent an ornament, are never weary of bewailing the decay of the English peasantry: it is their stock phrase, that the inhabitants of the country are being driven into the towns; and it is their stock lamentation, that the country, once so populous, is, in comparison with what it used to be, fast becoming a desert. Now, we are by no means saying that this language shows no acquaintance with fact, but we do say that it shows a singularly partial acquaintance. Who would imagine, to hear Mr. Collings speak, that those country districts of England whose appalling desolation he deplores, though they were somewhat more populous twenty years ago, have yet at this moment nearly as many inhabitants as at the beginning of this century were in country and towns together?<sup>1</sup>

This method, however, of dealing with the rural population, is comparatively honest and accurate when compared with that which the Radicals generally, when discussing the land-question, follow with reference to the population of the kingdom as a whole. That the

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<sup>1</sup> The number of persons directly engaged in agriculture, was, in 1861, 2,010,454; in 1881 the number was 1,383,184; but almost exactly half of this decrease is due to the withdrawal, not of men from agriculture, but of women. In 1801 the total population of England and Wales was 9,060,393. In 1881 the rural population alone was 8,337,275.

population of the towns has increased enormously, it is true, they do not deny: on the contrary, they insist that it has done so. But they invariably represent this increase as due to a disastrous immigration from the country;<sup>1</sup> and, were their public and popular utterances our only source of information, we should infallibly conclude that the population of the kingdom, as a whole, had increased but little during the last two centuries, and had hardly increased at all during the last eighty years. They never pause to consider that the increase in London alone has been far greater, during the last fifteen years, than the diminution of the whole agricultural classes during the last twenty; and that, whilst the country population is still, in spite of recent changes, almost as great as the entire population in 1801, the new population that has been added to the towns alone has increased that entire population by nearly 150 per cent.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thus Mr. Wallace, in his book on Land Nationalization, p. 215, says, "The only true and effectual cure for all these horrors and iniquities is, to draw back the population of the towns to the country." We are glad of this opportunity of alluding to Mr. Wallace, in order to mark our sense of the admirable temper and fairness pervading his whole book. In this respect he stands alone in the school with which he has associated himself. We sincerely regret that his judgment and his keenness are not equal to his temper and his fairness.

<sup>2</sup> "Notwithstanding the very great disturbance produced

All this, we say, the Radical apostles of land-reform never pause to consider. They are either too ignorant to know it, too disingenuous to admit it, or too much pre-occupied to remember it. The last explanation is, we incline to believe, the true one; but, whatever be the cause, the result is still the same. These men, who conceive themselves to be the most enlightened of statesmen, and who boast that they will, by an appeal to history, teach the people to realize their true rights in the soil, habitually appeal to periods, which, in the most vital point concerned, are not parallels, but violent contrasts, to our own. They are never weary of talking of the vast common lands which the people once possessed, which the rapacity of the landlords has stolen from them, and which, by some means or other, ought to be given back to them. But they quite forget, that, if the land were distributed amongst even one-half of our existing population, not only would no common land be restored, but every acre would have to be taken of such common land as is left. They quite forget, that, were even one-

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in the natural distribution of the population, . . . the native population shows, after all, stationary habits of a very decided character. Of the natives of England and Wales, who were in the country at the time of the census, no less than 78 per cent were enumerated in their native counties." — *Census of England and Wales*, 1881, vol. iv. p. 51.

half of the population allotted land in plots of not more than ten acres to a family, all the land in England would be occupied, and half the population would be utterly landless still.

We again beg leave to say, that, whatever may be our own convictions, we are not now writing as apologists of the existing land-system: we are only concerned to show the astounding ignorance that underlies the present attacks made upon it. And we must again take occasion to impress upon the reader, that this ignorance is by no means confined to what are commonly called ignorant men. We have before us, for instance, a pamphlet on "Land Nationalization," by Dr. Clark, a physician, and member of several learned societies;<sup>1</sup> and the following sentences are a specimen of his wisdom. "At present," he says, "about one-half of our food-supply is imported; three out of every four loaves eaten in this country are grown abroad; if we were to drift into war, and even one of our thousand food-ships were captured by the enemy, the advance in price would be great. *It is time our present land-system was abolished, and the country again become self-supporting.*" We beg that the reader will notice these last words. Dr. Clark evidently

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<sup>1</sup> A Plea for the Nationalization of the Land, by G. B. Clark, M.D.

considers them to be the soundest and sternest sense ; but can any thing, we ask, be more like absolute raving ? He forgets precisely what we have said all Radicals do forget, — he forgets the growth of our population ; and he fails to see, that, if his words have any meaning at all, they must mean, either that one-half of our population must be expelled, or that — stranger still — the country must produce “again” twice as much food as it ever produced before. We have quoted Dr. Clark, not because he is a man of any influence, but because he must necessarily be a man of some education ; and because, as such, he is a very excellent specimen of the blindness, we might almost say the madness, which, so far at least as the land-question is concerned, the Radical school communicate to all who come under their influence. These men, who conceive themselves to be the pioneers of progress, and are accustomed to taunt their opponents with their superstitious worship of the past, become themselves, the moment their prejudice moves them, the ministers of a worship more superstitious still ; and, whilst deriding the nation’s reverence for a past that has really existed, they work themselves into a state of maudlin devotion for an imaginary past that has never existed at all.

We would willingly have dwelt on this sub-

ject longer; but space obliges us, for the present, to bring our inquiry to a close. We trust, however, that enough has already been said to bring home to our readers the main fact we have been most desirous to impress upon them. We mean the fact that the party of agitation generally, in commending its measures, and canvassing for adherents, is doing far less by any overt propagandism than by an elaborate system of historical falsification, by which the present, with all its tendencies inverted, is interpreted by a past with half of its facts suppressed, — a past which, in virtue of this treatment, is as much like reality as a cherub is like a man. This is the fact which we urge upon the attention of our readers, and all our efforts in the present article have been directed to enforcing on them its extreme magnitude and importance. We have endeavored to open their eyes to the kind of nefarious process to which the public opinion of the country is at this moment being subjected, and to the dexterous way in which its hopes and passions are being played upon; to the admiration being created for a past that has never existed; the alarm at the extinction of a middle class which is really fast increasing; and the horror and indignation at the increase of a poverty which is in reality fast rising into competence. We ask our read-

ers to consider all this, and to reflect, that, to arrive at a true estimate of the situation, we have not to assent to, but categorically to deny, nearly every one of the beliefs that are at the present moment popular. We must recollect especially, that the English laboring-classes, instead of being, as Mr. Wallace says, the paupers of Europe, are in reality the richest laboring-class in the world, and that their proportionate share in the progress of the past forty years has been greater than that of any other class in the community.

The importance of our realizing the actual state of the case, of escaping from the dream-world of the agitator, where all that is, is inverted, is incalculable. Such an escape on the part of public opinion would be in itself a revolution. We have, however, something more to add, or our own estimate of the truth would be gravely mistaken. When we declare that the poorer classes as a body have advanced, and are advancing, enormously, we do not for a moment close our eyes to the squalor and the misery that still remain among us; and, if any Radical thinks he is refuting our position by pointing to the horrors of squalid and outcast London, we reply that of these we are as fully aware as he, and that our concern for them is as fully as great as his. We differ from him,

not in not seeing them, but in seeing them in their true proportions. If we were to find in the road some unhappy man covered with blood from a terribly mangled leg, we should not be showing any want of compassion if we stoutly maintained that the wound was in the leg only, and that, in spite of his agony, not another member was injured. Not only is compassion for misery not best shown by exaggerating it, but one of the chief conditions of its use is, that it should not be exaggerated. With diseases in the body politic, this is the case especially; and no more foolish or disastrous course can be taken than to bewail the pain without considering the extent of the evil, and to treat a nation as though it were in a dangerous fever, when in reality it is suffering from nothing but an acute local inflammation. It is our duty, if we would not lose our heads, to keep our eyes on what is going well with us, just as steadily as on what is going ill with us; and we trust that the reflections contained in the present article may assist the reader in forming some sound opinions on the matter.

It will be recollected, that, in dealing with the progress of the poorer classes, we showed it to be impossible that more than a quarter of their number should have failed to better their position by at least 100 per cent during the last



forty years, and that even of this quarter a very considerable proportion must have bettered their position by at least 25 per cent. But, when we speak of a quarter of the poorer classes of this country, we are speaking of a population of 7,500,000 persons; and there is room in even half this number for enough misery, not only to shock a philanthropist, but to be a source of serious social danger to the community. Were there only one family in eight below the condition of comfort, the proportion of the wretched that would belong to London alone would be something like 500,000 persons. That certainly is a reflection sufficiently distressing and serious. But even that can be regarded in two ways. We may either say, Is it not a disgrace to our civilization, is it not a horrible thing, that one family out of every eight should be on the verge of destitution? Or we may say, on the other hand, Is it not a triumph of our civilization, is it not a most hopeful sign, that, in place of the pauperism of forty years ago, seven families out of every eight are in a condition of progressive competence? The agitator dwells only on the first consideration; the optimist only on the second. Both agitator and optimist are wrong. The only right proceeding is, to give equal weight to each; and to do this is the charac-

teristic of true Conservatism. The Conservative differs from the Radical and the agitator, not because he sees less, but because he sees more. And the result of this extended vision, this dispassionate looking on both sides of the question, is, not to make us think that there is no misery to be alleviated, but to encourage us in our efforts for alleviating it, and to show us the direction and the spirit in which those efforts must be made.

A dispassionate review of the history of the past forty years, so far as it relates to the economic condition of the people, will serve to show us that the Constitution is not superannuated, corrupt, or incapable of doing its work; that it is not dividing this country, as Mr. Chamberlain says it is, into two hostile nations of millionnaires and paupers, and will, if not radically altered, produce a fierce social revolution; but that, on the contrary, under this very Constitution, wealth has been diffusing itself in a way unparalleled in any other country; that, whilst both rich and poor have been gaining, the poor have gained the most; and that England, with her monarchical and aristocratic institutions, allows to the people a measure of freedom that is not tolerated for an instant in the lands of universal suffrage.



- Malloch

- Taylor

- Wickstead

- Morris

- Waller

- Bright





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