

LAND & LIBERTY

(Incorporating "LAND VALUES.")

Twenty-seventh Year. (Established June, 1894.)

Price increased next month to 3d. Monthly.

By Post 4s. per annum.

(United States and Canada, 75 cents.)

Editorial Offices:

11, TOTHILL STREET, LONDON, S.W.1.

All communications to be addressed to the Editor.

Telegrams: "Eulav, Vic, London." Telephone: Victoria 7325.

WHAT IS JUSTICE?

The opening night of the Study Circle at Messrs. Selfridges, London, held recently, was devoted to the question of "What is Justice?" and we are indebted to a contemporary for a brief résumé of the session. Emerson's definition, we are told, of "seeing the truth and applying it" was taken as the basis of the discussion. But that does not take us very far, for the question remains—What is the truth? To improve the occasion the opinions of several celebrities, if not authorities, were tabled.

The Headmaster of Rugby, Dr. David Davies, wrote: "Ideal adjustment of each to each and each to all." But the doctor omitted to give any direction as to where to find "ideal adjustment," or how it would be recognized when found. Judging by the different and differing "ideals" working their passage through so much confused thought, this dictum of the modern schoolman recalls the story of that ancient philosopher who, in search for an honest man, was asked how he would know his man when he found him? He will have hair on the heel of his hand, was the reply.

Mr. W. L. Hichens, Chairman of Messrs. Cammell Laird & Co., tried a separation of human justice from divine justice: "Human justice consists in the impartial apportionment of advantages and disadvantages to individuals, according to deserts; but divine justice is the law of love to which an appeal must always lie." That "impartial apportionment" somehow takes our fancy. It is reminiscent of the mayor of a town somewhere in the North who, on demitting office, declared he could lay his hand on his heart and say he had done his duty to his fellow citizens "without partiality on the one hand or impartiality on the other." Then as to our "deserts"—has there yet been an answer to the question: Who should escape a whipping if men were so treated? This separation of human justice from divine justice of Mr. Hichens is not new, and it is in striking contrast with another and more appealing view of the matter, which reads: "Justice is a relation of congruity which really subsists between two things. This relation is always the same, whatever being considers it, whether it be God, or an angel, or lastly a man."

Mr. Gordon Selfridge said: "Justice is that requisite to which each is honestly entitled from the other. That fairness of judgment, word and action in intercourse and association with our fellow men." What this desiderated "requisite" is Mr. Selfridge did not explain. It may have some correspondence with commercial dealings, but what the thing actually betokens is left to conjecture.

Father Bernard Vaughan expressed himself: "The

virtue of justice I take to be the firm and abiding resolve to give each his own right." This is more attractive, but the question remains: What is the right of each? If this be the virtue of justice, what is it to which each of us has a special right? We must know what this right is and where to look for it.

The Bishop of Lichfield said: "Justice is that form of love which, laying aside all self-seeking, tries to render to all men that which is their due." But we want to know what exactly justice is, and cannot be put off with any metaphorical description of its form, even if that form were acceptable on its own merits. It would be more true to say that love is based on justice. Love may be a form of justice, if you like, but it does not follow that justice is a form of love. Is it not true that a loving man may unwittingly hold to an unjust idea, and thereby injure another? It is idle to say that such a man's intentions are good, for Nature does not judge our intentions; she judges our actions. Justice stands apart and reigns supreme. The blessed rain falls on the loving and on the unloving alike. The unselfish and the self-seeking may each enjoy a place in the sun. Love may be higher than justice, but without justice there can be no love, nor any moral progress worth the name.

Mr. P. A. Best, General Manager of Selfridges, said: "He felt that they could only decide that justice was an intellectual attribute." Mr. Best's feelings on the question appear to be like the flowers that bloom in the spring; they have nothing to do with the case. On the same principle, or want of principle, can it not be "felt" that *injustice* is also an intellectual attribute? There are those who would put intellect on a level with justice, but it is written, and felt as well, that "the moral faculties revolt against iniquity more certainly than the intellectual faculties against absurdity." The grand appeal is to the moral sense, and the witness to this truth is to be found readily enough in the open streets of men where intellectual paupers act as justly as intellectual princes, and sometimes more justly.

The meeting closed with the following addition to Emerson's definition, viz., "We do not want only intellectual justice, but justice which combines also mercy to enable us to do unto others as we should like them to do to us." But mercy like love is a quality that must spring from justice. It is in the constitution of things, written in legible terms for those with eyes to see, that neither love nor mercy, nor faith, nor hope, nor charity, can usurp the place of justice nor claim any share in its dominating purpose. A merciful man may very well exist and yet not know how to give the other fellow his due. Is this man's name not legion?

Our Oxford Street debaters, like so many others, seemed to have, matched themselves for so much phrasing and word-spinning without regard to the logical difficulty, if not the impossibility, of defining an abstract noun. Who can tell in the hurly-burly of everyday life what justice is unless there is brought to the verdict an unbiased and unfettered mind? Even then it may be a problem as to what ought to be done at any moment, but it is in accordance with the law that the judgment be made in freedom. As between two parties to a dispute the hands of one may not be tied, nor the voice stifled through fear of subsequent tyranny.

To act lovingly and deal mercifully we must first find out what is the right of our neighbour and see that he gets this in full measure. We are in a very real sense our brother's keeper, and we are neither free in mind nor safe in society so long as men are denied what is theirs by right. This right of man to his own is the chief corner stone of the social structure, though to-day as of old time it is rejected by the builders.

But what is justice? It is a question that must take form and shape as a working proposition. It is a question that must be answered through our own conduct, and not by mere words that signify nothing but so much lip-service. We journey through life with strange delusions, often mistaking the shadow for the substance of things; it is as if we were in a wilderness and without a Moses* to lead us into the land of our dreams. The current moral code has been described with some justification as one law for the individual and another for the State. Translated into terms of experience, this means that the individual *qua* individual may not steal, but the State, which is another name for the Government of the day, may establish theft, and defend it.

The biggest theft and the most devastating in its consequences is the one that takes from man his right—his equal right—to the free bounties of nature. This is man's first paramount right, his natural right to labour, so to live; and it is the duty of organized society to see that this right, above all others, is every man's portion. For bereft of the right to live man must perish or carry on as the slave of those who, in their own interests, garrison the natural gateways to employment, and to all moral advance. This denial of the elementary right to life and the pursuit of happiness is the great and abiding wrong, and until it is righted and man is given freedom to work out his own salvation, all prayer and passion for the better day is in vain. Evil-doing and hopeless despair must dog the footsteps of those who would urge man to seek after the things of the spirit while he is in bondage to a decree that robs him of his natural inheritance.

This is justice defined in its fundamental relationship to human life and progress; a justice that refuses to be on speaking terms with an expediency that would deny her right to apply the final test to any undertaking, whether as between man and man, or between man and established institutions. We must cede this first demand justice makes, or continue to make provision for the wayside fruits of our progress—workhouses, night shelters, and other asylums, and, "as we open new schools, extend our prison accommodation." Let us first set free to each and all the natural agencies to life, and then come to the altar with our gifts.

In the intellectual search for justice we take with us the morals of our experience, and what an experience! When we take time to give to this experience, so questionable in many of its features, its place and no more than its place, we can turn our face with assurance towards the light that came first, and in that light learn to act justly towards our neighbours. On that high ground the race can begin the morning of its life; away from it, we remain more or less at the mercy of human conceit, the conceit that arises from ignorance, contempt and neglect of human rights.

The other day at the Glasgow University Professor Graham Ker, lecturing under the auspices of the Glasgow

Branch of the Workers' Educational Association, roamed all over the theory of Evolution to justify the ways of God and man. As usual on such occasions the argument was lifted clean out of the field of reason into the wider field that treats of life in general. This clever extension of the case under review beyond its own boundaries is a common enough practice, and it is one that is by no means particular to the class room; it is part and parcel of the popular platform outfit. But it does not convince, it merely silences the audience not trained to detect the intellectual slip. This form of reasoning but leaves us where we commenced, and worse, because we constantly undervalue our own powers of perception while we listen to authority and learn not to question it. "Did they never try to puzzle out," the lecturer asked, "the fascinating story of how the modern Glasgow evolved, how that savage community gradually gave place to the great wealthy city of to-day; and did they ever ponder over the evolutionary principles involved in the process?" Did Mr. Ker himself ever ponder over the theory of economic rent, and try to find out its place in his evolutionary philosophy? Did he ever try to puzzle out what the payment of the rent of land by one class to another had to do with the progress of the city? How, for example, is John Simple, mechanic, any better evolved by handing over part of his earnings to James Law, landowner, for the mere privilege of living and working in Glasgow? Are these two species "distinct" and, if so, what makes the distinction—Nature or man? Glasgow is beyond dispute a wealthy city, especially to those who can lay claim to the site upon which it stands. The workers in attendance at Mr. Ker's lecture would realize this to the full as they returned to their one- and two-roomed "homes" in the overcrowded districts of the city, there to ponder over the well-balanced equities of their abiding place in this evolutionary theory. The professor's talk recalls the biting reflection of Henry George: "If we want to see poverty in its deepest and most degrading form we must go not to the backwoods where man single-handed is beginning the battle with Nature, but to the heart of a great city where the ownership of a small piece of land means a great fortune."

The moral man, the spiritual man and the intellectual man is only possible when the animal wants are satisfied, hence the prayer "Give us this day our daily bread." The Creator has provided man with the opportunity to earn his bread, and if he is willing to work for this, why are so many of his kind doomed to beg their way through life? Who or what produces this monstrosity: a man willing to work, yet cannot find a place to work in? Are the spaces all used up? If they are, then we may as well give over talking about justice, or anything else, for to-morrow we die. But no one really believes that a justice-loving and merciful God has sent us into a world in which there is no room to live and move and have our being, though we seem to act as if this were the common belief.

We live in a complex society, but in reaching out to an understanding of justice let us get back to first principles. Let us give our reason and our conscience a chance, if only for once in a while. Such an exercise cannot do harm, and there is the chance it may do good. All around we see work to do, and to-day the plain course mapped out for each and all is one that

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

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

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

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

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

J. P.

THE PEASANTS' MOVEMENT IN ITALY

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

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

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

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

THE ROTARY CLUBS.

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

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