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Review

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all the three different sources of wealth,''' which is just as misleading. Even the apparently careful transcription of the act of 1597 contains errors such as the substitution of "parties" for "justices."

EDWIN CANNAN

*The Village Problem.* By GEORGE J. MILLIN. (Swan, Sonnenschein & Co. 1903.)

THIS little book is only an old acquaintance, not indeed in a new dress, for the well worn arguments on which it relies are perfectly familiar to us; but expressed nevertheless in so confident a tone, and with such an air of authority, that they may well pass for original with those who are strangers to them. We cannot really undertake at this time of day to enter into any lengthened refutation of that favourite theory of modern socialism known as the "Nationalisation of the Land" which is Mr. Millin's remedy for the rural exodus, proposed with as much self-complacency as if nobody had ever heard of it before. This is a large question, involving what many think a gigantic absurdity, an opinion on which we say nothing, a short notice of "Village Life" by itself being obviously not the place for the discussion of so far-reaching a principle, affecting at different points almost the whole field of national industry: the "unearned increment" for instance being only another form of it. But what we can do in a few words is to point out where Mr. Millin is right and where he is wrong in his facts, so that our readers may decide for themselves how far he is a trustworthy guide on the problem which he seeks to solve.

On the whole we may allow that his estimate of the causes which underlie the rural exodus is correct enough, seeing that many previous writers have agreed in it, and none have attempted to refute it. "The desire for fuller life, for brighter and brisker existence, for larger earning powers, for more interest and enjoyment—these are among the things that are leading people, especially young people, from the village to the town, and upon the whole they are motives that are not to be deplored or deprecated." This is quite true, though Mr. Millin might have added that not only has the town life these new attractions to offer but that the village life has lost what it once possessed. When, however, we come to his proposed remedies we discover at once that we have to deal with a very superficial observer, who has not lived his life among the peasantry, and has only made inquiries at different times for a particular purpose. No man has ever got at the truth by this process. He is almost sure to be taken in by some one. Now as it is Mr. Millin's object to prove that the whole land of each parish should be in the occupation of the peasantry it is his business of course to disparage allotments. And how does the reader think he does it? Why, by

declaring that wherever allotments are given wages are lowered ! He hardly seems to be aware that the allotment system has been in existence for more than eighty years, and that it is not a mere modern device for reclaiming the labourers. To say that allotments tend to lower wages shows an amount of ignorance of agricultural history during the last century which we should scarcely have believed possible in one professing to instruct us. Allotments had spread widely all over the midland counties before Queen Victoria was crowned, and thirty years ago were the rule and not the exception in England at large. Wages most certainly have risen and not fallen during the same period.

Mr. Millin has been told that an allotment of an eighth of an acre, *i.e.*, half a rood, is worth about five pounds a year to the cultivator. This as a general rule is an exaggeration. He can make that by a quarter of an acre which is the usual size : and hence Mr. Millin infers that the land in the hands of the tenant farmer yields far less profit than it might easily be made to yield. He totally forgets that the farmer grows wheat, while the allotment holder grows vegetables and perhaps barley for the pig. If Mr. Millin would convert every parish in England into a large market garden, let him say so. He is not always consistent with himself, for in one place he says that Free trade "reduced agricultural profits, ruined many of the weaker farmers, and threw thousands of acres out of cultivation." This was not its immediate effect. But let that pass. Elsewhere, our Professor reverting to his natural hatred of landlords, says, that the corn laws "did not raise the wages of the labourers or increase the profits of the farmers, it all went into the pocket of the landlords." But if the duty on corn brought no profit to the farmer, how could he be ruined for want of it ? Mr. Millin was perhaps guilty of an oversight in saying that this was the "immediate" effect of Free trade. And he himself assigns very good reasons for the fact that no such effects did immediately follow the legislation of 1846.

"If Free trade in corn had been the only change at that time, it is at least very doubtful how far the direct benefits of it for the urban section of the population might not have been counterbalanced by the deeper and more widespread distress arising from want of employment in the country. There came, however, other vast and momentous changes. The railway era had already set in, and we had the good fortune to be first in the field with our iron and coal to meet its demands. Our mining resources enabled us not only to take full advantage of this tremendous commercial development, but also to get a good start of all the world in engineering and machine making, in textile manufactures and in shipbuilding. The sweeping away of the corn laws was no doubt very conducive to our success in all this, and many of the incidental difficulties, which, even Cobden could not deny, resulted from the vast change from long years of Protection to Free Trade, were mitigated by these simultaneous movements. It was

these developments, of course, which really accounted for the rise of wages in country as well as town, but the credit of which Cobden and others were accustomed to claim for the abolition of Protection."

It is noteworthy that Mr. Millin while scouting any return to protection for the benefit of owners and occupiers of land allows that it might be necessary for the success of his own system: for the village farm. And at this point we come in contact with a question which is one of the most difficult that a statesman can be called upon to solve. When moral and material considerations come or seem to come into conflict with each other how are we to balance their respective claims? A few years ago Lord Salisbury told us he did not believe in the economic results of peasant farming, but favoured it for its social good effects: Mr. Millin touches the fringe of this question in his chapter on the financial aspects of village farming. But he does not apparently perceive that it is one which may be asked in respect of almost all our national institutions, and that the answer which he gives to it in connection with one system is equally true of another, would be fatal to his whole scheme.

"It is an extremely improbable supposition, but no doubt it is conceivable, that wheat might be selling in the open market for less than its village farm lands could grow it. It would be a tolerably conclusive reason why the village should not attempt to grow for sale, but it should *not* be a reason for giving up growing for food. There are overwhelming reasons why the village should not give it up, even though something might be saved by doing so. Now I know very well that that will be ridiculed as an economic absurdity, and a thing inconsistent with the larger view of the world and universal progress. The new village is to grow its corn at a cost of five and thirty shillings a quarter when it can go into the open market and buy it for thirty shillings. Whether it is absurd or not, depends upon the point of view from which the matter is considered."

Cheapness he thinks may be bought too dear. "Let it always be borne in mind that the best use of the land is not necessarily that which provides the greatest possible wealth, but that which best promotes the real welfare of the people immediately concerned." He dwells a great deal on the effect of institutions upon character: and clearly shows that moral considerations weigh with him in deciding what is best for the peasantry. But if we allow them to weigh with us in considering what is best for a class, *a fortiori* must we do so in considering what is best for the nation. Now it has been thought that the moral influence of a great territorial aristocracy like our own on the manners and character and culture of the whole people is decidedly beneficial: to say nothing of its utility as "the cheap defence of nations," and a nursery of the most enduring kind of patriotism, that namely which is founded on a combination of generous sentiment with the consciousness of a great position and all its

practical advantages. What Mr. Millin asks for his Village Farm others are entitled to ask, if they please, for those whom it would destroy.

T. E. KEBBEL

*The Strength of the People : a Study in Social Economics.* By HELEN BOSANQUET. (London : Messrs. Macmillan & Co. Pp. 342. 1902.)

IN her preface, Mrs. Bosanquet describes her book as "an attempt to suggest how we may work out some theory of human nature and social life which will be a guide to us when applied to the actual problems which we have to face . . . It would be something gained if any considerable number of people could be convinced that in dealing with our social difficulties, we need neither work in the dark, nor yet merely by rule of thumb. Still more would be gained if those who now turn away with a melancholy *non possumus* could be brought to recognize the germ of growth and hope contained even in problems apparently hopeless."

With this aim in view, Mrs. Bosanquet analyses the principle of progress in the human mind: "If we look for the factor which gives the power to see things steadily and see them whole, and which distinguishes the rational life from these chaotic wrecks, we shall find it in the 'interests' of life as distinct from its appetites." "The man who has to earn his living can never be entirely without interests." "It is to the acquirement of wrong habit that we must look for one chief cause why progress is checked at a low level of development." "Change in the actual material surroundings of people is not only useless, *it cannot be made to continue*, unless the people can be made to take an interest in them, and deliberately choose them for *their* circumstances." "The community can safeguard to some extent the physical well-being of individuals from overwhelming disaster; it can equalise food supplies, ward off enemies, guard against fire, prevent, and to some extent cure, disease—always provided that it can secure the active co-operation of individuals. For though the community place its whole strength at the disposal of the individual, he may still decline to avail himself of it. Further, by active, nay, even aggressive instruction and education, the community may open the eyes of the backward, and induce them to enter upon new interests and responsibilities; but the one thing the community cannot do is to 'give'—*gratis*, without asking for any exertion in the taking—a good life, even a portion of good life, to its members."

Mrs. Bosanquet next proceeds to define the economic aim. The philanthropist's question of the economist is "What distribution produces the greatest happiness? How ensure that goods find their way to those most in need of them?" The statesman has to consider "the actual conditions under which at any moment a change is