WILEY

Review

Author(s): Katharine Conan

Review by: Katharine Conan

Source: *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 57 (Mar., 1905), pp. 80-86

Published by: Wiley on behalf of the Royal Economic Society

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2220969>

Accessed: 27-06-2016 02:35 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Royal Economic Society, *Wiley* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to
The Economic Journal

Vol. XIX., No. 1), and this theory seems to clear up much that is obscure in the question of justice in taxation.

The learning displayed in the work before us is broad and accurate. It is written in a truly philosophical spirit. The analysis is remarkably acute, and the style is clear. The monograph deserves to stand as a monument of painstaking research and profound thought. Nevertheless, it appears less satisfactory than it might be, for the reason that the author has just failed to grasp the key to the whole problem, and leaves us still with no very clear ideas as to what specific forms of taxation really do conform to the principle of justice, and not so very certain as to what the author regards as the real principle of justice. He tells us, it is true, that "the idea connoted by the term 'ability' more fully [than 'sacrifice'] expresses the ethical basis for the imposition of taxes, since it is the relation that most fully comprehends, not only the true relation of the individuals to the State, but also the ethical relations of the individuals in the State; it is most expressive, that is, of the fact that the obligation rests upon *persons*" (p. 207).

Now, aside from the indefiniteness of this conclusion, it is positively unsound, and this unsoundness is the result of the assumption that the obligation rests upon persons rather than upon the State itself, that tax contributions are voluntary and rest upon duty rather than compulsion (p. 207). This could be a safe assumption only on condition that taxes were voluntary contributions; but since they are not voluntary but compulsory, it vitiates the whole argument. We want to know, not how much the individual ought to contribute, but how much the State ought to collect, and these two questions cannot be resolved into one unless the extreme position is adopted that the State ought to try to make every individual do whatever he ought to do.

No kind of order can come out of the chaos of conflicting views on justice in taxation until we succeed in breaking loose from the question of individual obligation, and devote our attention directly to the question of the obligation of the State.

T. N. CARVER.

The Woman who Toils. By MRS. JOHN VAN VORST and MARIE VAN VORST. (New York: Doubleday. Pp. 303.)

THIS latest contribution to the literature of labour, like Wyckoff's *The Workers* and Miss Pettengill's *The Toilers of the Home*, is an attempt to portray out of actual experience the conditions of an essentially alien life. "Put yourself in his place"

would seem to be the motto of the literary realist. The artist must work from nature, but need not be a part of the scene he depicts. The social observer, on the other hand, must know the situation in his own person. He must breathe the air, lift the burden, undergo the fatigue, test the bread and butter adequacy of the wage. The method is the right one, but it is not often carried to a finish. To beg one's bread or to earn one's living for a few days or weeks with the consciousness of a good bank account in the background is not to know the life of "the other half." Experiment is not experience. Picturesque imitation can give no real insight into the vital problems of human existence. There is some danger that this method of sociological inquiry may degenerate into a fad.

The ladies who attempt to depict in these pages the life of the American working woman had no initiatory knowledge of toil or privation. The inevitable result is a want of the perspective essential to sane judgment. In the chapters written by Miss Van Vorst especially, there is an evident tendency to sympathetic hysteria. Both ladies, however, brought to their task an earnest desire to understand, and they were fettered by no prejudices or preconceived theories. *The Woman Who Toils* is, in consequence, a very human document. The conditions under which women wage-earners live and work are described with painstaking sympathy and considerable dramatic power. Each situation stands out clear and distinct; Pittsburg, the "black town of toil," Perry, the country village "where the wood's edge ran within a few yards of the factory windows," the squalid tenement-house district of Chicago, "the pest-ridden, epidemic-filled, filthy settlement" that huddled about the South Carolina cotton mill, all are drawn to the life. The people are no less true to type than their environment; the pin-money workers, selfish and silly, bartering life's opportunities for fine clothes and independence, the brow-beaten bread-winner of the tailor shop, leaving her place in tears, the stunted misshapen serf of the shoe factory, who has spent a long life in grinding toil and must die in the harness, the ignorant, unambitious "poor whites" of the southern mill towns, lazily content in squalor, "with no means to be clean and no stimulus to be decent."

In the account of living conditions the personal equation is more evident. Hard, unsheeted beds, coarse food badly cooked, the smell and smudge from the kitchen fire, the unlovely furnishings of ill-ventilated, ill-kept rooms, the sweaty, unwashed bodies of fellow-lodgers, all these things are distasteful to the fine lady

beyond the comprehension of girls to the manner born. Mrs. Van Vorst's account of her boarding places in Pittsburg and in Chicago is distorted beyond the recognition of the responsible persons by whom they were recommended. I have visited the southern factory village described in Chapter VIII., and know that while the water is disgracefully bad, and the country round about is swampy and malarial, not a tithe of the horrors described is visible to the ordinary observer. The southern mill town has a distinct advantage over the factory districts of New and Old England, in that the houses are comparatively new and are uniformly built as separate dwellings, with considerable yard space allotted to each. There is abundant light and air and soil for the growing of flowers and vegetables, had the people the wit to tend them.

Everywhere these make-believe bread-winners met with courtesy and kindness. Their fellow-workwomen welcomed the newcomers with sympathy and friendly offices. Fellow-workmen, too, extended to them the *camaraderie* of the shop with a word of cheer or of sage advice. Foremen they found, almost without exception, patient, just, and tolerant of the mistakes of a new hand. In all their varied experiences these ladies never encountered a shadow of annoyance or danger. Even in the south, where the lawlessness of the hills, combined with the degraded moral standards of the town, render the mill-hands a vicious population, the fellowship of labour was evinced in friendly helpfulness. Working conditions were everywhere astonishingly good. Muscular fatigue and the nervous wear and tear consequent on the unwonted strain were inevitable. The drained vitality of the women who had been for years at factory work is cited as evidence that labour is no less a burden to the *habitué*. This blood-tax is, alas, unavoidable where machinery is speeded to the highest pitch, and where operatives are paid by the piece. Filth and foul air, however, are relegated to the sweat-shop and the dens of the tenement worker. The enlightened employer realises the money gain in air and light and sanitary surroundings. Especially in the new cotton mills of the south does the proprietor take pride in fine buildings and modern labour-saving devices.

The most striking discovery made by these experimental labourers was the extraordinary ease with which, in these days of machine industry, a woman may learn a trade and earn thereby a living wage. Everywhere they found workwomen in demand, and nowhere were green hands refused. The first day's work brought fifty cents in a shoe factory, seventy cents in a pickling establishment, seventy-five in a knitting mill, one dollar and five cents in a

picture-framer's shop. Expert hands were earning from one dollar and a half to two dollars a day even in the cotton mills of the south, where labour is unorganised and wages comparatively low. Such easy achievement is demoralising, and it goes far toward accounting for the lack of industrial stamina among women-workers. Satisfied with a cheap success, they make no serious effort to gain in efficiency or to secure higher wages. Few women, moreover, take their work seriously as a life employment. All expect, more or less confidently, to marry some day, and to exchange the workshop for the home. They have no permanent interest in their trade, and show little concern to improve its conditions. The girls in the Pittsburg pickle factory, where Mrs. Van Vorst made her initial experiment, dragged through the day's work, reserving their best energies for the evening's ball. The zealous performance of the new girl evoked surprise and admiration. Each Saturday afternoon they went down on hands and knees and scrubbed the floors in sullen submission to a task they resented. The men, meanwhile, cheerily cleaned up their department with hose and mop. The men had clubbed together and were running a co-operative lunch-room at a cost of ten cents per day. The women, though furnished with dining-room and cooking utensils by the management, brought each her cold snack, and ate it in individualistic discomfort. Seldom was there evidence of any pride in work or of ambition for advancement. "I'm sick of the shoe-shops." "I hate the mill." "Ain't it just awful hard work? You can make good money, but you've got to hustle," were characteristic comments.

The bane of women's trades Mrs. Van Vorst finds, and quite justly, in the pin-money workers. Shiftless and inefficient, utterly lacking in *esprit de corps* and with no concern for a living wage, they degrade every employment to which they seek admission. "I don't have to work. I don't pay any board. My father and my brothers support me and my mother. But I couldn't have the clothes I do if I didn't work," was the explanation vouchsafed by one of these superfluous workers. "I don't like it at home. The kids bother me so. Mamma's people are well-to-do. I'm working for my own pleasure," said another factory girl, fourteen years old. These parasites work side by side with girls who are supporting not only themselves, but widowed mothers and invalid sisters. They are sinning against the *bona fide* bread-winners and against their own souls. Factory labour for women is at best a necessary evil. The drain on vitality is soon evident in haggard faces and shattered nerves. The best years of woman-

hood are wasted in meaningless labour, and life's dearest opportunities go by unclaimed. "I ain't ready to marry him," said one of these butterflies. "Twenty-five is time enough; I'm only twenty-three. I can have as good a time just as I am. He didn't want me to come away, and neither did my parents. I thought it would most kill my father. He looked like he'd been sick the day I left, but he let me come 'cause he knew I'd never be satisfied till I got my independence."

Mrs. Van Vorst reserves her severest censure for these shallow and selfish devotees of independence. "The American-born girl is an egoist. Her whole effort is for herself. She works for luxury until the day when a proper husband presents himself. Then she stops working and lets him toil for both, with the hope that the budget will not be diminished by increasing family demands. In those cases where the woman continues to work after marriage, she chooses invariably a kind of occupation which is inconsistent with child-bearing. Many of these wilful shirks persist in their independent career till the opportunity for marriage is past. The factories are full of old maids; the colleges are full of old maids; the ball-rooms in the worldly centres are full of old maids. For natural obligations are substituted the fictitious duties of clubs, meetings, committees, organisations, professions, a thousand unwomanly occupations."

It was this denunciation of voluntary childlessness that called out President Roosevelt's letter of approval and the now famous warning against race suicide. "An easy, good-natured kindness, and a desire to be 'independent'—that is, to live one's life purely according to one's own desires—are in no sense substitutes for the fundamental virtues, for the practice of the strong, racial qualities without which there can be no strong races—the qualities of courage and resolution in both men and women, of scorn of what is mean, base and selfish, of eager desire to work or fight or suffer as the case may be provided the end to be gained is great enough, and the contemptuous putting aside of mere ease, mere vapid pleasure, mere avoidance of toil and worry. I do not know whether I most pity or most despise the foolish and selfish man or woman who does not understand that the only things really worth having in life are those the acquirement of which normally means cost and effort. If a man or a woman, through no fault of his or hers, goes throughout life denied those highest of all joys which spring only from home life, from the having and bringing up of many healthy children, I feel for them deep and respectful sympathy—the sympathy that one extends to the gal-

lant fellow killed at the beginning of a campaign, or the man who toils hard, and is brought to ruin by the fault of others. But the man or woman who deliberately avoids marriage, and has a heart so cold as to know no passion and a brain so shallow and selfish as to dislike having children, is in effect, a criminal against the race, and should be an object of contemptuous abhorrence by all healthy people."

This vigorous protest against race suicide has called out some confirmatory evidence from various sources, notably from the president of Harvard University. The data sent in by the *alumni* of the past fifty years bear unmistakable evidence of a progressive decline in the size of the families represented. The showing of the recent census gives the statistician even more serious ground for apprehending the ultimate extinction of the English race in America. The general birth-rate is thirty-five per thousand, higher than the rate recorded for England and Wales. The average excess of births over deaths is seventeen and seven-tenths, six points better than the English rate. But our seeming advantage is due to our large foreign-born population. In the North Atlantic States, the rate of increase for native whites is but three and eight-tenths, while the rate for the foreign whites is thirty-nine and six-tenths. The discrepancy is less in the southern, central and western sections, but the advantage is everywhere with the immigrant population. The rate of increase during the initial decade of our national history, when the population was almost wholly English, was thirty-five per thousand. This apparent decadence of the Anglo-Saxon stock cannot be attributed to Malthus's positive checks. War, pestilence, and famine have had little influence on the movement of population. Diminished nervous vitality, consequent on strenuous living in a bracing climate, is in some measure responsible. A rising standard of living coupled with larger educational opportunities has been even more influential. Marriages are deferred till a suitable home can be provided, and fewer children are born. These are factors that determine the rate of increase among the higher levels of our population, factors that affect men no less than women. The increasing tendency of young women to seek employment in factories and workshops, schools and professions has without doubt a depressing effect on the birth-rate, but this tendency is less frequently due to the shirking of the responsibilities of married life than Mrs. Van Vorst would have us think. The opportunity for marriage is inadequate among the urban populations, and especially in manufacturing centres. There are seventy thousand superfluous women

in Massachusetts, forty thousand in New York. This disparity between the male and female population is greater in the factory towns than for the State as a whole. So marked is the preponderance of women in the cotton mills and shoe factories of New England that such places as Lynn, Brockton, Lowell, and Fall River are vulgarly known as "she-towns." The cause for this lamentable distortion of normal human relations we must seek, not in the wilful self-aberration of the women concerned, but in the fateful influence of labour-saving machinery.

KATHARINE CONAN

WELLESLEY, MASSACHUSETTS.

The Influence of Farm Machinery on Production and Labour.

By H. W. QUAINANCE, D.C.L., Ph.D. (Published for the American Economic Association by the Macmillan Company, New York. London: Swan, Sonnenschein and Co.)

THIS stout pamphlet sets out very carefully and with much elaboration the effects of machinery on labour in the United States. The historical survey with which it is prefaced is also of interest to the general reader. The English farmer learns from it with amazement that in California and Oregon traction engines of no less than fifty horse-power may be found at work. These gigantic machines drag sixteen ten-inch ploughs, four six-foot harrows, and a press-drill which plants the seed wheat. One of them can plough, harrow, and sow at a single operation from fifty to seventy-five acres of ground in a day. The cutting and thrashing is carried out equally expeditiously by means of a giant combination harvester, which leaves behind it the sacked corn ready to be conveyed to market by another traction engine dragging a dozen cars. With the aid of such implements it is not wonderful that the American farmers are able to sell their grain so cheaply and still make money.

H. RIDER HAGGARD

The Business Side of Agriculture. By ARTHUR G. L. ROGERS. (Methuen.)

THIS little book is mainly concerned with the various methods of the marketing of agricultural produce in Great Britain, a subject which the author seems to have studied with much industry. When it is added that corn alone is said to be sold in one hundred and twenty different ways in England, it will be obvious that this quality is needful to their chronicler.