

JULY 26, 1915

WAGES AND LIFE

So great an authority on all that pertains to the maintenance of human life and so keen an observer of the conditions of labor as Colonel Gorgas is responsible for this statement: "Add to the laboring man's wages from \$1.50 to \$2.50 a day and you will lengthen the average American's thread of life by 13 years at least."

Startling as that assertion may appear, it is not at all beyond the bounds of probability. What Colonel Gorgas means is that with the additional money such an increase would mean that workmen and their families would be better fed, housed and perhaps clothed; that they would have more of the things that make strong physiques and that even the mental attitude toward life would be happier and that would help to longevity.

Everybody knows that ill-paid workmen are less efficient physically than those who have better means for better support. Colonel Gorgas knows what he is talking about.

July 16, 1915.

Jobs for the Unemployed in New York.

According to the Tax Department of New York City, there are 454,095 parcels of land vacant within the city limits, assessed at \$618,041,300. That is, the assessors think that for the privilege of making use of this land it would be profitable for producers to pay that sum, or to annually pay the interest thereon. To put it in another way, this land can be made to produce enough wealth to afford a living to workers, pay interest on the capital needed to secure best results, all expenses incidental to its use, and over and above all about \$31,000,000 a year ground rent. With such opportunities lying idle, how comes it that the city is filled with involuntarily unemployed men? And why is it so difficult for idle capital to be profitably invested? The reason is that the owners do not see fit to let these opportunities be used. It is only natural that they should not. The laws of New York penalize improvement of land. The landholder who improves must pay more taxes in consequence. The one who holds land out of use has the opportunity to gain unearned increment without any particular effort on his part. The result is seen not only in these 454,095 parcels of unused land, but in land only partly used, in dilapidated buildings which should long ago have been replaced with better ones, in congested population, and in prevailing poverty, vice and crime. To remedy this state of affairs would seem to be the most urgent and important matter for a legislative assembly. Yet New York has not yet had a legislature that could see that far.

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