

a subject of pressing and growing importance that has attracted, and will yet more attract, the attention of able thinkers. The land question in its full range involves many more problems than have as yet been broached. In densely populated countries the struggle for land is becoming intense, its value is rising, and it must continue to rise until it may reach such a height as shall prove intolerable, unnatural, and injurious to the common weal. The period must come when some corrective will have to be found to counteract that tendency to monopoly which is more or less inherent in land, from its limited supply, as compared with the unlimited growth of population and capital.

We must here close these perfunctory remarks on a subject so vast and so important. It will before long occupy the minds and test the powers of the greatest statesmen and thinkers. The necessity for decisive action may not arise soon, nor everywhere at the same time. It may be postponed by palliative remedies. Indeed, in abstract theory, it might never arise at all, if science could devise means to raise food and raw materials in ever-increasing quantities out of the same area of land, so as to meet the ever-growing requirements of an ever-growing population. But in our present state of knowledge, and with our present command over the forces of nature, we have, or shall some day have, to confront the uncomfortable possibilities arising out of the contrast between limitless requirements for cultivable land and its limited supply. Meanwhile, we have no faith in the devices hitherto proposed to meet this eventual emergency.

## CHAPTER XXII.

Contempt for Wealth-Producers—The Poor would be Largely Benefited by Increased Wealth-Creation.

WHILE we have a firm trust in the future of civilised man, we fear that there are some races of men of whom, from their inaptitude for progress, we must despair. It is in the highest stages of civilisation that the art and practice of wealth-creation will attain the fullest recognition and the most ample development. The initial start must depend on the power to rise from a state of nature to a state of progress. True that the desire of possession being innate in man, it is as strong in the lowest savage as in the most cultured Caucasian; but the former neither knows the true use and value of wealth, nor the most effectual modes of acquiring it. He snatches at the objects of his desire as the means of gratifying his immediate appetites, and has but elementary notions as to the multiplication of those objects with a view to future fruition. Can he be taught to adopt the habits, join in the labours, and submit to the restraints of civilised life? Some races have done so, although in only a limited degree, but, in their case, a certain advance having been made, a farther advance may be hoped for.

But, on the other hand, there are other races, on whom the experiment has been tried in vain. The indigenous possessors of the soil in America and Australia on whom civilisation has encroached,

have deteriorated, and almost perished, by contact with it. Every effort to induce them to join us in our social arrangements has been fruitless. All amalgamation has been found impossible, and we have either to retire from the work of turning barren wastes into cornfields and gardens, or to resign ourselves to view with pitying eyes and regretful hearts the gradual decay and final extinction of those indigenous races.

It may be asked how it is that the aptitude for civilisation is absent in some native races and exists in others ; and where the line between them is to be drawn. Our theory as to this is but a rough and ready one, and we give it for what it may be worth. We believe that it will be found that those races or tribes among whom the land remains unappropriated, and exists in its primitive condition of being common to all, are the most untamable to the yoke of civilisation and will never live within its pale. Whether this preference for savage independence and dislike to settled habitations be the result of some peculiar physical conformation, or that habits indulged in, generation after generation, may have ripened into hereditary proclivities, certain it is that those indigenous tribes, among whom the land has remained unapportioned and uncultivated, are precisely those that have evinced the greatest incompatibility with, and aversion to, the arts of civilisation.

On the other hand, those nations among which the institution of land-ownership exists, seem to have passed the line which separates the improvable from the non-improvable races, and to have taken

that first step which renders the rest possible. It is to these that progress, more or less rapid, becomes a destiny ; and it is of these that, after all, the great bulk of mankind is composed.

We have now, to the best of our ability, urged the claims of wealth-creation to rank as the most efficient agent in promoting the physical, and, through the physical, the moral well-being of the totality of mankind. Without the physical, the mental and moral well-being is unattainable. It is illusory and deceptive to open the temple of knowledge, culture, and refinement to the bulk of the population, to invite them to enter, and to blame them for not entering—and at the same time to leave them oppressed by poverty, their leisure absorbed in toil, and their minds burdened with troubles and anxieties. It is the feast of the Barmecides. Practically, our cruel wars, our mistaken legislation, our wanton waste of wealth, close the entrance to the temple of knowledge to the many, be its portals ostensibly opened ever so wide.

What is primarily wanted is a sufficient supply of material comforts and sufficient leisure for mental improvement, not for a small minority, but for the general body of mankind. At present, these requirements are amply furnished to the few rich, but fall far short of adequate supply to the many poor. This deficiency, however, does not, we contend, arise from the nature of things, but from defects in our institutions. The wealth necessary to provide for all the requirements of all human beings would be easily obtainable, if the creation of wealth had fair play, and its unnecessary waste



were properly repressed. We have shown that whatever is produced is distributed, that the more there is produced, the more there must be for distribution, that the articles composing this increased production would chiefly be articles of necessity, such as food, clothing, &c., and that of these, were industry and capital intelligently directed to the right objects, there would be a superabundance for all. And we have further shown that the causes which either prevent production or beget waste, are removable by the exercise of human volition, for they owe their existence to the imperfection of human institutions. The evil influences which man has created, man can annul.

That multifarious objections will be started to our views we are quite aware. We anticipate that, among other things, it will be said:—1. That we are appealing to the lowest springs of human action, viz., a selfish greed for wealth. 2. That the increased production of wealth which we hold out as an universal panacea will do no good to the poor man, but merely go to swell the stores of the rich. 3. That the poor and illiterate who form the bulk of the population throughout the world are mostly sunk too low in ignorance, coarseness, and barbarism, ever to be raised to culture and refinement. 4. That in our enumeration of the means by which we propose to elevate the masses in the scale of being, we have omitted the powerful leverage of religious influences; and, 5. That our scheme is Utopian, and that the results we look for are unattainable. Let us briefly pass under review the several allegations.

1. Greed for wealth is only a contumelious mode of defining the virtues of industry and frugality, which definition is readily adopted by those who are devoid of both. The assumption that the creation of wealth is an ignoble task, and that the creators of wealth are an inferior class, is tantamount to asserting that the mere possession of wealth confers dignity, while its creation implies degradation; and that those who use unearned wealth are, from that very fact, a superior class to those who earn it. Is there, then, so much more merit in those who have inherited wealth than in those who have collected and bequeathed it? A lucky accident, the chance of birth, transfers to the former the wealth which the latter may have acquired by labour or by talent. Is his luck to dignify the one who receives the wealth, and his labour and talent to disgrace the other who bestows it? True, that the wealthy enjoy leisure and opportunities for mental cultivation, of which many (by no means all) avail themselves, but that is a gratuitous privilege which fortune has conferred, not a merit ascribable to personal superiority.

The foundation of the payments made to remunerate the governing and professional classes is the very wealth so affectedly disparaged, which is created by the very producers who are so unaffectedly despised. Kings, statesmen, generals, judges, bishops, &c., down to policemen and beadles, are the paid servants of the "inferior class" by whom wealth is created. The difference between the many-palaced Emperor of Germany

and the shirtless King of the Ashantees arises mainly from the difference in the wealth-creating powers of their respective subjects. To condense it briefly, which class best deserves our admiration and sympathy—those who enjoy wealth without creating it, or those who create wealth without enjoying it? Is it for the former to tax the latter with being actuated by “greed for wealth”?

It is in another form, however, that the contention displays most plausibility. Wealth, once acquired, is allowed to be highly respectable. It is the act of earning it which, according to some, degrades the mind, lowers the dignity, and vitiates the taste of the wealth-getter. “How,” say they, “can that man who devotes his energies to buying cheap and selling dear, to saving some trifle in the production of a commodity, to haggling with a workman about wages, and other trumpery matters, be considered the equal of another whose mind is occupied with lofty political or philosophical speculations, or with the æsthetic contemplation of works of art, or with the inspirations of divine poetry, &c.?” We humbly reply that, (a) These highly-cultured persons would never have been in a position to indulge their lofty flights if somebody had not endowed them with wealth ready-made to save them from the necessity of earning their daily bread. (b) The very object of the present work is to show how it may be rendered practicable for the same man for some hours of the day to take his fair share in the work of wealth-creation, and for some hours of the same day apply himself to that mental culture which we

deem quite compatible with the performance of a man's duty as a bread-winner. There are innumerable instances of the co-existence in the same man of useful hand-labour and valuable brain-labour. Indeed, the one forms a salutary balance to the other. It is certainly unwholesome, and we believe it to be quite unnatural, that man's efforts should be undeviatingly directed into one groove. (c) All honest and useful labour is of equal dignity. Indeed, the more useful it is the more estimable. Sowing an acre of ground with wheat is a more substantial contribution to human happiness than writing a mediocre poem, and it assuredly evinces more strength, both of mind and of body, to toil for hours, day after day, at some useful but laborious task than to recline on a soft couch or a sunny bank to dream of Arcadia and its theatrical shepherdesses. We cannot admit that the latter is the more dignified performance of the two.

2. That even if wealth were abundantly produced and not uselessly wasted, its increased volume would, on distribution, do little or no good to the poor man, is a paradox of easy refutation. The increase of production and the cessation of waste must result in the supply of more food, more raiment, and more articles of necessity for the use of every class of the community, even to the very lowest. It is not articles of luxury for the rich that would be multiplied by the cessation of all impediments, and the adoption of all aids, to the creation of wealth. If you run your eye down the list of the chief articles that are either imported or



exported, you will find nearly all of them to be such as minister to the wants of the millions, and of which the consumption is universal. These would be the commodities which would be so largely multiplied by promoting wealth-creation. For instance, it would be almost exclusively on such articles that the millions of able-bodied men, whose labour would be liberated and rendered available by the cessation of the European war-system, would employ their productive powers. The more abundant creation of wealth necessarily means the more abundant production of all such articles of universal consumption.

Now let us see what would become of this large increase in the supply of the necessities and comforts of life. Once brought into existence, they must, as we have shown at p. 3, be distributed. And among whom? It is clear that it must be among the population at large; that is, among the labour-selling and poorer classes. It cannot be among the opulent alone. The increased stock that has to be distributed consists chiefly of food, raiment, and other necessities. How can the distribution possibly be confined to the wealthy? They cannot eat all the extra food raised, or wear all the extra clothing produced. In fact, of neither class of commodities can they consume more than they formerly did, for they had an ample sufficiency before. What, then, becomes of the surplus stock? If this extra food, raiment, and necessities be distributed at all (and how they can fail being distributed we do not see), they must go to satisfy hunger that before went unsatisfied, to

substitute good clothing for scanty rags, to provide the labour-seller with the necessaries of life without the same strain on him as before, and, generally, to eliminate poverty with all its attendant evils.

This view of the subject seems to have escaped the attention which it deserves. It has been assumed far too lightly that it is the rich who chiefly benefit by the increase of the world's wealth. The contrary is nearer the truth. Abundance blesses both rich and poor, but the blessing to the rich forms a slight percentage over their previous resources, while the blessing to the poor forms an enormous percentage over their former small dole, and perhaps doubles or trebles their previous enjoyments. It is in times of dearness and scarcity that the position of the rich man becomes peculiarly invidious, and stands out in irritating contrast to that of the ill-paid toiler. In such times there is barely enough for all, and of course the pinch falls on the poor. To the rich such insufficiency means the curtailment of a few luxuries, to the poor it means the curtailment of the necessities of life.

In times of abundance and cheapness it is quite different. The increased supply of the necessities of life scarcely touches the rich, who already had as much of them as they could consume, and therefore it is on the poor that the blessings of comparative plenty fall. How could the rich man prevent the distribution among the rest of mankind of the extra supply of good things which perfected wealth-creation without waste would provide for the purposes of consumption? Let us consider,

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To a large extent, that wrong is done, now, by means of the protective system, which interdicts the free interchange of the commodities produced in one country with those produced in another; but we are at present supposing "perfected wealth-creation," which implies the abolition of the protective system. How, then, under "perfected wealth-creation" could the rich man keep back the articles of necessity, which he cannot himself consume, from being consumed by the poor? What he might do if he were obstinately determined to deprive the poor of that benefit, would be to buy some cargoes of grain or a few thousand bales of cotton and woollen fabrics, and burn them. Or he might use every effort to get the protective system re-enacted. We see no other way in which he could effect his purpose.

It may be said, "No! the rich man will not adopt those courses. He will spend his share of the increased wealth in keeping more servants and maintaining a more expensive establishment, in building palatial mansions, and acquiring more artistic furniture and works of art." Readily granted; but all this, far from interfering with the distribution among the labour-sellers of the increased wealth in question, merely explains the very processes through which that distribution would be effected. This increased expenditure of the rich goes to the increased employment of labour and to the payment of wages; and the greater the demand for labour the higher will be its remuneration. It is through this increased expenditure that the sellers of labour, whether it be labour of

the brain or of the hand, get their share of the additional wealth that has been created. In short, the whole of that increment in the world's wealth which will result from "perfected wealth-creation without waste," will be distributed, and that distribution will be effected by its exchange with the labour of those who have labour to sell. The more of it there will be to distribute in proportion to the quantity of labour in the market, the better for the labour-sellers, for the higher will be the rate of their remuneration.

If, however, the rich, instead of expending their increased wealth on fresh luxuries, should prefer investing it in reproductive enterprises, so much the better for the labour-sellers. Not only he gets, as in the other case, an increased demand, and therefore an increased price, for his labour, but the wealth which his labour has helped to produce is not consumed once for all, as in the former instance, but becomes reproductive and is renewed again and again. Thus fresh additions are made to that capital out of which the wages of labour are paid. Clearly then, labour-sellers have a special interest in the amount of production being as large as possible, since that production must be distributed, and in that distribution they largely share.