

LITTLE ESSAYS ON A BIG SUBJECT.

(For The Review.)

By J. W. BENGOUGH.

(Continued.)

In last number we announced the conclusion of these papers in this issue. Owing to the crowded condition of our columns we postpone the publication of the two short remaining chapters until next issue.—EDITOR SINGLE TAX REVIEW.

CHAPTER XVII.

There is, of course, a general agreement as to something being desperately wrong in our social system. The phenomena indicating this are visible to all thoughtful men. The single fact that notwithstanding continuous progress in wealth-producing power, there is no corresponding increase in general comfort; that the actual result is the raising of some to unreasonable riches and the depression of others to an ever deeper poverty, condemns the present system. But the school master of the day is nonplussed to account for this phenomenon, and as a consequence, utterly at a loss to suggest a remedy for it. We have already noted that the mournful conclusion of the Political Economists of the schools is, in short, that the state we contemplate is the mysterious dispensation of Divine Providence. The church in general accepting this expert opinion, counsels men, therefore, to be "content in the condition wherein it has pleased God to place them." Malthus, who combined in himself the offices of Political Economist and reverend clergyman, set forth his explanation that it had pleased the creator to so arrange matters that "population tends to outrun sustenance." This, as a statement of a "natural law," has been accepted and incorporated in the science of Political Economy as taught since his day. In Thomas Carlyle there arose a true soul and deep thinker, who named such a science "dismal," as well he might. The "condition of the people" was the first theme which took hold of Carlyle's youthful mind, and the dark problem remained his chief anxiety to the end of his life. Meanwhile he had little respect for the professional economists, as witness this extract from his journal:

"Is it true that of all quacks that ever quacked (boasting themselves to be somebody) in any age of the world, the political economists of this age are, for their intrinsic size, the loudest?"

Another entry in the journal indicates that, momentarily at least, the truth had flashed on his mind:

"A man," he writes, "with £200,000 a year eats the whole fruit of 6666 men's labor through a year; for you can get a stout tradesman to work and maintain himself for the sum of £30. Thus, we have private individuals whose wages are equal to the wages of seven or eight thousand other individuals. What do these highly beneficial individuals do in society for their wages?"

Kill partridges. Can this last? No; by the soul that is in man, it cannot, and will not, and shall not!"

One would suppose that Carlyle had discovered the real root of the trouble—landlordism. But alas! his thought did not pursue this true clue.

"When Carlyle published his views on the 'nigger question'" say Froude, "his friends on both sides of the Atlantic were astonished and outraged. Yet the thought in that pamphlet and the thought in *Sartor Resartus* is precisely the same. When a man can be taught to work and made to work (as in slavery) he has a distant value in the world appreciable by money, like the value of a horse. In the state of liberty where he belongs to nobody, and his industry cannot be calculated upon he makes his father poorer when he is born. Slavery might be a bad system, but under it a child was worth at least as much as a foal, and the master was interested in rearing it. Abolish slavery and substitute anarchy in the place of it, and the parents, themselves hardly able to keep body and soul together, will bless God when a timely fever relieves them of a troublesome charge."

This is a paraphrase of Carlyle's view as set forth in the Essay referred to. He was, unhappily, strangely blind to the fact before his eyes that the system of landlordism, under which, as he bitterly said, private individuals who did nothing for mankind but kill partridges were permitted to consume the annual wages of seven or eight thousand workers, was but a new kind of slave system, differing from "Nigger Slavery" only in this, that the masters (Landlords) were *not* "interested in rearing" their slaves.

"This fact, for fact it is, still waits for elucidation," says Froude—another of our great modern schoolmasters. The fact he alludes to is that in the present social system every additional child is a curse rather than a blessing to poor parents. He, too, failed to see that the spoliation involved in the landlord system was the plain and sufficient elucidation. To the end of his life Carlyle could hit upon no better remedy for the awful condition of the English laboring classes (or rather the classes that implored the privilege of laboring, which could not be granted them) than this: that the land-owning aristocracy should cease 'preserving game' and do their heaven-appointed duty, of furnishing "governance and guidance" to their unhappy brethren. Surely an impotent conclusion! "Not long before his death he was talking to me," says Froude, "of America, and the success with which the surplus population of Europe had been carried across the sea and distributed over that enormous continent." Here again he might have got another flash of light on the truth. There was at that date a wide expanse of *free land* in America; an absence of "landed proprietors" to absorb the earnings of workers. At the present moment the conditions in America are little better than those of Europe, for the available land is now all "owned."

As with Carlyle and Froude so with all the other schoolmasters of our era, down to the advent of Henry George. He was the first to grasp firmly and set forth clearly the explanation of the great paradox of Poverty keeping pace with Progress. And to him, too, the world owes its everlasting thanks

for the discovery and advocacy of the simple, natural and practicable method whereby in peaceful fashion, without the revolution and bloodshed which Carlyle prophesied, the great and long standing injustice may be rectified.

(To be concluded in next number.)

THE ABOLITION OF POVERTY BY THE RESTORATION OF EQUAL RIGHTS TO THE USE OF THE EARTH.

AN APPEAL TO THE WHITE SLAVES OF LANDLORDISM.

By GUSTAV BÜSCHER, of Zurich, Switzerland.

(Translated expressly for *The Single Tax Review*.)

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IV.

THE REWARD OF DOING NOTHING.

When Peter and Paul divide a cake, the piece the one gets will be smaller as the piece of the other is larger. Three factors divide between them the fruits of human labor. The workers, those who work with brain or muscle, whether as navvies or draftsmen, as agricultural laborers or bank managers, receive wages, capitalists receive interest on the wealth used in promoting production and commerce; and the land-owner receives rent for the use of the land. Other things remaining equal, the greater the reward of the one, the less there remains for the others.

Under present conditions there is always some invisible and to most of us incomprehensible cause at work constantly forcing wages down to the