

THE IDEAL CITY

By Councillor Arthur H. Weller, J.P.

The ideal city has no geographical position or boundaries; it exists only in the imagination. We have all seen it in our day-dreams, with its wide, clean streets, its noble buildings and beautiful homes, and with no slums in the background. It is situated in a smiling countryside where industry is efficiently and pleasantly conducted without Nature's lovely face being smeared with ugliness and grime. There is no unemployment nor poverty in the ideal city; no workhouses and no public charity for the able-bodied in the form of "social services."

Such conditions are very different from those we are accustomed to in Manchester and other modern cities where unemployment and poverty are taken for granted—like sunshine and shower. But unless poverty and its consequences are due to defects in human nature, it must be possible to raise the level of comfort and happiness in modern communities to that of the ideal city, because all the materials are here at our command. There is no reason to suppose that human beings are so constituted that association in equality is impossible. The inhabitants of our ideal city are people like ourselves—mainly good, but capable of demoralization and wickedness. What then is the secret of their prosperity and happiness? It is in their enjoyment of COMPLETE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY and the absence of special privileges. Property rights there are fully respected, which means that no one can share the fruits of another's labour and skill without giving equivalent service in return; no one there is getting something for nothing, and all are free to produce and to enjoy the product.

Equality of opportunity can only come by way of equal access to the natural resources, and that can be secured by altering our system of taxation. At present industry is carrying a heavy burden of national and local taxation which aggravates the difficulties resulting from the land system. The burden can be removed if a new source of revenue is used. The Taxation of Land Values would tap a hitherto unused source of public revenue—the communally created values of all the land. That measure would make land withholding impossible and also reduce, progressively, the landlord's toll on industry. Even a small measure of the Taxation of Land Values would force more land into productive uses and increase the opportunities for employment. When, finally, all the land values are taken for public expenditure and the taxes on homes and industry are abolished, we shall enjoy in full measure such prosperity and happiness as can now be found only in the ideal city of our dreams. To conform human laws to the moral law will bring its due reward. Henry George pointed to this ideal in *Progress and Poverty* when he said:—

"The poverty which in the midst of abundance pinches and embrates men, and all the evils which flow from it, spring from a denial of justice. In permitting the monopolisation of the opportunities which nature freely offers to all, we have ignored the fundamental law of justice, for . . . justice seems to be the supreme law of the universe. But by sweeping away this injustice and asserting the rights of all men to natural opportunities, we shall conform ourselves to the law—we shall remove the great cause of unnatural inequality in the distribution of wealth and power; we shall abolish poverty."

[From an article appearing in the "Stockport Express," "Middleton Guardian," "Oldham Evening Chronicle," and "Cotton Factory Times."]