

The Searchlight.

A Popular Monthly Exponent of Advanced Thought, and a Record of Current Research.

VOL. I. No. 3.

TORONTO, NOVEMBER, 1896.

Five Cents a Copy.

QUESTIONS OF THE DAY.

CHARITY AND POVERTY.

"Mack," in Saturday Night, in the course of an article on the ups and downs of life, enters into a discussion of problems that for years have been worrying the life out of men of charitable proclivities, in an attempt to solve, and still they are no nearer solving the problem of poverty, for it keeps pace with all the efforts to suppress it, than they were at the beginning. Charity to humanity has been the cry all the time. And charity to humanity receives, and still humanity cries for food, clothing and shelter. What is wanted is something more than charity; the bestowal of alms has been a failure and always will be. Stop this pernicious practice for a month, and it won't be long before the problem of poverty is settled, for justice will then have to be granted instead.

IRISH LAND LEGISLATION.

The demand for land law reforms coming to the fore in the Irish agitation is a sign that the friends of the Irish race are coming to their senses.

So far attempts in that direction have been on behalf of the tenant farmer, and not the actual worker, who seems to have been overlooked. The great landlord was to be removed and the tenants created into smaller landlords over the workers. That would help one class at the expense of another, but would be of no use to those most in need of help. To take the annual value of land by taxation would remove the territorial landlords without establishing others in their places, and would leave the workers the results of their work. The people of Ireland should realize that a landlord taking of the products all but a bare subsistence will be the same whether he operates over 100 or 100,000 acres, or whether the men they vote for go to College Green, Westminster or Halifax.

A FALSE THEORY.

A few days ago a number of retail merchants met together to discuss measures for better protection of their interests, which, it appeared to them, required a drastic course of action to maintain, owing to the growing expansion of the departmental establishments of the city, which are rapidly absorbing the business and trade, to the disadvantage of the smaller storekeepers. Quite naturally of those affected, general condemnation of the departmental stores was indulged in, entirely overlooking the main causes contributing to their present condition. So far as Toronto is considered, one-half too many stores are in existence. In no city of equal size and importance, and in many cities considerably larger, are there anywhere near the number of people occupying stores and trying to do business as there are in Toronto. These people cannot all make a decent living, even if the de-

partmental store was abolished. To condemn and attempt to restrict the large stores, as Chevalier Thompson wants to do, because many small businesses are being swallowed up by the larger ones, would be just as absurd and ridiculous as any attempt made to stop the manufacture of labor-saving inventions. It is quite true that the many labor-saving appliances adopted in latter years (and the departmental store is included) have displaced labor and have multiplied the difficulties of getting employment, and as a consequence introduced much happiness and much misery, but nevertheless no man in his proper senses would think of looking here for a solution of the labor problem.

A PROSPEROUS STATE.

In several of the remote states in Germany, a custom long maintained by the inhabitants, has been the conservation of the forests, the oil wells, clay pits, coal fields and mineral ores, for the benefit of the whole people. The revenues derived from these sources have always been large, and more than enough is received to satisfy the public requirements, without imposing any form of tax upon the people of the community. There is no poverty or destitution existing, and every person has an equal opportunity to employ himself. The reason for this is because the resources of nature are not, and cannot be held idle, to the exclusion of those who desire to work. How these German states deal with labor-saving appliances I do not know. But in view of their control of the natural resources, the probabilities are that the question of restriction never arises. It is quite possible, though, that the state, recognizing the advantages and disadvantages of labor-saving inventions, and the great power that one man can wield in the community by controlling such inventions, pays to the inventor a lump sum of money to forego his interest forever, the state immediately allowing the invention to be made public property.

Year after year, as I have watched the methods and practices of our charitable institutions and the benevolence of many kindly disposed persons in our midst towards the needy and destitute, it has often crossed my mind to inquire why it is that the charitably inclined do not stop to consider the direct cause of the poverty of the masses whose conditions they are trying ineffectually to ameliorate. No sooner are the conditions temporarily improved for some of the unfortunate when almost immediately another batch of unfortunates must be treated similarly, and it is continuously happening, day after day and year after year, and still there is no perceptible diminution in the number requiring the aims of charity. Is it not time that those who have the welfare of humanity at heart should try some other experiment? It must be apparent to almost everyone that men would not lower themselves by accepting charity if there were other means at hand whereby they could live. Then there must be a cause which keeps so many men idle and in poverty. What is it? That is the question which should be discussed. When that is done and the answer is found the duty becomes clear—the cause must be removed.



NO ESCAPE FROM LOGIC.

Dr. McGlynn—If land may be privately owned, then God is the father of a few, and the step-father of all the rest.

OBNOXIOUS TAXATION.

The persistence with which the taxation of personality is being pushed in the Court of Revision by a mistaken enthusiast of "equal" taxation, is worthy of a better cause. It cannot be gainsaid that the efforts of J. B. Johnson, who is prosecuting the personality assessment, has been altogether unsuccessful. The facts show that a greater amount of personality has been levied upon — in previous years. This may satisfy those who aim to reach all forms of wealth, but on the other hand, the real efforts resulting from the pressure brought to bear in assessing personality may be of a character which will prove injurious, not only to "personality taxers," but to the city as well. Already the indications show this to be the case, and particularly in this year's assessment. When the case of Beardmore & Co. came up in the court, Mr. Beardmore volunteered the statement that rather than go to the trouble of appealing and having to expose his whole business, he preferred to be assessed. He further remarked to the court that "if you go on as you are doing, in enforcing this personality tax, you will drive all the capital out of Toronto." This statement needs little enlargement. It states the case as to how solid business men view this question. The continuation of personality assessment will have the desired result, that checking industry, and forcing capital to go elsewhere.

One reason why the city of Montreal is a more desirable place for business men and manufacturers, is because it imposes no taxation on personality. I will profit by the experiences of Toronto during the last ten years, we should seek to change our whole system of taxation without delay. The fact is, scores of manufacturers have practically been driven out of this city and forced to accept the better inducements offered in other places. The attempts to levy on capital unnecessarily may be fruitful in quite the proper direction after all.