

THE
PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

THE MORAL AND LEGAL ASPECTS OF LABOUR.

THE problem of labour may be said to be as old as civilisation. Labour is coeval with the existence of society; for labour as a form of the activity of human beings is an essential condition of the life of every social group. It is one way in which a society is constituted and maintained. For many persons it makes up, if not the whole, at any rate the chief part of their existence as members of a social organism. To them membership in a society means primarily (as they put it) toiling "for" society. To be social and to labour are for them almost equivalent terms.

No doubt its prominence as a determining factor in social life has varied from time to time in the history of mankind. Thus, *e. g.*, labour has not the same significance in a militant society as it has in a commercial state. The incidence of human interest is in the former case concentrated on the defensive and offensive operations required for the maintenance of one social unity against another which threatens its very existence as a unit amongst the nations. In a commercial society, on the other hand, labour is all-important for the advancement and growth of the society, and interest in its problems outweighs in importance all other considerations. But in either case the difference is only one of emphasis. For the maintenance of labour is as much a necessity in the former as the maintenance of an armed defence is a necessity for the latter. We might distinguish the two types of society by saying that in the militant type, aggressive or offensive warfare is the predominant characteristic to which the resources of labour are made to minister as sub-