

## General Gorgas

THE world may well pause at the passing of General Wm. C. Gorgas, to take note of his remarkable career. For rarely does a man leave his fellows so much in his debt as did this plain and unassuming man. But great as is the consciousness of this indebtedness, the world has not yet fully grasped the greatness of General Gorgas.

His record as an army surgeon the world knows, his rapid promotion, his rise to the office of surgeon general with the rank of major general, his phenomenal efficiency, his dramatic experience in cleaning up Cuba and the Panama zone, his aid to other countries in solving their sanitary problems, all this and more is known to the reading public. Such a list of achievements far exceeds that of any but the really great.

But back of all this was the man with a philosophy. The trained mind that enabled him to see the possibilities of sanitation; and the grasp of affairs to make the application, led him to apply his philosophy of sanitation to economic as well as physical conditions. Mere observance

of health rules on the part of the individual, he found, did not avail against the community-bred mosquito with its deadly germs of malaria and yellow fever. Neither did individual industry and frugality suffice to overcome the handicap of maladjusted social laws.

It was this broad view and firm grasp of conditions that early brought General Gorgas to see the close connection between sanitation and economic life.

"I am a Singletaxer," he said, "because my life work has been that of sanitation. Sanitation is most needed by the class of people who would be most benefited by the Singletax. That poverty was the greatest single cause of bad sanitary conditions was very early impressed upon me. If I should again go into a community, such as Cuba, or Panama, and were allowed to select only one sanitary measure, but were at the same time given power to choose from all sanitary measures, I would select that of doubling wages."

Vacant lots and unimproved neighborhoods of cities like Panama and Havana gave him most sanitary trouble. He saw that if these vacant lots could be taxed out of the speculators' hands and into use, the problem would be largely solved. "I discussed this matter of taxation a good deal with the officials of Panama,"

he said, "urging upon them the desirability of a tax levy of this kind to cover expenditures brought about by the sanitary work." He finally got the Panama authorities around to the point of seeing the justice and advisability of such methods, but the organic law would have to be changed, and this always takes time.

Nor did the great man's vision stop at that. Doubling men's wages on the Isthmus led them unconsciously to a higher mode of living. So, he argued, would the doubling of wages in the tenement house districts of our large cities, as well as on the isolated farms, beget better sanitary conditions. Poverty drives people to huddle in unsanitary surroundings. It is only the poor who have to be forced by law to observe the rules of health. The well-to-do never live whole families in a single room; neither do they have rooms in their houses without windows or ventilation.

Sanitation is well on the road to a final solution. Other members of the sanitary corps will take up the work laid down by their great leader. And other social reformers will have to carry on the work of educating the public in right methods of taxation, in order that there may be a full solution of the industrial and social problems that lay so close to the heart of General Gorgas.