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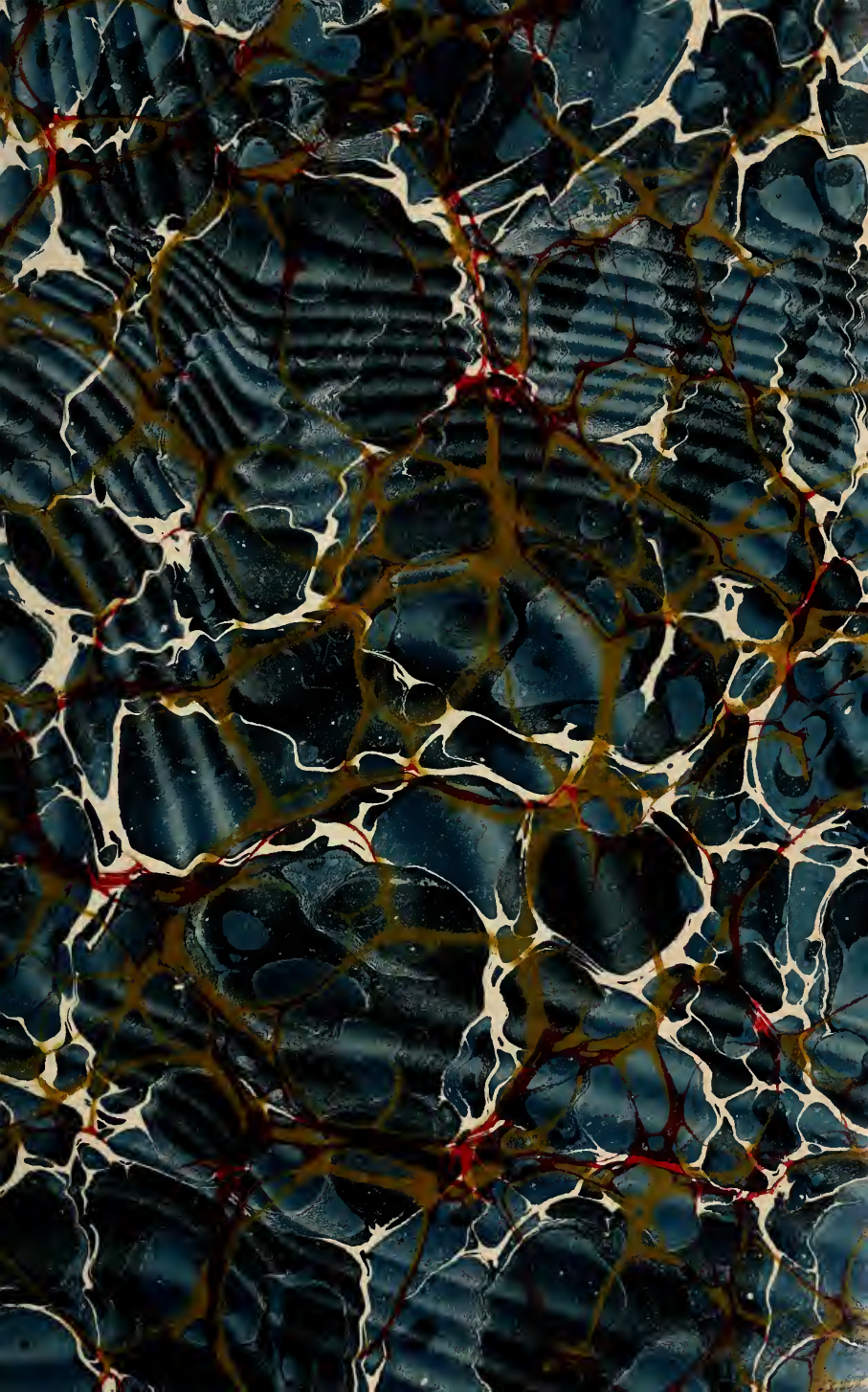
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MEMORIAL EDITION  
OF THE WRITINGS  
OF HENRY GEORGE

VOL. II.



THE WRITINGS OF  
HENRY GEORGE

PROGRESS AND  
POVERTY

AN INQUIRY INTO THE CAUSE OF INDUS-  
TRIAL DEPRESSIONS AND OF INCREASE  
OF WANT WITH INCREASE OF WEALTH

THE REMEDY

II



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## BOOK VI.

### THE REMEDY.

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CHAPTER I.—INSUFFICIENCY OF REMEDIES CURRENTLY  
ADVOCATED.

CHAPTER II.—THE TRUE REMEDY.

A new and fair division of the goods and rights of this world should be the main object of those who conduct human affairs.—  
*De Tocqueville.*

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When the object is to raise the permanent condition of a people, small means do not merely produce small effects; they produce no effect at all.—*John Stuart Mill.*



## CHAPTER I.

### INSUFFICIENCY OF REMEDIES CURRENTLY ADVOCATED.

In tracing to its source the cause of increasing poverty amid advancing wealth, we have discovered the remedy; but before passing to that branch of our subject it will be well to review the tendencies or remedies which are currently relied on or advocated. The remedy to which our conclusions point is at once radical and simple—so radical that, on the one side, it will not be fairly considered so long as any faith remains in the efficacy of less caustic measures; so simple that, on the other side, its real efficacy and comprehensiveness are likely to be overlooked, until the effect of more elaborate measures is estimated.

The tendencies and measures which current literature and discussions show to be more or less relied on or advocated as calculated to relieve poverty and distress among the masses may be divided into six classes. I do not mean that there are so many distinct parties or schools of thought, but merely that, for the purpose of our inquiry, prevailing opinions and proposed measures may be so grouped for review. Remedies which for the sake of greater convenience and clearness we shall consider separately are often combined in thought.

There are many persons who still retain a comfortable belief that material progress will ultimately extirpate poverty, and there are many who look to prudential restraint upon the increase of population as the most efficacious means, but the fallacy of these views has al-

ready been sufficiently shown. Let us now consider what may be hoped for:

- I. From greater economy in government.
- II. From the better education of the working classes and improved habits of industry and thrift.
- III. From combinations of workmen for the advance of wages.
- IV. From the co-operation of labor and capital.
- V. From governmental direction and interference.
- VI. From a more general distribution of land.

Under these six heads I think we may in essential form review all hopes and propositions for the relief of social distress short of the simple but far-reaching measure which I shall propose.

*I.—From Greater Economy in Government.*

Until a very few years ago it was an article of faith with Americans—a belief shared by European liberals—that the poverty of the down-trodden masses of the Old World was due to aristocratic and monarchical institutions. This belief has rapidly passed away with the appearance in the United States, under republican institutions, of social distress of the same kind, if not of the same intensity, as that prevailing in Europe. But social distress is still largely attributed to the immense burdens which existing governments impose—the great debts, the military and naval establishments, the extravagance which is characteristic as well of republican as of monarchical rulers, and especially characteristic of the administration of great cities. To these must be added, in the United States, the robbery involved in the protective tariff, which for every twenty-five cents it puts in the treasury takes a dollar and it may be four or five out of the pocket of the consumer. Now, there seems to be an evident connection between the immense sums thus taken from the people and the privations of the lower

classes, and it is upon a superficial view natural to suppose that a reduction in the enormous burdens thus uselessly imposed would make it easier for the poorest to get a living. But a consideration of the matter in the light of the economic principles heretofore traced out will show that this would not be the effect. A reduction in the amount taken from the aggregate produce of a community by taxation would be simply equivalent to an increase in the power of net production. It would in effect add to the productive power of labor just as do the increasing density of population and improvement in the arts. And as the advantage in the one case goes, and must go, to the owners of land, in increased rent, so would the advantage in the other.

From the produce of the labor and capital of England are now supported the burden of an immense debt, an Established Church, an expensive royal family, a large number of sinecurists, a great army and great navy. Suppose the debt repudiated, the Church disestablished, the royal family set adrift to make a living for themselves, the sinecurists cut off, the army disbanded, the officers and men of the navy discharged and the ships sold. An enormous reduction in taxation would thus become possible. There would be a great addition to the net produce which remains to be distributed among the parties to production. But it would be only such an addition as improvement in the arts has been for a long time constantly making, and not so great an addition as steam and machinery have made within the last twenty or thirty years. And as these additions have not alleviated pauperism, but have only increased rent, so would this. English land owners would reap the whole benefit. I will not dispute that if all these things could be done suddenly, and without the destruction and expense involved in a revolution, there might be a temporary improvement in the condition of the lowest class; but such

a sudden and peaceable reform is manifestly impossible. And if it were, any temporary improvement would, by the process we now see going on in the United States, be ultimately swallowed up by increased land values.

And, so, in the United States, if we were to reduce public expenditures to the lowest possible point, and meet them by revenue taxation, the benefit could certainly not be greater than that which railroads have brought. There would be more wealth left in the hands of the people as a whole, just as the railroads have put more wealth in the hands of the people as a whole, but the same inexorable laws would operate as to its distribution. The condition of those who live by their labor would not ultimately be improved.

A dim consciousness of this pervades—or, rather, is beginning to pervade—the masses, and constitutes one of the grave political difficulties that are closing in around the American republic. Those who have nothing but their labor, and especially the proletarians of the cities—a growing class—care little about the prodigality of government, and in many cases are disposed to look upon it as a good thing—“furnishing employment,” or “putting money in circulation.” Tweed, who robbed New York as a guerrilla chief might levy upon a captured town (and who was but a type of the new banditti who are grasping the government of all our cities), was undoubtedly popular with a majority of the voters, though his thieving was notorious, and his spoils were blazoned in big diamonds and lavish personal expenditure. After his indictment, he was triumphantly elected to the Senate; and, even when a recaptured fugitive, was frequently cheered on his way from court to prison. He had robbed the public treasury of many millions, but the proletarians felt that he had not robbed them. And the verdict of political economy is the same as theirs.

Let me be clearly understood. I do not say that gov-

ernmental economy is not desirable; but simply that reduction in the expenses of government can have no direct effect in extirpating poverty and increasing wages, so long as land is monopolized.

Although this is true, yet even with sole reference to the interests of the lowest class, no effort should be spared to keep down useless expenditures. The more complex and extravagant government becomes, the more it gets to be a power distinct from and independent of the people, and the more difficult does it become to bring questions of real public policy to a popular decision. Look at our elections in the United States—upon what do they turn? The most momentous problems are pressing upon us, yet so great is the amount of money in politics, so large are the personal interests involved, that the most important questions of government are but little considered. The average American voter has prejudices, party feelings, general notions of a certain kind, but he gives to the fundamental questions of government not much more thought than a street-car horse does to the profits of the line. Were this not the case, so many hoary abuses could not have survived and so many new ones been added. Anything that tends to make government simple and inexpensive tends to put it under control of the people and to bring questions of real importance to the front. But no reduction in the expenses of government can of itself cure or mitigate the evils that arise from a constant tendency to the unequal distribution of wealth.

## *II.—From the Diffusion of Education and Improved Habits of Industry and Thrift.*

There is, and always has been, a widespread belief among the more comfortable classes that the poverty and suffering of the masses are due to their lack of industry, frugality, and intelligence. This belief, which at once

soothes the sense of responsibility and flatters by its suggestion of superiority, is probably even more prevalent in countries like the United States, where all men are politically equal, and where, owing to the newness of society, the differentiation into classes has been of individuals rather than of families, than it is in older countries, where the lines of separation have been longer, and are more sharply, drawn. It is but natural for those who can trace their own better circumstances to the superior industry and frugality that gave them a start, and the superior intelligence that enabled them to take advantage of every opportunity,\* to imagine that those who remain poor do so simply from lack of these qualities.

But whoever has grasped the laws of the distribution of wealth, as in previous chapters they have been traced out, will see the mistake in this notion. The fallacy is similar to that which would be involved in the assertion that every one of a number of competitors might win a race. That *any* one might is true; that *every* one might is impossible.

For, as soon as land acquires a value, wages, as we have seen, do not depend upon the real earnings or product of labor, but upon what is left to labor after rent is taken out; and when land is all monopolized, as it is everywhere except in the newest communities, rent must drive wages down to the point at which the poorest paid class will be just able to live and reproduce, and thus wages are forced to a minimum fixed by what is called the standard of comfort—that is, the amount of necessities and comforts which habit leads the working classes to demand as the lowest on which they will consent to maintain their numbers. This being the case, industry,

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\* To say nothing of superior want of conscience, which is often the determining quality which makes a millionaire out of one who otherwise might have been a poor man.

skill, frugality, and intelligence can avail the individual only in so far as they are superior to the general level—just as in a race speed can avail the runner only in so far as it exceeds that of his competitors. If one man work harder, or with superior skill or intelligence than ordinary, he will get ahead; but if the average of industry, skill, or intelligence be brought up to the higher point, the increased intensity of application will secure but the old rate of wages, and he who would get ahead must work harder still.

One individual may save money from his wages by living as Dr. Franklin did when, during his apprenticeship and early journeyman days, he concluded to practice vegetarianism; and many poor families might be made more comfortable by being taught to prepare the cheap dishes to which Franklin tried to limit the appetite of his employer Keimer, as a condition to his acceptance of the position of confuter of opponents to the new religion of which Keimer wished to become the prophet,\* but if the working classes generally came to live in that way, wages would ultimately fall in proportion, and whoever wished to get ahead by the practice of economy, or to mitigate poverty by teaching it, would be compelled to devise some still cheaper mode of keeping soul and body together. If, under existing conditions, American mechanics would come down to the Chinese standard of living, they would ultimately have to come down to the Chinese standard of wages; or if English laborers would content themselves with the rice diet and scanty clothing of the Bengalee, labor would soon be as ill paid in England as in Bengal. The introduction of the potato into Ireland was expected to improve the condition of the poorer classes, by increasing the difference between the

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\* Franklin, in his inimitable way, relates how Keimer finally broke his resolution and ordering a roast pig invited two lady friends to dine with him, but the pig being brought in before the company arrived, Keimer could not resist the temptation and ate it all himself.

wages they received and the cost of their living. The consequences that did ensue were a rise of rent and a lowering of wages, and, with the potato blight, the ravages of famine among a population that had already reduced its standard of comfort so low that the next step was starvation.

And, so, if one individual work more hours than the average, he will increase his wages; but the wages of all cannot be increased in this way. It is notorious that in occupations where working hours are long, wages are not higher than where working hours are shorter; generally the reverse, for the longer the working day, the more helpless does the laborer become—the less time has he to look around him and develop other powers than those called forth by his work; the less becomes his ability to change his occupation or to take advantage of circumstances. And, so, the individual workman who gets his wife and children to assist him may thus increase his income; but in occupations where it has become habitual for the wife and children of the laborer to supplement his work, it is notorious that the wages earned by the whole family do not on the average exceed those of the head of the family in occupations where it is usual for him only to work. Swiss family labor in watch making competes in cheapness with American machinery. The Bohemian cigar makers of New York, who work, men, women, and children, in their tenement-house rooms, have reduced the prices of cigar making to less than the Chinese in San Francisco were getting.

These general facts are well known. They are fully recognized in standard politico-economic works, where, however, they are explained upon the Malthusian theory of the tendency of population to multiply up to the limit of subsistence. The true explanation, as I have sufficiently shown, is in the tendency of rent to reduce wages.



As to the effects of education, it may be worth while to say a few words specially, for there is a prevailing disposition to attribute to it something like a magical influence. Now, education is only education in so far as it enables a man more effectively to use his natural powers, and this is something that what we call education in very great part fails to do. I remember a little girl, pretty well along in her school geography and astronomy, who was much astonished to find that the ground in her mother's back yard was really the surface of the earth, and, if you talk with them, you will find that a good deal of the knowledge of many college graduates is much like that of the little girl. They seldom think any better, and sometimes not so well as men who have never been to college.

A gentleman who had spent many years in Australia, and knew intimately the habits of the aborigines (Rev. Dr. Bleesdale), after giving some instances of their wonderful skill in the use of their weapons, in foretelling changes in the wind and weather and in trapping the shyest birds, once said to me: "I think it a great mistake to look on these black fellows as ignorant. Their knowledge is different from ours, but in it they are generally better educated. As soon as they begin to toddle, they are taught to play with little boomerangs and other weapons, to observe and to judge, and, when they are old enough to take care of themselves, they are fully able to do so—are, in fact, in reference to the nature of their knowledge, what I should call well-educated gentlemen; which is more than I can say for many of our young fellows who have had what we call the best advantages, but who enter upon manhood unable to do anything either for themselves or for others."

Be this as it may, it is evident that intelligence, which is or should be the aim of education, until it induces and enables the masses to discover and remove the cause of

the unequal distribution of wealth, can operate upon wages only by increasing the effective power of labor. It has the same effect as increased skill or industry. And it can raise the wages of the individual only in so far as it renders him superior to others. When to read and write were rare accomplishments, a clerk commanded high respect and large wages, but now the ability to read and write has become so nearly universal as to give no advantage. Among the Chinese the ability to read and write seems absolutely universal, but wages in China touch the lowest possible point. The diffusion of intelligence, except as it may make men discontented with a state of things which condemns producers to a life of toil while non-producers loll in luxury, cannot tend to raise wages generally, or in any way improve the condition of the lowest class—the “mud-sills” of society, as a Southern Senator once called them—who must rest on the soil, no matter how high the superstructure may be carried. No increase of the effective power of labor can increase general wages, so long as rent swallows up all the gain. This is not merely a deduction from principles. It is the fact, proved by experience. The growth of knowledge and the progress of invention have multiplied the effective power of labor over and over again without increasing wages. In England there are over a million paupers. In the United States almshouses are increasing and wages are decreasing.

It is true that greater industry and skill, greater prudence, and a higher intelligence, are, as a rule, found associated with a better material condition of the working classes; but that this is effect, not cause, is shown by the relation of the facts. Wherever the material condition of the laboring classes has been improved, improvement in their personal qualities has followed, and wherever their material condition has been depressed, deterioration in these qualities has been the result; but nowhere

can improvement in material condition be shown as the result of the increase of industry, skill, prudence, or intelligence in a class condemned to toil for a bare living, though these qualities when once attained (or, rather, their concomitant—the improvement in the standard of comfort) offer a strong, and, in many cases, a sufficient, resistance to the lowering of material condition.

The fact is, that the qualities that raise man above the animal are superimposed on those which he shares with the animal, and that it is only as he is relieved from the wants of his animal nature that his intellectual and moral nature can grow. Compel a man to drudgery for the necessities of animal existence, and he will lose the incentive to industry—the progenitor of skill—and will do only what he is forced to do. Make his condition such that it cannot be much worse, while there is little hope that anything he can do will make it much better, and he will cease to look beyond the day. Deny him leisure—and leisure does not mean the want of employment, but the absence of the need which forces to uncongenial employment—and you cannot, even by running the child through a common school and supplying the man with a newspaper, make him intelligent.

It is true that improvement in the material condition of a people or class may not show immediately in mental and moral improvement. Increased wages may at first be taken out in idleness and dissipation. But they will ultimately bring increased industry, skill, intelligence, and thrift. Comparisons between different countries; between different classes in the same country; between the same people at different periods; and between the same people when their conditions are changed by emigration, show, as an invariable result, that the personal qualities of which we are speaking appear as material conditions are improved, and disappear as material conditions are depressed. Poverty is the Slough of Despond

which Bunyan saw in his dream, and into which good books may be tossed forever without result. To make people industrious, prudent, skillful, and intelligent, they must be relieved from want. If you would have the slave show the virtues of the freeman, you must first make him free.

### *III.—From Combinations of Workmen.*

It is evident from the laws of distribution, as previously traced, that combinations of workmen *can* advance wages, and this not at the expense of other workmen, as is sometimes said, nor yet at the expense of capital, as is generally believed; but, ultimately, at the expense of rent. That no general advance in wages can be secured by combination; that any advance in particular wages thus secured must reduce other wages or the profits of capital, or both—are ideas that spring from the erroneous notion that wages are drawn from capital. The fallacy of these ideas is demonstrated, not alone by the laws of distribution as we have worked them out, but by experience, so far as it has gone. The advance of wages in particular trades by combinations of workmen, of which there are many examples, has nowhere shown any effect in lowering wages in other trades, or in reducing the rate of profits. Except as it may affect his fixed capital or current engagements, a diminution of wages can benefit, and an increase of wages injure an employer only in so far as it gives him an advantage or puts him at a disadvantage as compared with other employers. The employer who first succeeds in reducing the wages of his hands, or is first compelled to pay an advance, gains an advantage, or is put at a disadvantage in regard to his competitors, which ceases when the movement includes them also. So far, however, as the change in wages affects his contracts or stock on hand, by changing the relative cost of production, it may be to him a real

gain or loss, though this gain or loss, being purely relative, disappears when the whole community is considered. And, if the change in wages works a change in relative demand, it may render capital fixed in machinery, buildings, or otherwise, more or less profitable. But, in this, a new equilibrium is soon reached; for, especially in a progressive country, fixed capital is only somewhat less mobile than circulating capital. If there is too little in a certain form, the tendency of capital to assume that form soon brings it up to the required amount; if there is too much, the cessation of increment soon restores the level.

But, while a change in the rate of wages in any particular occupation may induce a change in the relative demand for labor, it can produce no change in the aggregate demand. For instance, let us suppose that a combination of the workmen engaged in any particular manufacture raise wages in one country, while a combination of employers reduce wages in the same manufacture in another country. If the change be great enough, the demand, or part of the demand, in the first country will now be supplied by importation of such manufactures from the second. But, evidently, this increase in importations of a particular kind must necessitate either a corresponding decrease in importations of other kinds, or a corresponding increase in exportations. For, it is only with the produce of its labor and capital that one country can demand, or can obtain, in exchange, the produce of the labor and capital of another. The idea that the lowering of wages can increase, or the increase of wages can diminish, the trade of a country, is as baseless as the idea that the prosperity of a country can be increased by taxes on imports, or diminished by the removal of restrictions on trade. If all wages in any particular country were to be doubled, that country would continue to export and import the same things,

and in the same proportions; for exchange is determined not by absolute, but by relative, cost of production. But, if wages in some branches of production were doubled, and in others not increased, or not increased so much, there would be a change in the proportion of the various things imported, but no change in the proportion between exports and imports.

While most of the objections made to the combination of workmen for the advance of wages are thus baseless, while the success of such combinations cannot reduce other wages, or decrease the profits of capital, or injuriously affect national prosperity, yet so great are the difficulties in the way of the effective combinations of laborers, that the good that can be accomplished by them is extremely limited, while there are inherent disadvantages in the process.

To raise wages in a particular occupation or occupations, which is all that any combination of workmen yet made has been equal to attempting, is manifestly a task the difficulty of which progressively increases. For the higher are wages of any particular kind raised above their normal level with other wages, the stronger are the tendencies to bring them back. Thus, if a printers' union, by a successful or threatened strike, raise the wages of typesetting ten per cent. above the normal rate as compared with other wages, relative demand and supply are at once affected. On the one hand, there is a tendency to a diminution of the amount of typesetting called for; and, on the other, the higher rate of wages tends to increase the number of compositors in ways the strongest combination cannot altogether prevent. If the increase be twenty per cent., these tendencies are much stronger; if it is fifty per cent., they become stronger still, and so on. So that practically—even in countries like England, where the lines between different trades are much more distinct and difficult to pass than in countries like the

United States—that which trades' unions, even when supporting each other, can do in the way of raising wages is comparatively little, and this little, moreover, is confined to their own sphere, and does not affect the lower stratum of unorganized laborers, whose condition most needs alleviation and ultimately determines that of all above them. The only way by which wages could be raised to any extent and with any permanence by this method would be by a general combination, such as was aimed at by the Internationals, which should include laborers of all kinds. But such a combination may be set down as practically impossible, for the difficulties of combination, great enough in the most highly paid and smallest trades, become greater and greater as we descend in the industrial scale.

Nor, in the struggle of endurance, which is the only method which combinations not to work for less than a certain minimum have of effecting the increase of wages, must it be forgotten who are the real parties pitted against each other. It is not labor and capital. It is laborers on the one side and the owners of land on the other. If the contest were between labor and capital, it would be on much more equal terms. For the power of capital to stand out is only some little greater than that of labor. Capital not only ceases to earn anything when not used, but it goes to waste—for in nearly all its forms it can be maintained only by constant reproduction. But land will not starve like laborers or go to waste like capital—its owners can wait. They may be inconvenienced, it is true, but what is inconvenience to them, is destruction to capital and starvation to labor.

The agricultural laborers in certain parts of England are now endeavoring to combine for the purpose of securing an increase in their miserably low wages. If it was capital that was receiving the enormous difference between the real produce of their labor and the pittance

they get out of it, they would have but to make an effective combination to secure success; for the farmers, who are their direct employers, can afford to go without labor but little, if any, better than the laborers can afford to go without wages. But the farmers cannot yield much without a reduction of rent; and thus it is between the land owners and the laborers that the real struggle must come. Suppose the combination to be so thorough as to include all agricultural laborers, and to prevent from doing so all who might be tempted to take their places. The laborers refuse to work except at a considerable advance of wages; the farmers can give it only by securing a considerable reduction of rent, and have no way to back their demands except as the laborers back theirs, by refusing to go on with production. If cultivation thus comes to a dead-lock, the land owners would lose only their rent, while the land improved by lying fallow. But the laborers would starve. And if English laborers of all kinds were united in one grand league for a general increase of wages, the real contest would be the same, and under the same conditions. For wages could not be increased except to the decrease of rent; and in a general dead-lock, land owners could live, while laborers of all sorts must starve or emigrate. The owners of the land of England are by virtue of their ownership the masters of England. So true is it that "to whomsoever the soil at any time belongs, to him belong the fruits of it." The white parasols and the elephants mad with pride passed with the grant of English land, and the people at large can never regain their power until that grant is resumed. What is true of England, is universally true.

It may be said that such a dead-lock in production could never occur. This is true; but true only because no such thorough combination of labor as might produce it is possible. But the fixed and definite nature of land



enables land owners to combine much more easily and efficiently than either laborers or capitalists. How easy and efficient their combination is, there are many historical examples. And the absolute necessity for the use of land, and the certainty in all progressive countries that it must increase in value, produce among land owners, without any formal combination, all the effects that could be produced by the most rigorous combination among laborers or capitalists. Deprive a laborer of opportunity of employment, and he will soon be anxious to get work on any terms, but when the receding wave of speculation leaves nominal land values clearly above real values, whoever has lived in a growing country knows with what tenacity land owners hold on.

And, besides these practical difficulties in the plan of forcing by endurance an increase of wages, there are in such methods inherent disadvantages which workingmen should not blink. I speak without prejudice, for I am still an honorary member of the union which, while working at my trade, I always loyally supported. But, see: The methods by which a trade union can alone act are necessarily destructive; its organization is necessarily tyrannical. A strike, which is the only recourse by which a trade union can enforce its demands, is a destructive contest—just such a contest as that to which an eccentric, called “The Money King,” once, in the early days of San Francisco, challenged a man who had taunted him with meanness, that they should go down to the wharf and alternately toss twenty-dollar pieces into the bay until one gave in. The struggle of endurance involved in a strike is, really, what it has often been compared to—a war; and, like all war, it lessens wealth. And the organization for it must, like the organization for war, be tyrannical. As even the man who would fight for freedom, must, when he enters an army, give up his personal freedom and become a

mere part in a great machine, so must it be with workmen who organize for a strike. These combinations are, therefore, necessarily destructive of the very things which workmen seek to gain through them—wealth and freedom.

There is an ancient Hindoo mode of compelling the payment of a just debt, traces of something akin to which Sir Henry Maine has found in the laws of the Irish Brehons. It is called, sitting *dharna*—the creditor seeking enforcement of his debt by sitting down at the door of the debtor, and refusing to eat or drink until he is paid.

Like this is the method of labor combinations. In their strikes, trades' unions sit *dharna*. But, unlike the Hindoo, they have not the power of superstition to back them.

#### IV.—*From Co-operation.*

It is now, and has been for some time, the fashion to preach co-operation as the sovereign remedy for the grievances of the working classes. But, unfortunately for the efficacy of co-operation as a remedy for social evils, these evils, as we have seen, do not arise from any conflict between labor and capital; and if co-operation were universal, it could not raise wages or relieve poverty. This is readily seen.

Co-operation is of two kinds—co-operation in supply and co-operation in production. Now, co-operation in supply, let it go as far as it may in excluding middlemen, only reduces the cost of exchanges. It is simply a device to save labor and eliminate risk, and its effect upon distribution can be only that of the improvements and inventions which have in modern times so wonderfully cheapened and facilitated exchanges—viz., to increase rent. And co-operation in production is simply a reversion to that form of wages which still prevails in the

whaling service, and is there termed a "lay." It is the substitution of proportionate wages for fixed wages—a substitution of which there are occasional instances in almost all employments; or, if the management is left to the workmen, and the capitalist but takes his proportion of the net produce, it is simply the system that has prevailed to a large extent in European agriculture since the days of the Roman Empire—the colonial or metayer system. All that is claimed for co-operation in production is, that it makes the workman more active and industrious—in other words, that it increases the efficiency of labor. Thus its effect is in the same direction as the steam engine, the cotton gin, the reaping machine—in short, all the things in which material progress consists, and it can produce only the same result—viz., the increase of rent.

It is a striking proof of how first principles are ignored in dealing with social problems, that in current economic and semi-economic literature so much importance is attached to co-operation as a means for increasing wages and relieving poverty. That it can have no such general tendency is apparent.

Waiving all the difficulties that under present conditions beset co-operation either of supply or of production, and supposing it so extended as to supplant present methods—that co-operative stores made the connection between producer and consumer with the minimum of expense, and co-operative workshops, factories, farms, and mines, abolished the employing capitalist who pays fixed wages, and greatly increased the efficiency of labor—what then? Why, simply that it would become possible to produce the same amount of wealth with less labor, and consequently that the owners of land, the source of all wealth, could command a greater amount of wealth for the use of their land. This is not a matter of mere theory; it is proved by experience and by exist-

ing facts. Improved methods and improved machinery have the same effect that co-operation aims at—of reducing the cost of bringing commodities to the consumer and increasing the efficiency of labor, and it is in these respects that the older countries have the advantage of new settlements. But, as experience has amply shown, improvements in the methods and machinery of production and exchange have no tendency to improve the condition of the lowest class, and wages are lower and poverty deeper where exchange goes on at the minimum of cost and production has the benefit of the best machinery. The advantage but adds to rent.

But suppose co-operation between producers and land owners? That would simply amount to the payment of rent in kind—the same system under which much land is rented in California and the Southern States where the land owner gets a share of the crop. Save as a matter of computation it in no wise differs from the system which prevails in England of a fixed money rent. Call it co-operation, if you choose, the terms of the co-operation would still be fixed by the laws which determine rent, and wherever land was monopolized, increase in productive power would simply give the owners of the land the power to demand a larger share.

That co-operation is by so many believed to be the solution of the “labor question” arises from the fact that, where it has been tried, it has in many instances improved perceptibly the condition of those immediately engaged in it. But this is due simply to the fact that these cases are isolated. Just as industry, economy, or skill may improve the condition of the workmen who possess them in superior degree, but cease to have this effect when improvement in these respects becomes general, so a special advantage in procuring supplies, or a special efficiency given to some labor, may secure advantages which would be lost as soon as these improvements

became so general as to affect the general relations of distribution. And the truth is, that, save possibly in educational effects, co-operation can produce no general results that competition will not produce. Just as the cheap-for-cash stores have a similar effect upon prices as the co-operative supply associations, so does competition in production lead to a similar adjustment of forces and division of proceeds as would co-operative production. That increasing productive power does not add to the reward of labor, is not because of competition, but because competition is one-sided. Land, without which there can be no production, is monopolized, and the competition of producers for its use forces wages to a minimum and gives all the advantage of increasing productive power to land owners, in higher rents and increased land values. Destroy this monopoly, and competition could exist only to accomplish the end which co-operation aims at—to give to each what he fairly earns. Destroy this monopoly, and industry must become the co-operation of equals.

*V.—From Governmental Direction and Interference.*

The limits within which I wish to keep this book will not permit an examination in detail of the methods in which it is proposed to mitigate or extirpate poverty by governmental regulation of industry and accumulation, and which in their most thorough-going form are called socialistic. Nor is it necessary, for the same defects attach to them all. These are the substitution of governmental direction for the play of individual action, and the attempt to secure by restriction what can better be secured by freedom. As to the truths that are involved in socialistic ideas I shall have something to say hereafter; but it is evident that whatever savors of regulation and restriction is in itself bad, and should not be re-

sorted to if any other mode of accomplishing the same end presents itself. For instance, to take one of the simplest and mildest of the class of measures I refer to—a graduated tax on incomes. The object at which it aims, the reduction or prevention of immense concentrations of wealth, is good; but this means involves the employment of a large number of officials clothed with inquisitorial powers; temptations to bribery, and perjury, and all other means of evasion, which beget a demoralization of opinion, and put a premium upon unscrupulousness and a tax upon conscience; and, finally, just in proportion as the tax accomplishes its effect, a lessening in the incentive to the accumulation of wealth, which is one of the strong forces of industrial progress. While, if the elaborate schemes for regulating everything and finding a place for everybody could be carried out, we should have a state of society resembling that of ancient Peru, or that which, to their eternal honor, the Jesuits instituted and so long maintained in Paraguay.

I will not say that such a state as this is not a better social state than that to which we now seem to be tending, for in ancient Peru, though production went on under the greatest disadvantages, from the want of iron and the domestic animals, yet there was no such thing as want, and the people went to their work with songs. But this it is unnecessary to discuss. Socialism in anything approaching such a form, modern society cannot successfully attempt. The only force that has ever proved competent for it—a strong and definite religious faith—is wanting and is daily growing less. We have passed out of the socialism of the tribal state, and cannot re-enter it again except by a retrogression that would involve anarchy and perhaps barbarism. Our governments, as is already plainly evident, would break down in the attempt. Instead of an intelligent award of duties and earnings, we should have a Roman distribu-

tion of Sicilian corn, and the demagogue would soon become the Imperator.

The ideal of socialism is grand and noble; and it is, I am convinced, possible of realization; but such a state of society cannot be manufactured—it must grow. Society is an organism, not a machine. It can live only by the individual life of its parts. And in the free and natural development of all the parts will be secured the harmony of the whole. All that is necessary to social regeneration is included in the motto of those Russian patriots sometimes called Nihilists—“Land and Liberty!”

#### *VI.—From a More General Distribution of Land.*

There is a rapidly growing feeling that the tenure of land is in some manner connected with the social distress which manifests itself in the most progressive countries; but this feeling as yet mostly shows itself in propositions which look to the more general division of landed property—in England, free trade in land, tenant right, or the equal partition of landed estates among heirs; in the United States, restrictions upon the size of individual holdings. It has been also proposed in England that the state should buy out the landlords, and in the United States that grants of money should be made to enable the settlements of colonies upon public lands. The former proposition let us pass for the present; the latter, so far as its distinctive feature is concerned, falls into the category of the measures considered in the last section. It needs no argument to show to what abuses and demoralization grants of public money or credit would lead.

How what the English writers call “free trade in land”—the removal of duties and restrictions upon conveyances—could facilitate the division of ownership in agricultural land, I cannot see, though it might to some

extent have that effect as regards town property. The removal of restrictions upon buying and selling would merely permit the ownership of land to assume more quickly the form to which it tends. Now, that the tendency in Great Britain is to concentration is shown by the fact that, in spite of the difficulties interposed by the cost of transfer, land ownership has been and is steadily concentrating there, and that this tendency is a general one is shown by the fact that the same process of concentration is observable in the United States. I say this unhesitatingly in regard to the United States, although statistical tables are sometimes quoted to show a different tendency. But how, in such a country as the United States, the ownership of land may be really concentrating, while census tables show rather a diminution in the average size of holdings, is readily seen. As land is brought into use, and, with the growth of population, passes from a lower to a higher or intenser use, the size of holdings tends to diminish. A small stock range would be a large farm, a small farm would be a large orchard, vineyard, nursery, or vegetable garden, and a patch of land which would be small even for these purposes would make a very large city property. Thus, the growth of population, which puts land to higher or intenser uses, tends naturally to reduce the size of holdings, by a process very marked in new countries; but with this may go on a tendency to the concentration of land ownership, which, though not revealed by tables which show the average size of holdings, is just as clearly seen. Average holdings of one acre in a city may show a much greater concentration of land ownership than average holdings of 640 acres in a newly settled township. I refer to this to show the fallacy in the deductions drawn from the tables which are frequently paraded in the United States to show that land monopoly is an evil that will cure itself. On the contrary, it is obvious that the



proportion of land owners to the whole population is constantly decreasing.

And that there is in the United States, as there is in Great Britain, a strong tendency to the concentration of land ownership in agriculture is clearly seen. As, in England and Ireland, small farms are being thrown into larger ones, so in New England, according to the reports of the Massachusetts Bureau of Labor Statistics, is the size of farms increasing. This tendency is even more clearly noticeable in the newer States and Territories. Only a few years ago a farm of 320 acres would, under the system of agriculture prevailing in the northern parts of the Union, have anywhere been a large one, probably as much as one man could cultivate to advantage. In California now there are farms (not cattle ranges) of five, ten, twenty, forty and sixty thousand acres, while the model farm of Dakota embraces 100,000 acres. The reason is obvious. It is the application of machinery to agriculture and the general tendency to production on a large scale. The same tendency which substitutes the factory, with its army of operatives, for many independent hand-loom weavers, is beginning to exhibit itself in agriculture.

Now, the existence of this tendency shows two things: first, that any measures which merely permit or facilitate the greater subdivision of land would be inoperative; and, second, that any measures which would compel it would have a tendency to check production. If land in large bodies can be cultivated more cheaply than land in small bodies, to restrict ownership to small bodies will reduce the aggregate production of wealth, and, in so far as such restrictions are imposed and take effect, will they tend to diminish the general productiveness of labor and capital.

The effort, therefore, to secure a fairer division of wealth by such restrictions is liable to the drawback of

lessening the amount to be divided. The device is like that of the monkey, who, dividing the cheese between the cats, equalized matters by taking a bite off the biggest piece.

But there is not merely this objection, which weighs against every proposition to restrict the ownership of land, with a force that increases with the efficiency of the proposed measure. There is the further and fatal objection that restriction will not secure the end which is alone worth aiming at—a fair division of the produce. It will not reduce rent, and therefore cannot increase wages. It may make the comfortable classes larger, but will not improve the condition of those in the lowest class.

If what is known as the Ulster tenant right were extended to the whole of Great Britain, it would be but to carve out of the estate of the landlord an estate for the tenant. The condition of the laborer would not be a whit improved. If landlords were prohibited from asking an increase of rent from their tenants and from ejecting a tenant so long as the fixed rent was paid, the body of the producers would gain nothing. Economic rent would still increase, and would still steadily lessen the proportion of the produce going to labor and capital. The only difference would be that the tenants of the first landlords, who would become landlords in their turn, would profit by the increase.

If by a restriction upon the amount of land any one individual might hold, by the regulation of devises and successions, or by cumulative taxation, the few thousand land holders of Great Britain should be increased by two or three million, these two or three million people would be gainers. But the rest of the population would gain nothing. They would have no more share in the advantages of land ownership than before. And if, what is manifestly impossible, a fair distribution of the land

were made among the whole population, giving to each his equal share, and laws enacted which would interpose a barrier to the tendency to concentration by forbidding the holding by any one of more than the fixed amount, what would become of the increase of population?

Just what may be accomplished by the greater division of land may be seen in those districts of France and Belgium where minute division prevails. That such a division of land is on the whole much better, and that it gives a far more stable basis to the state than that which prevails in England, there can be no doubt. But that it does not make wages any higher or improve the condition of the class who have only their labor, is equally clear. These French and Belgian peasants practice a rigid economy unknown to any of the English-speaking peoples. And if such striking symptoms of the poverty and distress of the lowest class are not apparent as on the other side of the channel, it must, I think, be attributed, not only to this fact, but to another fact, which accounts for the continuance of the minute division of the land—that material progress has not been so rapid.

Neither has population increased with the same rapidity (on the contrary it has been nearly stationary), nor have improvements in the modes of production been so great. Nevertheless, M. de Laveleye, all of whose prepossessions are in favor of small holdings, and whose testimony will therefore carry more weight than that of English observers, who may be supposed to harbor a prejudice for the system of their own country, states in his paper on the Land Systems of Belgium and Holland, printed by the Cobden Club, that the condition of the laborer is worse under this system of the minute division of land than it is in England; while the tenant farmers—for tenancy largely prevails even where the *morcellment* is greatest—are rack-rented with a mercilessness unknown in England, and even in Ireland, and the

franchise "so far from raising them in the social scale, is but a source of mortification and humiliation to them, for they are forced to vote according to the dictates of the landlord instead of following the dictates of their own inclination and convictions."

But while the subdivision of land can thus do nothing to cure the evils of land monopoly, while it can have no effect in raising wages or in improving the condition of the lowest classes, its tendency is to prevent the adoption or even advocacy of more thorough-going measures, and to strengthen the existing unjust system by interesting a larger number in its maintenance. M. de Laveleye, in concluding the paper from which I have quoted, urges the greater division of land as the surest means of securing the great land owners of England from something far more radical. Although in the districts where land is so minutely divided, the condition of the laborer is, he states, the worst in Europe and the renting farmer is much more ground down by his landlord than the Irish tenant, yet "feelings hostile to social order," M. de Laveleye goes on to say, "do not manifest themselves," because—

"The tenant, although ground down by the constant rise of rents, lives among his equals, peasants like himself who have tenants whom they use just as the large land holder does his. His father, his brother, perhaps the man himself, possesses something like an acre of land, which he lets at as high a rent as he can get. In the public house peasant proprietors will boast of the high rents they get for their lands, just as they might boast of having sold their pigs or potatoes very dear. Letting at as high a rent as possible comes thus to seem to him to be quite a matter of course, and he never dreams of finding fault with either the land owners as a class or with property in land. His mind is not likely to dwell on the notion of a caste of domineering landlords, of "bloodthirsty tyrants," fattening on the sweat of impoverished tenants and doing no work themselves; for those who drive the hardest bargains are not the great land owners but his own fellows. Thus, the distribution of a number of small properties among the peasantry forms a kind of rampart and safe-

guard for the holders of large estates, and peasant property may without exaggeration be called the lightning conductor that averts from society dangers which might otherwise lead to violent catastrophes.

“The concentration of land in large estates among a small number of families is a sort of provocation of leveling legislation. The position of England, so enviable in many respects, seems to me to be in this respect full of danger for the future.”

To me, for the very same reason that M. de Laveleye expresses, the position of England seems full of hope.

Let us abandon all attempt to get rid of the evils of land monopoly by restricting land ownership. An equal distribution of land is impossible, and anything short of that would be only a mitigation, not a cure, and a mitigation that would prevent the adoption of a cure. Nor is any remedy worth considering that does not fall in with the natural direction of social development, and swim, so to speak, with the current of the times. That concentration is the order of development there can be no mistaking—the concentration of people in large cities, the concentration of handicrafts in large factories, the concentration of transportation by railroad and steamship lines, and of agricultural operations in large fields. The most trivial businesses are being concentrated in the same way—errands are run and carpet sacks are carried by corporations. All the currents of the time run to concentration. To resist it successfully we must throttle steam and discharge electricity from human service.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE TRUE REMEDY.

We have traced the unequal distribution of wealth which is the curse and menace of modern civilization to the institution of private property in land. We have seen that so long as this institution exists no increase in productive power can permanently benefit the masses; but, on the contrary, must tend still further to depress their condition. We have examined all the remedies, short of the abolition of private property in land, which are currently relied on or proposed for the relief of poverty and the better distribution of wealth, and have found them all inefficacious or impracticable.

There is but one way to remove an evil—and that is, to remove its cause. Poverty deepens as wealth increases, and wages are forced down while productive power grows, because land, which is the source of all wealth and the field of all labor, is monopolized. To extirpate poverty, to make wages what justice commands they should be, the full earnings of the laborer, we must therefore substitute for the individual ownership of land a common ownership. Nothing else will go to the cause of the evil—in nothing else is there the slightest hope.

This, then, is the remedy for the unjust and unequal distribution of wealth apparent in modern civilization, and for all the evils which flow from it:

*We must make land common property.*

We have reached this conclusion by an examination in

which every step has been proved and secured. In the chain of reasoning no link is wanting and no link is weak. Deduction and induction have brought us to the same truth—that the unequal ownership of land necessitates the unequal distribution of wealth. And as in the nature of things unequal ownership of land is inseparable from the recognition of individual property in land, it necessarily follows that the only remedy for the unjust distribution of wealth is in making land common property.

But this is a truth which, in the present state of society, will arouse the most bitter antagonism, and must fight its way, inch by inch. It will be necessary, therefore, to meet the objections of those who, even when driven to admit this truth, will declare that it cannot be practically applied.

In doing this we shall bring our previous reasoning to a new and crucial test. Just as we try addition by subtraction and multiplication by division, so may we, by testing the sufficiency of the remedy, prove the correctness of our conclusions as to the cause of the evil.

The laws of the universe are harmonious. And if the remedy to which we have been led is the true one, it must be consistent with justice; it must be practicable of application; it must accord with the tendencies of social development and must harmonize with other reforms.

All this I propose to show. I propose to meet all practical objections that can be raised, and to show that this simple measure is not only easy of application; but that it is a sufficient remedy for all the evils which, as modern progress goes on, arise from the greater and greater inequality in the distribution of wealth—that it will substitute equality for inequality, plenty for want, justice for injustice, social strength for social weakness, and will open the way to grander and nobler advances of civilization.

I thus propose to show that the laws of the universe do not deny the natural aspirations of the human heart; that the progress of society might be, and, if it is to continue, must be, toward equality, not toward inequality; and that the economic harmonies prove the truth perceived by the Stoic Emperor—

*“We are made for co-operation—like feet, like hands, like eyelids, like the rows of the upper and lower teeth.”*



# BOOK VII.

## JUSTICE OF THE REMEDY.

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CHAPTER I.—INJUSTICE OF PRIVATE PROPERTY IN LAND.

CHAPTER II.—ENSLAVEMENT OF LABORERS THE ULTIMATE RESULT OF PRIVATE PROPERTY IN LAND.

CHAPTER III.—CLAIM OF LAND OWNERS TO COMPENSATION.

CHAPTER IV.—PROPERTY IN LAND HISTORICALLY CONSIDERED.

CHAPTER V.—PROPERTY IN LAND IN THE UNITED STATES.

Justice is a relation of congruity which really subsists between two things. This relation is always the same, whatever being considers it, whether it be God, or an angel, or lastly a man.—*Montesquieu*.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE INJUSTICE OF PRIVATE PROPERTY IN LAND.

When it is proposed to abolish private property in land the first question that will arise is that of justice. Though often warped by habit, superstition, and selfishness into the most distorted forms, the sentiment of justice is yet fundamental to the human mind, and whatever dispute arouses the passions of men, the conflict is sure to rage, not so much as to the question "Is it wise?" as to the question "Is it right?"

This tendency of popular discussions to take an ethical form has a cause. It springs from a law of the human mind; it rests upon a vague and instinctive recognition of what is probably the deepest truth we can grasp. That alone is wise which is just; that alone is enduring which is right. In the narrow scale of individual actions and individual life this truth may be often obscured, but in the wider field of national life it everywhere stands out.

I bow to this arbitrament, and accept this test. If our inquiry into the cause which makes low wages and pauperism the accompaniments of material progress has led us to a correct conclusion, it will bear translation from terms of political economy into terms of ethics, and as the source of social evils show a wrong. If it will not do this, it is disproved. If it will do this, it is proved by the final decision. If private property in land be just, then is the remedy I propose a false one; if, on the contrary, private property in land be unjust, then is this remedy the true one.

What constitutes the rightful basis of property? What is it that enables a man justly to say of a thing, "It is mine?" From what springs the sentiment which acknowledges his exclusive right as against all the world? Is it not, primarily, the right of a man to himself to the use of his own powers, to the enjoyment of the fruits of his own exertions? Is it not this individual right, which springs from and is testified to by the natural facts of individual organization—the fact that each particular pair of hands obey a particular brain and are related to a particular stomach; the fact that each man is a definite, coherent, independent whole—which alone justifies individual ownership? As a man belongs to himself, so his labor when put in concrete form belongs to him.

And for this reason, that which a man makes or produces is his own, as against all the world—to enjoy or to destroy, to use, to exchange, or to give. No one else can rightfully claim it, and his exclusive right to it involves no wrong to any one else. Thus there is to everything produced by human exertion a clear and indisputable title to exclusive possession and enjoyment, which is perfectly consistent with justice, as it descends from the original producer, in whom it vested by natural law. The pen with which I am writing is justly mine. No other human being can rightfully lay claim to it, for in me is the title of the producers who made it. It has become mine, because transferred to me by the stationer, to whom it was transferred by the importer, who obtained the exclusive right to it by transfer from the manufacturer, in whom, by the same process of purchase, vested the rights of those who dug the material from the ground and shaped it into a pen. Thus, my exclusive right of ownership in the pen springs from the natural right of the individual to the use of his own faculties.

Now, this is not only the original source from which

all ideas of exclusive ownership arise—as is evident from the natural tendency of the mind to revert to it when the idea of exclusive ownership is questioned, and the manner in which social relations develop—but it is necessarily the only source. There can be to the ownership of anything no rightful title which is not derived from the title of the producer and does not rest upon the natural right of the man to himself. There can be no other rightful title, because (1st) there is no other natural right from which any other title can be derived, and (2d) because the recognition of any other title is inconsistent with and destructive of this.

For (1st) what other right exists from which the right to the exclusive possession of anything can be derived, save the right of a man to himself? With what other power is man by nature clothed, save the power of exerting his own faculties? How can he in any other way act upon or affect material things or other men? Paralyze the motor nerves, and your man has no more external influence or power than a log or stone. From what else, then, can the right of possessing and controlling things be derived? If it spring not from man himself, from what can it spring? Nature acknowledges no ownership or control in man save as the result of exertion. In no other way can her treasures be drawn forth, her powers directed, or her forces utilized or controlled. She makes no discriminations among men, but is to all absolutely impartial. She knows no distinction between master and slave, king and subject, saint and sinner. All men to her stand upon an equal footing and have equal rights. She recognizes no claim but that of labor, and recognizes that without respect to the claimant. If a pirate spread his sails, the wind will fill them as well as it will fill those of a peaceful merchantman or missionary bark; if a king and a common man be thrown overboard, neither can keep his head above water except by swim-

ming; birds will not come to be shot by the proprietor of the soil any quicker than they will come to be shot by the poacher; fish will bite or will not bite at a hook in utter disregard as to whether it is offered them by a good little boy who goes to Sunday-school, or a bad little boy who plays truant; grain will grow only as the ground is prepared and the seed is sown; it is only at the call of labor that ore can be raised from the mine; the sun shines and the rain falls, alike upon just and unjust. The laws of nature are the decrees of the Creator. There is written in them no recognition of any right save that of labor; and in them is written broadly and clearly the equal right of all men to the use and enjoyment of nature; to apply to her by their exertions, and to receive and possess her reward. Hence, as nature gives only to labor, the exertion of labor in production is the only title to exclusive possession.

2d. This right of ownership that springs from labor excludes the possibility of any other right of ownership. If a man be rightfully entitled to the produce of his labor, then no one can be rightfully entitled to the ownership of anything which is not the produce of his labor, or the labor of some one else from whom the right has passed to him. If production give to the producer the right to exclusive possession and enjoyment, there can rightfully be no exclusive possession and enjoyment of anything not the production of labor, and the recognition of private property in land is a wrong. For the right to the produce of labor cannot be enjoyed without the right to the free use of the opportunities offered by nature, and to admit the right of property in these is to deny the right of property in the produce of labor. When non-producers can claim as rent a portion of the wealth created by producers, the right of the producers to the fruits of their labor is to that extent denied.

There is no escape from this position. To affirm that

a man can rightfully claim exclusive ownership in his own labor when embodied in material things, is to deny that any one can rightfully claim exclusive ownership in land. To affirm the rightfulness of property in land, is to affirm a claim which has no warrant in nature, as against a claim founded in the organization of man and the laws of the material universe.

What most prevents the realization of the injustice of private property in land is the habit of including all the things that are made the subject of ownership in one category, as property, or, if any distinction is made, drawing the line, according to the unphilosophical distinction of the lawyers, between personal property and real estate, or things movable and things immovable. The real and natural distinction is between things which are the produce of labor and things which are the gratuitous offerings of nature; or, to adopt the terms of political economy, between wealth and land.

These two classes of things are in essence and relations widely different, and to class them together as property is to confuse all thought when we come to consider the justice or the injustice, the right or the wrong of property.

A house and the lot on which it stands are alike property, as being the subject of ownership, and are alike classed by the lawyers as real estate. Yet in nature and relations they differ widely. The one is produced by human labor, and belongs to the class in political economy styled wealth. The other is a part of nature, and belongs to the class in political economy styled land.

The essential character of the one class of things is that they embody labor, are brought into being by human exertion, their existence or non-existence, their increase or diminution, depending on man. The essential character of the other class of things is that they do not embody labor, and exist irrespective of human exertion

and irrespective of man; they are the field or environment in which man finds himself; the storehouse from which his needs must be supplied, the raw material upon which, and the forces with which alone his labor can act.

The moment this distinction is realized, that moment is it seen that the sanction which natural justice gives to one species of property is denied to the other; that the rightfulness which attaches to individual property in the produce of labor implies the wrongfulness of individual property in land; that, whereas the recognition of the one places all men upon equal terms, securing to each the due reward of his labor, the recognition of the other is the denial of the equal rights of men, permitting those who do not labor to take the natural reward of those who do.

Whatever may be said for the institution of private property in land, it is therefore plain that it cannot be defended on the score of justice.

The equal right of all men to the use of land is as clear as their equal right to breathe the air—it is a right proclaimed by the fact of their existence. For we cannot suppose that some men have a right to be in this world and others no right.

If we are all here by the equal permission of the Creator, we are all here with an equal title to the enjoyment of his bounty—with an equal right to the use of all that nature so impartially offers.\* This is a right which is

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\* In saying that private property in land can, in the ultimate analysis, be justified only on the theory that some men have a better right to existence than others, I am stating only what the advocates of the existing system have themselves perceived. What gave to Malthus his popularity among the ruling classes—what caused his illogical book to be received as a new revelation, induced sovereigns to send him decorations, and the meanest rich man in England to propose to give him a living, was the fact that he furnished a plaus-



natural and inalienable; it is a right which vests in every human being as he enters the world, and which during his continuance in the world can be limited only by the equal rights of others. There is in nature no such thing as a fee simple in land. There is on earth no power which can rightfully make a grant of exclusive ownership in land. If all existing men were to unite to grant away their equal rights, they could not grant away the right of those who follow them. For what are we but tenants for a day? Have we made the earth, that we should determine the rights of those who after us shall tenant it in their turn? The Almighty, who created the earth for man and man for the earth, has entailed it upon all the generations of the children of men by a decree written upon the constitution of all things—a decree which no human action can bar and no prescription determine. Let the parchments be ever so many, or possession ever so long, natural justice can recognize no right in one man to the possession and enjoyment of land that is not equally the right of all his fellows. Though his titles have been acquiesced in by generation after generation, to the landed estates of the Duke of Westminster the poorest child that is born in London to-day

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ible reason for the assumption that some have a better right to existence than others—an assumption which is necessary for the justification of private property in land, and which Malthus clearly states in the declaration that the tendency of population is constantly to bring into the world human beings for whom nature refuses to provide, and who consequently “have not the slightest right to any share in the existing store of the necessaries of life;” whom she tells as interlopers to be gone, “and does not hesitate to extort by force obedience to her mandates,” employing for that purpose “hunger and pestilence, war and crime, mortality and neglect of infantine life, prostitution and syphilis.” And to-day this Malthusian doctrine is the ultimate defense upon which those who justify private property in land fall back. In no other way can it be logically defended.

has as much right as has his eldest son.\* Though the sovereign people of the State of New York consent to the landed possessions of the Astors, the puniest infant that comes wailing into the world in the squalidest room of the most miserable tenement house, becomes at that moment seized of an equal right with the millionaires. And it is robbed if the right is denied.

Our previous conclusions, irresistible in themselves, thus stand approved by the highest and final test. Translated from terms of political economy into terms of ethics they show a wrong as the source of the evils which increase as material progress goes on.

The masses of men, who in the midst of abundance suffer want; who, clothed with political freedom, are condemned to the wages of slavery; to whose toil labor-saving inventions bring no relief, but rather seem to rob them of a privilege, instinctively feel that "there is something wrong." And they are right.

The wide-spreading social evils which everywhere oppress men amid an advancing civilization spring from a great primary wrong—the appropriation, as the exclusive property of some men, of the land on which and from which all must live. From this fundamental injustice flow all the injustices which distort and endanger modern development, which condemn the producer of wealth to

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\* This natural and inalienable right to the equal use and enjoyment of land is so apparent that it has been recognized by men wherever force or habit has not blunted first perceptions. To give but one instance: The white settlers of New Zealand found themselves unable to get from the Maoris what the latter considered a complete title to land, because, although a whole tribe might have consented to a sale, they would still claim with every new child born among them an additional payment on the ground that they had parted with only their own rights, and could not sell those of the unborn. The government was obliged to step in and settle the matter by buying land for a tribal annuity, in which every child that is born acquires a share.

poverty and pamper the non-producer in luxury, which rear the tenement house with the palace, plant the brothel behind the church, and compel us to build prisons as we open new schools.

There is nothing strange or inexplicable in the phenomena that are now perplexing the world. It is not that material progress is not in itself a good; it is not that nature has called into being children for whom she has failed to provide; it is not that the Creator has left on natural laws a taint of injustice at which even the human mind revolts, that material progress brings such bitter fruits. That amid our highest civilization men faint and die with want is not due to the niggardliness of nature, but to the injustice of man. Vice and misery, poverty and pauperism, are not the legitimate results of increase of population and industrial development; they only follow increase of population and industrial development because land is treated as private property—they are the direct and necessary results of the violation of the supreme law of justice, involved in giving to some men the exclusive possession of that which nature provides for all men.

The recognition of individual proprietorship of land is the denial of the natural rights of other individuals—it is a wrong which *must* show itself in the inequitable division of wealth. For as labor cannot produce without the use of land, the denial of the equal right to the use of land is necessarily the denial of the right of labor to its own produce. If one man can command the land upon which others must labor, he can appropriate the produce of their labor as the price of his permission to labor. The fundamental law of nature, that her enjoyment by man shall be consequent upon his exertion, is thus violated. The one receives without producing; the others produce without receiving. The one is unjustly enriched; the others are robbed. To this fundamental wrong we

have traced the unjust distribution of wealth which is separating modern society into the very rich and the very poor. It is the continuous increase of rent—the price that labor is compelled to pay for the use of land, which strips the many of the wealth they justly earn, to pile it up in the hands of the few, who do nothing to earn it.

Why should they who suffer from this injustice hesitate for one moment to sweep it away? Who are the land holders that they should thus be permitted to reap where they have not sown?

Consider for a moment the utter absurdity of the titles by which we permit to be gravely passed from John Doe to Richard Roe the right exclusively to possess the earth, giving absolute dominion as against all others. In California our land titles go back to the Supreme Government of Mexico, who took from the Spanish King, who took from the Pope, when he by a stroke of the pen divided lands yet to be discovered between the Spanish or Portuguese—or if you please they rest upon conquest. In the Eastern States they go back to treaties with Indians and grants from English Kings; in Louisiana to the Government of France; in Florida to the Government of Spain; while in England they go back to the Norman conquerors. Everywhere, not to a right which obliges, but to a force which compels. And when a title rests but on force, no complaint can be made when force annuls it. Whenever the people, having the power, choose to annul those titles, no objection can be made in the name of justice. There have existed men who had the power to hold or to give exclusive possession of portions of the earth's surface, but when and where did there exist the human being who had the right?

The right to exclusive ownership of anything of human production is clear. No matter how many the hands through which it has passed, there was, at the beginning of the line, human labor—some one who, having procured

or produced it by his exertions, had to it a clear title as against all the rest of mankind, and which could justly pass from one to another by sale or gift. But at the end of what string of conveyances or grants can be shown or supposed a like title to any part of the material universe? To improvements such an original title can be shown; but it is a title only to the improvements, and not to the land itself. If I clear a forest, drain a swamp, or fill a morass, all I can justly claim is the value given by these exertions. They give me no right to the land itself, no claim other than to my equal share with every other member of the community in the value which is added to it by the growth of the community.

But it will be said: There are improvements which in time become indistinguishable from the land itself! Very well; then the title to the improvements becomes blended with the title to the land; the individual right is lost in the common right. It is the greater that swallows up the less, not the less that swallows up the greater. Nature does not proceed from man, but man from nature, and it is into the bosom of nature that he and all his works must return again.

Yet, it will be said: As every man has a right to the use and enjoyment of nature, the man who is using land must be permitted the exclusive right to its use in order that he may get the full benefit of his labor. But there is no difficulty in determining where the individual right ends and the common right begins. A delicate and exact test is supplied by value, and with its aid there is no difficulty, no matter how dense population may become, in determining and securing the exact rights of each, the equal rights of all. The value of land, as we have seen, is the price of monopoly. It is not the absolute, but the relative, capability of land that determines its value. No matter what may be its intrinsic qualities, land that is no better than other land which may be had for the using

can have no value. And the value of land always measures the difference between it and the best land that may be had for the using. Thus, the value of land expresses in exact and tangible form the right of the community in land held by an individual; and rent expresses the exact amount which the individual should pay to the community to satisfy the equal rights of all other members of the community. Thus, if we concede to priority of possession the undisturbed use of land, confiscating rent for the benefit of the community, we reconcile the fixity of tenure which is necessary for improvement with a full and complete recognition of the equal rights of all to the use of land.

As for the deduction of a complete and exclusive individual right to land from priority of occupation, that is, if possible, the most absurd ground on which land ownership can be defended. Priority of occupation give exclusive and perpetual title to the surface of a globe on which, in the order of nature, countless generations succeed each other! Had the men of the last generation any better right to the use of this world than we of this? or the men of a hundred years ago? or of a thousand years ago? Had the mound-builders, or the cave-dwellers, the contemporaries of the mastodon and the three-toed horse, or the generations still further back, who, in dim æons that we can think of only as geologic periods, followed each other on the earth we now tenant for our little day?

Has the first comer at a banquet the right to turn back all the chairs and claim that none of the other guests shall partake of the food provided, except as they make terms with him? Does the first man who presents a ticket at the door of a theater, and passes in, acquire by his priority the right to shut the doors and have the performance go on for him alone? Does the first passenger who enters a railroad car obtain the right to scatter his

baggage over all the seats and compel the passengers who come in after him to stand up?

The cases are perfectly analogous. We arrive and we depart, guests at a banquet continually spread, spectators and participants in an entertainment where there is room for all who come; passengers from station to station, on an orb that whirls through space—our rights to take and possess cannot be exclusive; they must be bounded everywhere by the equal rights of others. Just as the passenger in a railroad car may spread himself and his baggage over as many seats as he pleases, until other passengers come in, so may a settler take and use as much land as he chooses, until it is needed by others—a fact which is shown by the land acquiring a value—when his right must be curtailed by the equal rights of the others, and no priority of appropriation can give a right which will bar these equal rights of others. If this were not the case, then by priority of appropriation one man could acquire and could transmit to whom he pleased, not merely the exclusive right to 160 acres, or to 640 acres, but to a whole township, a whole State, a whole continent.

And to this manifest absurdity does the recognition of individual right to land come when carried to its ultimate—that any one human being, could he concentrate in himself the individual rights to the land of any country, could expel therefrom all the rest of its inhabitants; and could he thus concentrate the individual rights to the whole surface of the globe, he alone of all the teeming population of the earth would have the right to live.

And what upon this supposition would occur is, upon a smaller scale, realized in actual fact. The territorial lords of Great Britain, to whom grants of land have given the “white parasols and elephants mad with pride,” have over and over again expelled from large districts the native population, whose ancestors had lived on the land

from immemorial times—driven them off to emigrate, to become paupers, or to starve. And on uncultivated tracts of land in the new State of California may be seen the blackened chimneys of homes from which settlers have been driven by force of laws which ignore natural right, and great stretches of land which might be populous are desolate, because the recognition of exclusive ownership has put it in the power of one human creature to forbid his fellows from using it. The comparative handful of proprietors who own the surface of the British Islands would be doing only what English law gives them full power to do, and what many of them have done on a smaller scale already, were they to exclude the millions of British people from their native islands. And such an exclusion, by which a few hundred thousand should at will banish thirty million people from their native country, while it would be more striking, would not be a whit more repugnant to natural right than the spectacle now presented, of the vast body of the British people being compelled to pay such enormous sums to a few of their number for the privilege of being permitted to live upon and use the land which they so fondly call their own; which is endeared to them by memories so tender and so glorious, and for which they are held in duty bound, if need be, to spill their blood and lay down their lives.

I refer only to the British Islands, because, land ownership being more concentrated there, they afford a more striking illustration of what private property in land necessarily involves. "To whomsoever the soil at any time belongs, to him belong the fruits of it," is a truth that becomes more and more apparent as population becomes denser and invention and improvement add to productive power; but it is everywhere a truth—as much in our new States as in the British Islands or by the banks of the Indus.



## CHAPTER II.

### THE ENSLAVEMENT OF LABORERS THE ULTIMATE RESULT OF PRIVATE PROPERTY IN LAND.

If chattel slavery be unjust, then is private property in land unjust.

For let the circumstances be what they may—the ownership of land will always give the ownership of men, to a degree measured by the necessity (real or artificial) for the use of land. This is but a statement in different form of the law of rent.

And when that necessity is absolute—when starvation is the alternative to the use of land, then does the ownership of men involved in the ownership of land become absolute.

Place one hundred men on an island from which there is no escape, and whether you make one of these men the absolute owner of the other ninety-nine, or the absolute owner of the soil of the island, will make no difference either to him or to them.

In the one case, as the other, the one will be the absolute master of the ninety-nine—his power extending even to life and death, for simply to refuse them permission to live upon the island would be to force them into the sea.

Upon a larger scale, and through more complex relations, the same cause must operate in the same way and to the same end—the ultimate result, the enslavement of laborers, becoming apparent just as the pressure increases which compels them to live on and from land which is treated as the exclusive property of others. Take a country in which the soil is divided among a number of

proprietors, instead of being in the hands of one, and in which, as in modern production, the capitalist has been specialized from the laborer, and manufactures and exchange, in all their many branches, have been separated from agriculture. Though less direct and obvious, the relations between the owners of the soil and the laborers will, with increase of population and the improvement of the arts, tend to the same absolute mastery on the one hand and the same abject helplessness on the other, as in the case of the island we have supposed. Rent will advance, while wages will fall. Of the aggregate produce, the land owner will get a constantly increasing, the laborer a constantly diminishing share. Just as removal to cheaper land becomes difficult or impossible, laborers, no matter what they produce, will be reduced to a bare living, and the free competition among them, where land is monopolized, will force them to a condition which, though they may be mocked with the titles and insignia of freedom, will be virtually that of slavery.

There is nothing strange in the fact that, in spite of the enormous increase in productive power which this century has witnessed, and which is still going on, the wages of labor in the lower and wider strata of industry should everywhere tend to the wages of slavery—just enough to keep the laborer in working condition. For the ownership of the land on which and from which a man must live is virtually the ownership of the man himself, and in acknowledging the right of some individuals to the exclusive use and enjoyment of the earth, we condemn other individuals to slavery as fully and as completely as though we had formally made them chattels.

In a simpler form of society, where production chiefly consists in the direct application of labor to the soil, the slavery that is the necessary result of according to some the exclusive right to the soil from which all must live, is plainly seen in helotism, in villeinage, in serfdom.

Chattel slavery originated in the capture of prisoners in war, and, though it has existed to some extent in every part of the globe, its area has been small, its effects trivial, as compared with the forms of slavery which have originated in the appropriation of land. No people as a mass have ever been reduced to chattel slavery to men of their own race, nor yet on any large scale has any people ever been reduced to slavery of this kind by conquest. The general subjection of the many to the few, which we meet with wherever society has reached a certain development, has resulted from the appropriation of land as individual property. It is the ownership of the soil that everywhere gives the ownership of the men that live upon it. It is slavery of this kind to which the enduring pyramids and the colossal monuments of Egypt yet bear witness, and of the institution of which we have, perhaps, a vague tradition in the biblical story of the famine during which the Pharaoh purchased up the lands of the people. It was slavery of this kind to which, in the twilight of history, the conquerors of Greece reduced the original inhabitants of that peninsula, transforming them into helots by making them pay rent for their lands. It was the growth of the *latifundia*, or great landed estates, which transmuted the population of ancient Italy, from a race of hardy husbandmen, whose robust virtues conquered the world, into a race of cringing bondsmen; it was the appropriation of the land as the absolute property of their chieftains which gradually turned the descendants of free and equal Gallic, Teutonic and Hunnish warriors into *colonii* and villains, and which changed the independent burghers of Slavonic village communities into the boors of Russia and the serfs of Poland; which instituted the feudalism of China and Japan, as well as that of Europe, and which made the High Chiefs of Polynesia the all but absolute masters of their fellows. How it came to pass that the Aryan shepherds and warriors

who, as comparative philology tells us, descended from the common birthplace of the Indo-Germanic race into the lowlands of India, were turned into the suppliant and cringing Hindoo, the Sanscrit verse which I have before quoted gives us a hint. The white parasols and the elephants mad with pride of the Indian Rajah are the flowers of grants of land. And could we find the key to the records of the long-buried civilizations that lie entombed in the gigantic ruins of Yucatan and Guatemala, telling at once of the pride of a ruling class and the unrequited toil to which the masses were condemned, we should read, in all human probability, of a slavery imposed upon the great body of the people through the appropriation of the land as the property of a few—of another illustration of the universal truth that they who possess the land are masters of the men who dwell upon it.

The necessary relation between labor and land, the absolute power which the ownership of land gives over men who cannot live but by using it, explains what is otherwise inexplicable—the growth and persistence of institutions, manners, and ideas so utterly repugnant to the natural sense of liberty and equality.

When the idea of individual ownership, which so justly and naturally attaches to things of human production, is extended to land, all the rest is a mere matter of development. The strongest and most cunning easily acquire a superior share in this species of property, which is to be had, not by production, but by appropriation, and in becoming lords of the land they become necessarily lords of their fellow-men. The ownership of land is the basis of aristocracy. It was not nobility that gave land, but the possession of land that gave nobility. All the enormous privileges of the nobility of medieval Europe flowed from their position as the owners of the soil. The simple principle of the ownership of the soil produced, on the one side, the lord, on the other, the vassal—the one hav-

ing all rights, the other none. The right of the lord to the soil acknowledged and maintained, those who lived upon it could do so only upon his terms. The manners and conditions of the times made those terms include services and servitudes, as well as rents in produce or money, but the essential thing that compelled them was the ownership of land. This power exists wherever the ownership of land exists, and can be brought out wherever the competition for the use of land is great enough to enable the landlord to make his own terms. The English land owner of to-day has, in the law which recognizes his exclusive right to the land, essentially all the power which his predecessor the feudal baron had. He might command rent in services or servitudes. He might compel his tenants to dress themselves in a particular way, to profess a particular religion, to send their children to a particular school, to submit their differences to his decision, to fall upon their knees when he spoke to them, to follow him around dressed in his livery, or to sacrifice to him female honor, if they would prefer these things to being driven off his land. He could demand, in short, any terms on which men would still consent to live on his land, and the law could not prevent him so long as it did not qualify his ownership, for compliance with them would assume the form of a free contract or voluntary act. And English landlords do exercise such of these powers as in the manners of the times they care to. Having shaken off the obligation of providing for the defense of the country, they no longer need the military service of their tenants, and the possession of wealth and power being now shown in other ways than by long trains of attendants, they no longer care for personal service. But they habitually control the votes of their tenants, and dictate to them in many little ways. That "right reverend father in God," Bishop Lord Plunkett, evicted a number of his poor Irish tenants because they would not send

their children to Protestant Sunday-schools; and to that Earl of Leitrim for whom Nemesis tarried so long before she sped the bullet of an assassin, even darker crimes are imputed; while, at the cold promptings of greed, cottage after cottage has been pulled down and family after family forced into the roads. The principle that permits this is the same principle that in ruder times and a simpler social state enthralled the great masses of the common people and placed such a wide gulf between noble and peasant. Where the peasant was made a serf, it was simply by forbidding him to leave the estate on which he was born, thus artificially producing the condition we supposed on the island. In sparsely settled countries this is necessary to produce absolute slavery, but where land is fully occupied, competition may produce substantially the same conditions. Between the condition of the rack-rented Irish peasant and the Russian serf, the advantage was in many things on the side of the serf. The serf did not starve.

Now, as I think I have conclusively proved, it is the same cause which has in every age degraded and enslaved the laboring masses that is working in the civilized world to-day. Personal liberty—that is to say, the liberty to move about—is everywhere conceded, while of political and legal inequality there are in the United States no vestiges, and in the most backward civilized countries but few. But the great cause of inequality remains, and is manifesting itself in the unequal distribution of wealth. The essence of slavery is that it takes from the laborer all he produces save enough to support an animal existence, and to this minimum the wages of free labor, under existing conditions, unmistakably tend. Whatever be the increase of productive power, rent steadily tends to swallow up the gain, and more than the gain.

Thus the condition of the masses in every civilized country is, or is tending to become, that of virtual slavery under the forms of freedom. And it is probable that of all kinds of slavery this is the most cruel and relentless. For the laborer is robbed of the produce of his labor and compelled to toil for a mere subsistence; but his taskmasters, instead of human beings, assume the form of imperious necessities. Those to whom his labor is rendered and from whom his wages are received are often driven in their turn—contact between the laborers and the ultimate beneficiaries of their labor is sundered, and individuality is lost. The direct responsibility of master to slave, a responsibility which exercises a softening influence upon the great majority of men, does not arise; it is not one human being who seems to drive another to unremitting and ill-requited toil, but “the inevitable laws of supply and demand,” for which no one in particular is responsible. The maxims of Cato the Censor—maxims which were regarded with abhorrence even in an age of cruelty and universal slaveholding—that after as much work as possible is obtained from a slave he should be turned out to die, become the common rule; and even the selfish interest which prompts the master to look after the comfort and well-being of the slave is lost. Labor has become a commodity, and the laborer a machine. There are no masters and slaves, no owners and owned, but only buyers and sellers. The higgling of the market takes the place of every other sentiment.

When the slaveholders of the South looked upon the condition of the free laboring poor in the most advanced civilized countries, it is no wonder that they easily persuaded themselves of the divine institution of slavery. That the field hands of the South were as a class better fed, better lodged, better clothed; that they had less anxi-

ety and more of the amusements and enjoyments of life than the agricultural laborers of England there can be no doubt; and even in the Northern cities, visiting slaveholders might see and hear of things impossible under what they called their organization of labor. In the Southern States, during the days of slavery, the master who would have compelled his negroes to work and live as large classes of free white men and women are compelled in free countries to work and live, would have been deemed infamous, and if public opinion had not restrained him, his own selfish interest in the maintenance of the health and strength of his chattels would. But in London, New York, and Boston, among people who have given, and would give again, money and blood to free the slave, where no one could abuse a beast in public without arrest and punishment, barefooted and ragged children may be seen running around the streets even in the winter time, and in squalid garrets and noisome cellars women work away their lives for wages that fail to keep them in proper warmth and nourishment. Is it any wonder that to the slaveholders of the South the demand for the abolition of slavery seemed like the cant of hypocrisy?

And now that slavery has been abolished, the planters of the South find they have sustained no loss. Their ownership of the land upon which the freedmen must live gives them practically as much command of labor as before, while they are relieved of responsibility, sometimes very expensive. The negroes as yet have the alternative of emigrating, and a great movement of that kind seems now about commencing, but as population increases and land becomes dear, the planters will get a greater proportionate share of the earnings of their laborers than they did under the system of chattel slavery, and the laborers a less share—for under the system of chattel slavery the slaves always got at least enough to keep them in good



physical health, but in such countries as England there are large classes of laborers who do not get that.\*

The influences which, wherever there is personal relation between master and slave, slip in to modify chattel slavery, and to prevent the master from exerting to its fullest extent his power over the slave, also showed themselves in the ruder forms of serfdom that characterized the earlier periods of European development, and aided by religion, and, perhaps, as in chattel slavery, by the more enlightened but still selfish interests of the lord, and hardening into custom, universally fixed a limit to what the owner of the land could extort from the serf or peasant, so that the competition of men without means of existence bidding against each other for access to the means of existence, was nowhere suffered to go to its full length and exert its full power of deprivation and degradation. The helots of Greece, the metayers of Italy, the serfs of Russia and Poland, the peasants of feudal Europe, rendered to their landlords a fixed proportion either of their produce or their labor, and were not generally squeezed past that point. But the influences which thus stepped in to modify the extortive power of land ownership, and which may still be seen on English estates where the landlord and his family deem it their duty to send medicines and comforts to the sick and infirm, and to look after the well-being of their cottagers, just as the Southern planter was accustomed to look after his negroes, are lost in the more refined and less obvious form which serfdom assumes in the more complicated processes of modern production, which separates so

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\* One of the anti-slavery agitators (Col. J. A. Collins) on a visit to England addressed a large audience in a Scotch manufacturing town, and wound up as he had been used to in the United States, by giving the ration which in the slave codes of some of the States fixed the minimum of maintenance for a slave. He quickly discovered that to many of his hearers it was an anti-climax.

widely and by so many intermediate gradations the individual whose labor is appropriated from him who appropriates it, and makes the relations between the members of the two classes not direct and particular, but indirect and general. In modern society, competition has free play to force from the laborer the very utmost he can give, and with what terrific force it is acting may be seen in the condition of the lowest class in the centers of wealth and industry. That the condition of this lowest class is not yet more general, is to be attributed to the great extent of fertile land which has hitherto been open on this continent, and which has not merely afforded an escape for the increasing population of the older sections of the Union, but has greatly relieved the pressure in Europe—in one country, Ireland, the emigration having been so great as actually to reduce the population. This avenue of relief cannot last forever. It is already fast closing up, and as it closes, the pressure must become harder and harder.

It is not without reason that the wise crow in the Ramayana, the crow Bushanda, “who has lived in every part of the universe and knows all events from the beginnings of time,” declares that, though contempt of worldly advantages is necessary to supreme felicity, yet the keenest pain possible is inflicted by extreme poverty. The poverty to which in advancing civilization great masses of men are condemned, is not the freedom from distraction and temptation which sages have sought and philosophers have praised; it is a degrading and embruting slavery, that cramps the higher nature, dulls the finer feelings, and drives men by its pain to acts which the brutes would refuse. It is into this helpless, hopeless poverty, that crushes manhood and destroys womanhood, that robs even childhood of its innocence and joy, that the working classes are being driven by a force which acts upon them like a resistless and unpitying machine. The

Boston collar manufacturer who pays his girls two cents an hour may commiserate their condition, but he, as they, is governed by the law of competition, and cannot pay more and carry on his business, for exchange is not governed by sentiment. And so, through all intermediate gradations, up to those who receive the earnings of labor without return, in the rent of land, it is the inexorable laws of supply and demand, a power with which the individual can no more quarrel or dispute than with the winds and the tides, that seem to press down the lower classes into the slavery of want.

But in reality, the cause is that which always has and always must result in slavery—the monopolization by some of what nature has designed for all.

Our boasted freedom necessarily involves slavery, so long as we recognize private property in land. Until that is abolished, Declarations of Independence and Acts of Emancipation are in vain. So long as one man can claim the exclusive ownership of the land from which other men must live, slavery will exist, and as material progress goes on, must grow and deepen!

This—and in previous chapters of this book we have traced the process, step by step—is what is going on in the civilized world to-day. Private ownership of land is the nether millstone. Material progress is the upper millstone. Between them, with an increasing pressure, the working classes are being ground.

## CHAPTER III.

### CLAIM OF LAND OWNERS TO COMPENSATION.

The truth is, and from this truth there can be no escape, that there is and can be no just title to an exclusive possession of the soil, and that private property in land is a bold, bare, enormous wrong, like that of chattel slavery.

The majority of men in civilized communities do not recognize this, simply because the majority of men do not think. With them whatever is, is right, until its wrongfulness has been frequently pointed out, and in general they are ready to crucify whoever first attempts this.

But it is impossible for any one to study political economy, even as at present taught, or to think at all upon the production and distribution of wealth, without seeing that property in land differs essentially from property in things of human production, and that it has no warrant in abstract justice.

This is admitted, either expressly or tacitly, in every standard work on political economy, but in general merely by vague admission or omission. Attention is in general called away from the truth, as a lecturer on moral philosophy in a slave-holding community might call away attention from too close a consideration of the natural rights of men, and private property in land is accepted without comment, as an existing fact, or is assumed to be necessary to the proper use of land and the existence of the civilized state.

The examination through which we have passed has

proved conclusively that private property in land cannot be justified on the ground of utility—that, on the contrary, it is the great cause to which are to be traced the poverty, misery, and degradation, the social disease and the political weakness which are showing themselves so menacingly amid advancing civilization. Expediency, therefore, joins justice in demanding that we abolish it.

When expediency thus joins justice in demanding that we abolish an institution that has no broader base or stronger ground than a mere municipal regulation, what reason can there be for hesitation?

The consideration that seems to cause hesitation, even on the part of those who see clearly that land by right is common property, is the idea that having permitted land to be treated as private property for so long, we should in abolishing it be doing a wrong to those who have been suffered to base their calculations upon its permanence; that having permitted land to be held as rightful property, we should by the resumption of common rights be doing injustice to those who have purchased it with what was unquestionably their rightful property. Thus, it is held that if we abolish private property in land, justice requires that we should fully compensate those who now possess it, as the British Government, in abolishing the purchase and sale of military commissions, felt itself bound to compensate those who held commissions which they had purchased in the belief that they could sell them again, or as in abolishing slavery in the British West Indies \$100,000,000 was paid the slaveholders.

Even Herbert Spencer, who in his "Social Statics" has so clearly demonstrated the invalidity of every title by which the exclusive possession of land is claimed, gives countenance to this idea (though it seems to me inconsistently) by declaring that justly to estimate and liquidate the claims of the present landholders "who have either by their own acts or by the acts of their ancestors given

for their estates equivalents of honestly-earned wealth," to be "one of the most intricate problems society will one day have to solve."

It is this idea that suggests the proposition, which finds advocates in Great Britain, that the government shall purchase at its market price the individual proprietorship of the land of the country, and it was this idea which led John Stuart Mill, although clearly perceiving the essential injustice of private property in land, to advocate, not a full resumption of the land, but only a resumption of accruing advantages in the future. His plan was that a fair and even liberal estimate should be made of the market value of all the land in the kingdom, and that future additions to that value, not due to the improvements of the proprietor, should be taken by the state.

To say nothing of the practical difficulties which such cumbrous plans involve, in the extension of the functions of government which they would require and the corruption they would beget, their inherent and essential defect lies in the impossibility of bridging over by any compromise the radical difference between wrong and right. Just in proportion as the interests of the land holders are conserved, just in that proportion must general interests and general rights be disregarded, and if land holders are to lose nothing of their special privileges, the people at large can gain nothing. To buy up individual property rights would merely be to give the land holders in another form a claim of the same kind and amount that their possession of land now gives them; it would be to raise for them by taxation the same proportion of the earnings of labor and capital that they are now enabled to appropriate in rent. Their unjust advantage would be preserved and the unjust disadvantage of the non-landholders would be continued. To be sure there would be a gain to the people at large when the advance of rents had

made the amount which the land holders would take under the present system greater than the interest upon the purchase price of the land at present rates, but this would be only a future gain, and in the meanwhile there would not only be no relief, but the burden imposed upon labor and capital for the benefit of the present land holders would be much increased. For one of the elements in the present market value of land is the expectation of future increase of value, and thus, to buy up the lands at market rates and pay interest upon the purchase money would be to saddle producers not only with the payment of actual rent, but with the payment in full of speculative rent. Or to put it in another way: The land would be purchased at prices calculated upon a lower than the ordinary rate of interest (for the prospective increase in land values always makes the market price of land much greater than would be the price of anything else yielding the same present return), and interest upon the purchase money would be paid at the ordinary rate. Thus, not only all that the land yields them now would have to be paid the land owners, but a considerably larger amount. It would be, virtually, the state taking a perpetual lease from the present land holders at a considerable advance in rent over what they now receive. For the present the state would merely become the agent of the land holders in the collection of their rents, and would have to pay over to them not only what they received, but considerably more.

Mr. Mill's plan for nationalizing the future "unearned increase in the value of land," by fixing the present market value of all lands and appropriating to the state future increase in value, would not add to the injustice of the present distribution of wealth, but it would not remedy it. Further speculative advance of rent would cease, and in the future the people at large would gain the difference between the increase of rent and the

amount at which that increase was estimated in fixing the present value of land, in which, of course, prospective, as well as present, value is an element. But it would leave, for all the future, one class in possession of the enormous advantage over others which they now have. All that can be said of this plan is, that it might be better than nothing.

Such inefficient and impracticable schemes may do to talk about, where any proposition more efficacious would not at present be entertained, and their discussion is a hopeful sign, as it shows the entrance of the thin end of the wedge of truth. Justice in men's mouths is cringingly humble when she first begins a protest against a time-honored wrong, and we of the English-speaking nations still wear the collar of the Saxon thrall, and have been educated to look upon the "vested rights" of land owners with all the superstitious reverence that ancient Egyptians looked upon the crocodile. But when the times are ripe for them, ideas grow, even though insignificant in their first appearance. One day, the Third Estate covered their heads when the king put on his hat. A little while thereafter, and the head of a son of St. Louis rolled from the scaffold. The anti-slavery movement in the United States commenced with talk of compensating owners, but when four millions of slaves were emancipated, the owners got no compensation, nor did they clamor for any. And by the time the people of any such country as England or the United States are sufficiently aroused to the injustice and disadvantages of individual ownership of land to induce them to attempt its nationalization, they will be sufficiently aroused to nationalize it in a much more direct and easy way than by purchase. They will not trouble themselves about compensating the proprietors of land.

Nor is it right that there should be any concern about the proprietors of land. That such a man as John Stuart



Mill should have attached so much importance to the compensation of land owners as to have urged the confiscation merely of the future increase in rent, is explainable only by his acquiescence in the current doctrines that wages are drawn from capital and that population constantly tends to press upon subsistence. These blinded him as to the full effects of the private appropriation of land. He saw that "the claim of the land holder is altogether subordinate to the general policy of the state," and that "when private property in land is not expedient, it is unjust,"\* but, entangled in the toils of the Malthusian doctrine, he attributed, as he expressly states in a paragraph I have previously quoted, the want and suffering that he saw around him to "the niggardliness of nature, not to the injustice of man," and thus to him the nationalization of land seemed comparatively a little thing, that could accomplish nothing toward the eradication of pauperism and the abolition of want—ends that could be reached only as men learned to repress a natural instinct. Great as he was and pure as he was—warm heart and noble mind—he yet never saw the true harmony of economic laws, nor realized how from this one great fundamental wrong flow want and misery, and vice and shame. Else he could never have written this sentence: "The land of Ireland, the land of every country, belongs to the people of that country. The individuals called land owners have no right in morality and justice to anything but the rent, or compensation for its salable value."

In the name of the Prophet—figs! If the land of any country belong to the people of that country, what right, in morality and justice, have the individuals called land owners to the rent? If the land belong to the people,

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\* Principles of Political Economy, Book I, Chap. 2, Sec. 6.

why in the name of morality and justice should the people pay its salable value for their own?

Herbert Spencer says:\* “*Had* we to deal with the parties who originally robbed the human race of its heritage, we might make short work of the matter?” Why not make short work of the matter anyhow? For this robbery is not like the robbery of a horse or a sum of money, that ceases with the act. It is a fresh and continuous robbery, that goes on every day and every hour. It is not from the produce of the past that rent is drawn; it is from the produce of the present. It is a toll levied upon labor constantly and continuously. Every blow of the hammer, every stroke of the pick, every thrust of the shuttle, every throb of the steam engine, pay it tribute. It levies upon the earnings of the men who, deep under ground, risk their lives, and of those who over white surges hang to reeling masts; it claims the just reward of the capitalist and the fruits of the inventor’s patient effort; it takes little children from play and from school, and compels them to work before

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\* Social Statics, page 142. [It may be well to say in the new reprint of this book (1897) that this and all other references to Herbert Spencer’s “Social Statics” are from the edition of that book published by D. Appleton & Co., New York, with his consent, from 1864 to 1892. At that time “Social Statics” was repudiated, and a new edition under the name of “Social Statics, abridged and revised,” has taken its place. From this, all that the first Social Statics had said in denial of property in land has been eliminated, and it of course contains nothing here referred to. Mr. Spencer has also been driven by the persistent heckling of the English single tax men, who insisted on asking him the questions suggested in the first Social Statics, to bring out a small volume, entitled “Mr. Herbert Spencer on the Land Question,” in which are reprinted in parallel columns Chapter IX of Social Statics, with what he considers valid answers to himself as given in “Justice,” 1891. This has also been reprinted by D. Appleton & Co., and constitutes, I think, the very funniest answer to himself ever made by a man who claimed to be a philosopher.]

their bones are hard or their muscles are firm; it robs the shivering of warmth; the hungry, of food; the sick, of medicine; the anxious, of peace. It debases, and embrothers, and embitters. It crowds families of eight and ten into a single squalid room; it herds like swine agricultural gangs of boys and girls; it fills the gin palace and groggery with those who have no comfort in their homes; it makes lads who might be useful men candidates for prisons and penitentiaries; it fills brothels with girls who might have known the pure joy of motherhood; it sends greed and all evil passions prowling through society as a hard winter drives the wolves to the abodes of men; it darkens faith in the human soul, and across the reflection of a just and merciful Creator draws the veil of a hard, and blind, and cruel fate!

It is not merely a robbery in the past; it is a robbery in the present—a robbery that deprives of their birth-right the infants that are now coming into the world! Why should we hesitate about making short work of such a system? Because I was robbed yesterday, and the day before, and the day before that, is it any reason that I should suffer myself to be robbed to-day and to-morrow? any reason that I should conclude that the robber has acquired a vested right to rob me?

If the land belong to the people, why continue to permit land owners to take the rent, or compensate them in any manner for the loss of rent? Consider what rent is. It does not arise spontaneously from land; it is due to nothing that the land owners have done. It represents a value created by the whole community. Let the land holders have, if you please, all that the possession of the land would give them in the absence of the rest of the community. But rent, the creation of the whole community, necessarily belongs to the whole community.

Try the case of the land holders by the maxims of the common law by which the rights of man and man are de-

terminated. The common law we are told is the perfection of reason, and certainly the land owners cannot complain of its decision, for it has been built up by and for land owners. Now what does the law allow to the innocent possessor when the land for which he paid his money is adjudged rightfully to belong to another? Nothing at all. That he purchased in good faith gives him no right or claim whatever. The law does not concern itself with the "intricate question of compensation" to the innocent purchaser. The law does not say, as John Stuart Mill says: "The land belongs to A, therefore B who has thought himself the owner has no right to anything but the rent, or compensation for its salable value." For that would be indeed like a famous fugitive slave case decision in which the Court was said to have given the law to the North and the nigger to the South. The law simply says: "The land belongs to A, let the Sheriff put him in possession!" It gives the innocent purchaser of a wrongful title no claim, it allows him no compensation. And not only this, it takes from him all the improvements that he has in good faith made upon the land. You may have paid a high price for land, making every exertion to see that the title is good; you may have held it in undisturbed possession for years without thought or hint of an adverse claimant; made it fruitful by your toil or erected upon it a costly building of greater value than the land itself, or a modest home in which you hope, surrounded by the fig-trees you have planted and the vines you have dressed, to pass your declining days; yet if Quirk, Gammon & Snap can mouse out a technical flaw in your parchments or hunt up some forgotten heir who never dreamed of his rights, not merely the land, but all your improvements, may be taken away from you. And not merely that. According to the common law, when you have surrendered the land and given up your improvements, you may be called upon to account for the

profits you derived from the land during the time you had it.

Now if we apply to this case of *The People vs. The Land Owners* the same maxims of justice that have been formulated by land owners into law, and are applied every day in English and American courts to disputes between man and man, we shall not only not think of giving the land holders any compensation for the land, but shall take all the improvements and whatever else they may have as well.

But I do not propose, and I do not suppose that any one else will propose, to go so far. It is sufficient if the people resume the ownership of the land. Let the land owners retain their improvements and personal property in secure possession.

And in this measure of justice would be no oppression, no injury to any class. The great cause of the present unequal distribution of wealth, with the suffering, degradation, and waste that it entails, would be swept away. Even land holders would share in the general gain. The gain of even the large land holders would be a real one. The gain of the small land holders would be enormous. For in welcoming Justice, men welcome the handmaid of Love. Peace and Plenty follow in her train, bringing their good gifts, not to some, but to all.

How true this is, we shall hereafter see.

If in this chapter I have spoken of justice and expediency as if justice were one thing and expediency another, it has been merely to meet the objections of those who so talk. In justice is the highest and truest expediency.

## CHAPTER IV.

### PRIVATE PROPERTY IN LAND HISTORICALLY CONSIDERED.

What more than anything else prevents the realization of the essential injustice of private property in land and stands in the way of a candid consideration of any proposition for abolishing it, is that mental habit which makes anything that has long existed seem natural and necessary.

We are so used to the treatment of land as individual property, it is so thoroughly recognized in our laws, manners, and customs, that the vast majority of people never think of questioning it; but look upon it as necessary to the use of land. They are unable to conceive, or at least it does not enter their heads to conceive, of society as existing or as possible without the reduction of land to private possession. The first step to the cultivation or improvement of land seems to them to get for it a particular owner, and a man's land is looked on by them as fully and as equitably his, to sell, to lease, to give, or to bequeath, as his house, his cattle, his goods, or his furniture. The "sacredness of property" has been preached so constantly and effectively, especially by those "conservators of ancient barbarism," as Voltaire styled the lawyers, that most people look upon the private ownership of land as the very foundation of civilization, and if the resumption of land as common property is suggested, think of it at first blush either as a chimerical vagary, which never has and never can be realized, or as a proposition to overturn society from its base and bring about a reversion to barbarism.

If it were true that land had always been treated as private property, that would not prove the justice or necessity of continuing so to treat it, any more than the universal existence of slavery, which might once have been safely affirmed, would prove the justice or necessity of making property of human flesh and blood.

Not long ago monarchy seemed all but universal, and not only the kings but the majority of their subjects really believed that no country could get along without a king. Yet, to say nothing of America, France now gets along without a king; the Queen of England and Empress of India has about as much to do with governing her realms as the wooden figurehead of a ship has in determining its course, and the other crowned heads of Europe sit, metaphorically speaking, upon barrels of nitro-glycerine.

Something over a hundred years ago, Bishop Butler, author of the famous Analogy, declared that "a constitution of civil government without any religious establishment is a chimerical project of which there is no example." As for there being no example, he was right. No government at that time existed, nor would it have been easy to name one that ever had existed, without some sort of an established religion; yet in the United States we have since proved by the practice of a century that it is possible for a civil government to exist without a state church.

But while, were it true, that land had always and everywhere been treated as private property would not prove that it should always be so treated, this is *not* true. On the contrary, the common right to land has everywhere been primarily recognized, and private ownership has nowhere grown up save as the result of usurpation. The primary and persistent perceptions of mankind are that all have an equal right to land, and the opinion that private property in land is necessary to society is but an

offspring of ignorance that cannot look beyond its immediate surroundings—an idea of comparatively modern growth, as artificial and as baseless as that of the right divine of kings.

The observations of travelers, the researches of the critical historians who within a recent period have done so much to reconstruct the forgotten records of the people, the investigations of such men as Sir Henry Maine, Emile de Laveleye, Professor Nasse of Bonn, and others, into the growth of institutions, prove that wherever human society has formed, the common right of men to the use of the earth has been recognized, and that nowhere has unrestricted individual ownership been freely adopted. Historically, as ethically, private property in land is robbery. It nowhere springs from contract; it can nowhere be traced to perceptions of justice or expediency; it has everywhere had its birth in war and conquest, and in the selfish use which the cunning have made of superstition and law.

Wherever we can trace the early history of society, whether in Asia, in Europe, in Africa, in America, or in Polynesia, land has been considered, as the necessary relations which human life has to it would lead to its consideration—as common property, in which the rights of all who had admitted rights were equal. That is to say, that all members of the community, all citizens, as we should say, had equal rights to the use and enjoyment of the land of the community. This recognition of the common right to land did not prevent the full recognition of the particular and exclusive right in things which are the result of labor, nor was it abandoned when the development of agriculture had imposed the necessity of recognizing exclusive possession of land in order to secure the exclusive enjoyment of the results of the labor expended in cultivating it. The division of land between the industrial units, whether families, joint families, or



individuals, went only as far as was necessary for that purpose, pasture and forest lands being retained as common, and equality as to agricultural land being secured, either by a periodical re-division, as among the Teutonic races, or by the prohibition of alienation, as in the law of Moses.

This primary adjustment still exists, in more or less intact form, in the village communities of India, Russia, and the Slavonic countries yet, or until recently, subjected to Turkish rule; in the mountain cantons of Switzerland; among the Kabyles in the north of Africa, and the Kaffirs in the south; among the native population of Java, and the aborigines of New Zealand—that is to say, wherever extraneous influences have left intact the form of primitive social organization. That it everywhere existed has been within late years abundantly proved by the researches of many independent students and observers, and which are, to my knowledge, best summarized in the “Systems of Land Tenures in Various Countries,” published under authority of the Cobden Club, and in M. Emile de Laveleye’s “Primitive Property,” to which I would refer the reader who desires to see this truth displayed in detail.

“In all primitive societies,” says M. de Laveleye, as the result of an investigation which leaves no part of the world unexplored—“in all primitive societies, the soil was the joint property of the tribes and was subject to periodical distribution among all the families, so that all might live by their labor as nature has ordained. The comfort of each was thus proportioned to his energy and intelligence; no one, at any rate, was destitute of the means of subsistence, and inequality increasing from generation to generation was provided against.”

If M. de Laveleye be right in this conclusion, and that he is right there can be no doubt, how, it will be asked, has the reduction of land to private ownership become so general?

The causes which have operated to supplant this original idea of the equal right to the use of land by the idea of exclusive and unequal rights may, I think, be everywhere vaguely but certainly traced. They are everywhere the same which have led to the denial of equal personal rights and to the establishment of privileged classes.

These causes may be summarized as the concentration of power in the hands of chieftains and the military class, consequent on a state of warfare, which enabled them to monopolize common lands; the effect of conquest, in reducing the conquered to a state of predial slavery, and dividing their lands among the conquerors, and in disproportionate share to the chiefs; the differentiation and influence of a sacerdotal class, and the differentiation and influence of a class of professional lawyers, whose interests were served by the substitution of exclusive, in place of common, property in land\*—inequality once produced always tending to greater inequality, by the law of attraction.

It was the struggle between this idea of equal rights to the soil and the tendency to monopolize it in individual possession, that caused the internal conflicts of Greece and Rome; it was the check given to this tendency—in Greece by such institutions as those of Lycurgus and Solon, and in Rome by the Licinian Law and subsequent divisions of land—that gave to each their days of strength and glory; and it was the final triumph of this tendency that destroyed both. Great estates ruined Greece, as afterward “great estates ruined Italy,”† and

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\*The influence of the lawyers has been very marked in Europe, both on the continent and in Great Britain, in destroying all vestiges of the ancient tenure, and substituting the idea of the Roman law, exclusive ownership.

† *Latifundia perdidere Italiam.*—*Pliny.*

as the soil, in spite of the warnings of great legislators and statesmen, passed finally into the possession of a few, population declined, art sank, the intellect became emasculate, and the race in which humanity had attained its most splendid development became a by-word and reproach among men.

The idea of absolute individual property in land, which modern civilization derived from Rome, reached its full development there in historic times. When the future mistress of the world first looms up, each citizen had his little homestead plot, which was inalienable, and the general domain—"the corn-land which was of public right"—was subject to common use, doubtless under regulations or customs which secured equality, as in the Teutonic mark and Swiss allmend. It was from this public domain constantly extended by conquest, that the patrician families succeeded in carving their great estates. These great estates by the power with which the great attracts the less, in spite of temporary checks by legal limitation and recurring divisions, finally crushed out all the small proprietors, adding their little patrimonies to the *latifundia* of the enormously rich, while they themselves were forced into the slave gangs, became rent-paying *colonii*, or else were driven into the freshly conquered foreign provinces, where land was given to the veterans of the legions; or to the metropolis, to swell the ranks of the proletariat who had nothing to sell but their votes.

Cæsarism, soon passing into an unbridled despotism of the Eastern type, was the inevitable political result, and the empire, even while it embraced the world, became in reality a shell, kept from collapse only by the healthier life of the frontiers, where the land had been divided among military settlers or the primitive usages longer survived. But the *latifundia*, which had devoured the strength of Italy, crept steadily outward, carving the surface of Sicily, Africa, Spain, and Gaul into great

estates cultivated by slaves or tenants. The hardy virtues born of personal independence died out, an exhaustive agriculture impoverished the soil, and wild beasts supplanted men, until at length, with a strength nurtured in equality, the barbarians broke through; Rome perished; and of a civilization once so proud nothing was left but ruins.

Thus came to pass that marvelous thing, which at the time of Rome's grandeur would have seemed as impossible as it seems now to us that the Comanches or Flatheads should conquer the United States, or the Laplanders should desolate Europe. The fundamental cause is to be sought in the tenure of land. On the one hand, the denial of the common right to land had resulted in decay; on the other, equality gave strength.

"Freedom," says M. de Laveleye ("Primitive Property," p. 116), "freedom, and, as a consequence, the ownership of an undivided share of the common property, to which the head of every family in the clan was equally entitled, were in the German village essential rights. This system of absolute equality impressed a remarkable character on the individual, which explains how small bands of barbarians made themselves masters of the Roman Empire, in spite of its skillful administration, its perfect centralization and its civil law, which has preserved the name of written reason."

It was, on the other hand, that the heart was eaten out of that great empire. "Rome perished," says Professor Seeley, "from the failure of the crop of men."

In his lectures on the "History of Civilization in Europe," and more elaborately in his lectures on the "History of Civilization in France," M. Guizot has vividly described the chaos that in Europe succeeded the fall of the Roman Empire—a chaos which, as he says, "carried all things in its bosom," and from which the structure of modern society was slowly evolved. It is a picture which

cannot be compressed into a few lines, but suffice it to say that the result of this infusion of rude but vigorous life into Romanized society was a disorganization of the German, as well as the Roman structure—both a blending and an admixture of the idea of common rights in the soil with the idea of exclusive property, substantially as occurred in those provinces of the Eastern Empire subsequently overrun by the Turks. The feudal system, which was so readily adopted and so widely spread, was the result of such a blending; but underneath, and side by side with the feudal system, a more primitive organization, based on the common rights of the cultivators, took root or revived, and has left its traces all over Europe. This primitive organization, which allots equal shares of cultivated ground and the common use of uncultivated ground, and which existed in Ancient Italy as in Saxon England, has maintained itself beneath absolutism and serfdom in Russia, beneath Moslem oppression in Servia, and in India has been swept, but not entirely destroyed, by wave after wave of conquest, and century after century of oppression.

The feudal system, which is not peculiar to Europe, but seems to be the natural result of the conquest of a settled country by a race among whom equality and individuality are yet strong, clearly recognized, in theory at least, that the land belongs to society at large, not to the individual. Rude outcome of an age in which might stood for right as nearly as it ever can (for the idea of right is ineradicable from the human mind, and must in some shape show itself even in the association of pirates and robbers), the feudal system yet admitted in no one the uncontrolled and exclusive right to land. A fief was essentially a trust, and to enjoyment was annexed obligation. The sovereign, theoretically the representative of the collective power and rights of the whole people, was in feudal view the only absolute owner of land. And

though land was granted to individual possession, yet in its possession were involved duties, by which the enjoyer of its revenues was supposed to render back to the commonwealth an equivalent for the benefits which from the delegation of the common right he received.

In the feudal scheme the crown lands supported public expenditures which are now included in the civil list; the church lands defrayed the cost of public worship and instruction, of the care of the sick and of the destitute, and maintained a class of men who were supposed to be, and no doubt to a great extent were, devoting their lives to purposes of public good; while the military tenures provided for the public defense. In the obligation under which the military tenant lay to bring into the field such and such a force when need should be, as well as in the aid he had to give when the sovereign's eldest son was knighted, his daughter married, or the sovereign himself made prisoner of war, was a rude and inefficient recognition, but still unquestionably a recognition, of the fact, obvious to the natural perceptions of all men, that land is not individual but common property.

Nor yet was the control of the possessor of land allowed to extend beyond his own life. Although the principle of inheritance soon displaced the principle of selection, as where power is concentrated it always must, yet feudal law required that there should always be some representative of a fief, capable of discharging the duties as well as of receiving the benefits which were annexed to a landed estate, and who this should be was not left to individual caprice, but rigorously determined in advance. Hence wardship and other feudal incidents. The system of primogeniture and its outgrowth, the entail, were in their beginnings not the absurdities they afterward became.

The basis of the feudal system was the absolute ownership of the land, an idea which the barbarians readily

acquired in the midst of a conquered population to whom it was familiar; but over this, feudalism threw a superior right, and the process of infeudation consisted of bringing individual dominion into subordination to the superior dominion, which represented the larger community or nation. Its units were the land owners, who by virtue of their ownership were absolute lords on their own domains, and who there performed the office of protection which M. Taine has so graphically described, though perhaps with too strong a coloring, in the opening chapter of his "Ancient Régime." The work of the feudal system was to bind together these units into nations, and to subordinate the powers and rights of the individual lords of land to the powers and rights of collective society, as represented by the suzerain or king.

Thus the feudal system, in its rise and development, was a triumph of the idea of the common right to land, changing an absolute tenure into a conditional tenure, and imposing peculiar obligations in return for the privilege of receiving rent. And during the same time, the power of land ownership was trenched, as it were, from below, the tenancy at will of the cultivators of the soil very generally hardening into tenancy by custom, and the rent which the lord could exact from the peasant becoming fixed and certain.

And amid the feudal system there remained, or there grew up, communities of cultivators, more or less subject to feudal dues, who tilled the soil as common property; and although the lords, where and when they had the power, claimed pretty much all they thought worth claiming, yet the idea of common right was strong enough to attach itself by custom to a considerable part of the land. The commons, in feudal ages, must have embraced a very large proportion of the area of most European countries. For in France (although the appropriations of these lands by the aristocracy, occasionally

checked and rescinded by royal edict, had gone on for some centuries prior to the Revolution, and during the Revolution and First Empire large distributions and sales were made), the common or communal lands still amount, according to M. de Laveleye, to 4,000,000 hectares, or 9,884,400 acres. The extent of the common land of England during the feudal ages may be inferred from the fact that though inclosures by the landed aristocracy began during the reign of Henry VII., it is stated that no less than 7,660,413 acres of common lands were inclosed under Acts passed between 1710 and 1843, of which 600,000 acres have been inclosed since 1845; and it is estimated that there still remain 2,000,000 acres of common in England, though of course the most worthless parts of the soil.

In addition to these common lands, there existed in France, until the Revolution, and in parts of Spain, until our own day, a custom having all the force of law, by which cultivated lands, after the harvest had been gathered, became common for purposes of pasturage or travel, until the time had come to use the ground again; and in some places a custom by which any one had the right to go upon ground which its owner neglected to cultivate, and there to sow and reap a crop in security. And if he chose to use manure for the first crop, he acquired the right to sow and gather a second crop without let or hindrance from the owner.

It is not merely the Swiss allmend, the Ditmarsch mark, the Servian and Russian village communities; not merely the long ridges which on English ground, now the exclusive property of individuals, still enable the antiquarian to trace out the great fields in ancient time devoted to the triennial rotation of crops, and in which each villager was annually allotted his equal plot; not merely the documentary evidence which careful students have within late years drawn from old records; but the very institu-



tions under which modern civilization has developed, which prove the universality and long persistence of the recognition of the common right to the use of the soil.

There still remain in our legal systems survivals that have lost their meaning, that, like the still existing remains of the ancient commons of England, point to this. The doctrine of eminent domain, existing as well in Mohammedan law, which makes the sovereign theoretically the only absolute owner of land, springs from nothing but the recognition of the sovereign as the representative of the collective rights of the people; primogeniture and entail, which still exist in England, and which existed in some of the American States a hundred years ago, are but distorted forms of what was once an outgrowth of the apprehension of land as common property. The very distinction made in legal terminology between real and personal property is but the survival of a primitive distinction between what was originally looked upon as common property and what from its nature was always considered the peculiar property of the individual. And the greater care and ceremony which are yet required for the transfer of land is but a survival, now meaningless and useless, of the more general and ceremonious consent once required for the transfer of rights which were looked upon, not as belonging to any one member, but to every member of a family or tribe.

The general course of the development of modern civilization since the feudal period has been to the subversion of these natural and primary ideas of collective ownership in the soil. Paradoxical as it may appear, the emergence of liberty from feudal bonds has been accompanied by a tendency in the treatment of land to the form of ownership which involves the enslavement of the working classes, and which is now beginning to be strongly felt all over the civilized world, in the pressure of an iron yoke, which cannot be relieved by any extension of mere

political power or personal liberty, and which political economists mistake for the pressure of natural laws, and workmen for the oppressions of capital.

This is clear—that in Great Britain to-day the right of the people as a whole to the soil of their native country is much less fully acknowledged than it was in feudal times. A much smaller proportion of the people own the soil, and their ownership is much more absolute. The commons, once so extensive and so largely contributing to the independence and support of the lower classes, have, all but a small remnant of yet worthless land, been appropriated to individual ownership and inclosed; the great estates of the church, which were essentially common property devoted to a public purpose, have been diverted from that trust to enrich individuals; the dues of the military tenants have been shaken off, and the cost of maintaining the military establishment and paying the interest upon an immense debt accumulated by wars has been saddled upon the whole people, in taxes upon the necessaries and comforts of life. The crown lands have mostly passed into private possession, and for the support of the royal family and all the petty princelings who marry into it, the British workman must pay in the price of his mug of beer and pipe of tobacco. The English yeoman—the sturdy breed who won Crecy, and Poitiers, and Agincourt—is as extinct as the mastodon. The Scottish clansman, whose right to the soil of his native hills was then as undisputed as that of his chieftain, has been driven out to make room for the sheep ranges or deer parks of that chieftain's descendant; the tribal right of the Irishman has been turned into a tenancy-at-will. Thirty thousand men have legal power to expel the whole population from five-sixths of the British Islands, and the vast majority of the British people have no right whatever to their native land save to walk the streets or trudge the roads. To them may be fittingly applied the

words of a Tribune of the Roman People: "*Men of Rome,*" said Tiberius Gracchus—"men of Rome, you are called the lords of the world, yet have no right to a square foot of its soil! The wild beasts have their dens, but the soldiers of Italy have only water and air!"

The result has, perhaps, been more marked in England than anywhere else, but the tendency is observable everywhere, having gone further in England owing to circumstances which have developed it with greater rapidity.

The reason, I take it, that with the extension of the idea of personal freedom has gone on an extension of the idea of private property in land, is that as in the progress of civilization the grosser forms of supremacy connected with land ownership were dropped, or abolished, or became less obvious, attention was diverted from the more insidious, but really more potential forms, and the land owners were easily enabled to put property in land on the same basis as other property.

The growth of national power, either in the form of royalty or parliamentary government, stripped the great lords of individual power and importance, and of their jurisdiction and power over persons, and so repressed striking abuses, as the growth of Roman Imperialism repressed the more striking cruelties of slavery. The disintegration of the large feudal estates, which, until the tendency to concentration arising from the modern tendency to production upon a large scale is strongly felt, operated to increase the number of land owners, and the abolition of the restraints by which land owners when population was sparser endeavored to compel laborers to remain on their estates also contributed to draw away attention from the essential injustice involved in private property in land; while the steady progress of legal ideas drawn from the Roman law, which has been the great mine and storehouse of modern jurisprudence, tended to level the natural distinction between property in land

and property in other things. Thus, with the extension of personal liberty, went on an extension of individual proprietorship in land.

The political power of the barons was, moreover, not broken by the revolt of the classes who could clearly feel the injustice of land ownership. Such revolts took place, again and again; but again and again were they repressed with terrific cruelties. What broke the power of the barons was the growth of the artisan and trading classes, between whose wages and rent there is not the same obvious relation. These classes, too, developed under a system of close guilds and corporations, which, as I have previously explained in treating of trade combinations and monopolies, enabled them somewhat to fence themselves in from the operation of the general law of wages, and which were much more easily maintained than now, when the effect of improved methods of transportation, and the diffusion of rudimentary education and of current news, is steadily making population more mobile. These classes did not see, and do not yet see, that the tenure of land is the fundamental fact which must ultimately determine the conditions of industrial, social, and political life. And so the tendency has been to assimilate the idea of property in land with that of property in things of human production, and even steps backward have been taken, and been hailed, as steps in advance. The French Constituent Assembly, in 1789, thought it was sweeping away a relic of tyranny when it abolished tithes and imposed the support of the clergy on general taxation. The Abbé Sieyès stood alone when he told them that they were simply remitting to the proprietors a tax which was one of the conditions on which they held their lands, and reimposing it on the labor of the nation. But in vain. The Abbé Sieyès, being a priest, was looked on as defending the interests of his order, when in truth he was defending the rights of man. In those tithes,

the French people might have retained a large public revenue which would not have taken one centime from the wages of labor or the earnings of capital.

And so the abolition of the military tenures in England by the Long Parliament, ratified after the accession of Charles II., though simply an appropriation of public revenues by the feudal land holders, who thus got rid of the consideration on which they held the common property of the nation, and saddled it on the people at large, in the taxation of all consumers, has long been characterized, and is still held up in the law books, as a triumph of the spirit of freedom. Yet here is the source of the immense debt and heavy taxation of England. Had the form of these feudal dues been simply changed into one better adapted to the changed times, English wars need never have occasioned the incurring of debt to the amount of a single pound, and the labor and capital of England need not have been taxed a single farthing for the maintenance of a military establishment. All this would have come from rent, which the land holders since that time have appropriated to themselves—from the tax which land ownership levies on the earnings of labor and capital. The land holders of England got their land on terms which required them even in the sparse population of Norman days to put in the field, upon call, sixty thousand perfectly equipped horsemen,\* and on the further condition of various fines and incidents which amounted to a considerable part of the rent. It would probably be a low estimate to put the pecuniary value of these various services and dues at one-half the rental value of the land. Had the land holders been kept to this contract

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\* Andrew Bisset, in "The Strength of Nations," London, 1859, a suggestive work in which he calls the attention of the English people to this measure by which the land owners avoided the payment of their rent to the nation, disputes the statement of Blackstone that a knight's service was but for 40 days, and says it was during necessity.

and no land been permitted to be inclosed except upon similar terms, the income accruing to the nation from English land would to-day be greater by many millions than the entire public revenues of the United Kingdom. England to-day might have enjoyed absolute free trade. There need not have been a customs duty, an excise, license, or income tax, yet all the present expenditures could be met, and a large surplus remain to be devoted to any purpose which would conduce to the comfort or well-being of the whole people.

Turning back, wherever there is light to guide us, we may everywhere see that in their first perceptions, all peoples have recognized the common ownership in land, and that private property is an usurpation, a creation of force and fraud.

As Madame de Stael said, "Liberty is ancient." Justice, if we turn to the most ancient records, will always be found to have the title of prescription.

## CHAPTER V.

### OF PROPERTY IN LAND IN THE UNITED STATES.

In the earlier stages of civilization we see that land is everywhere regarded as common property. And, turning from the dim past to our own times, we may see that natural perceptions are still the same, and that when placed under circumstances in which the influence of education and habit is weakened, men instinctively recognize the equality of right to the bounty of nature.

The discovery of gold in California brought together in a new country men who had been used to look on land as the rightful subject of individual property, and of whom probably not one in a thousand had ever dreamed of drawing any distinction between property in land and property in anything else. But, for the first time in the history of the Anglo-Saxon race, these men were brought into contact with land from which gold could be obtained by the simple operation of washing it out.

Had the land with which they were thus called upon to deal been agricultural, or grazing, or forest land, of peculiar richness; had it been land which derived peculiar value from its situation for commercial purposes, or by reason of the water power which it afforded; or even had it contained rich mines of coal, iron or lead, the land system to which they had been used would have been applied, and it would have been reduced to private ownership in large tracts, as even the pueblo lands of San Francisco, really the most valuable in the State, which by Spanish law had been set apart to furnish homes for the future residents of that city, were reduced, without any

protest worth speaking of. But the novelty of the case broke through habitual ideas, and threw men back upon first principles, and it was by common consent declared that this gold-bearing land should remain common property, of which no one might take more than he could reasonably use, or hold for a longer time than he continued to use it. This perception of natural justice was acquiesced in by the General Government and the courts, and while placer mining remained of importance, no attempt was made to overrule this reversion to primitive ideas. The title to the land remained in the government, and no individual could acquire more than a possessory claim. The miners in each district fixed the amount of ground an individual could take and the amount of work that must be done to constitute use. If this work were not done, any one could re-locate the ground. Thus, no one was allowed to forestall or to lock up natural resources. Labor was acknowledged as the creator of wealth, was given a free field, and secured in its reward. The device would not have assured complete equality of rights under the conditions that in most countries prevail; but under the conditions that there and then existed—a sparse population, an unexplored country, and an occupation in its nature a lottery, it secured substantial justice. One man might strike an enormously rich deposit, and others might vainly prospect for months and years, but all had an equal chance. No one was allowed to play the dog in the manger with the bounty of the Creator. The essential idea of the mining regulations was to prevent forestalling and monopoly. Upon the same principle are based the mining laws of Mexico; and the same principle was adopted in Australia, in British Columbia, and in the diamond fields of South Africa, for it accords with natural perceptions of justice.

With the decadence of placer mining in California, the accustomed idea of private property finally prevailed in



the passage of a law permitting the patenting of mineral lands. The only effect is to lock up opportunities—to give the owner of mining ground the power of saying that no one else may use what he does not choose to use himself. And there are many cases in which mining ground is thus withheld from use for speculative purposes, just as valuable building lots and agricultural land are withheld from use. But while thus preventing use, the extension to mineral land of the same principle of private ownership which marks the tenure of other lands has done nothing for the security of improvements. The greatest expenditures of capital in opening and developing mines—expenditures that in some cases amounted to millions of dollars—were made upon possessory titles.

Had the circumstances which beset the first English settlers in North America been such as to call their attention *de novo* to the question of land ownership, there can be no doubt that they would have reverted to first principles, just as they reverted to first principles in matters of government; and individual land ownership would have been rejected, just as aristocracy and monarchy were rejected. But while in the country from which they came this system had not yet fully developed itself, nor its effects been fully felt, the fact that in the new country an immense continent invited settlement prevented any question of the justice and policy of private property in land from arising. For in a new country, equality seems sufficiently assured if no one is permitted to take land to the exclusion of the rest. At first no harm seems to be done by treating this land as absolute property. There is plenty of land left for those who choose to take it, and the slavery that in a later stage of development necessarily springs from the individual ownership of land is not felt.

In Virginia and to the South, where the settlement had an aristocratic character, the natural complement of

the large estates into which the land was carved was introduced in the shape of negro slaves. But the first settlers of New England divided the land as, twelve centuries before, their ancestors had divided the land of Britain, giving to each head of a family his town lot and his seed lot, while beyond lay the free common. So far as concerned the great proprietors whom the English kings by letters patent endeavored to create, the settlers saw clearly enough the injustice of the attempted monopoly, and none of these proprietors got much from their grants; but the plentifulness of land prevented attention from being called to the monopoly which individual land ownership, even when the tracts are small, must involve when land becomes scarce. And so it has come to pass that the great republic of the modern world has adopted at the beginning of its career an institution that ruined the republics of antiquity; that a people who proclaim the inalienable rights of all men to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness have accepted without question a principle which, in denying the equal and inalienable right to the soil, finally denies the equal right to life and liberty; that a people who at the cost of a bloody war have abolished chattel slavery, yet permit slavery in a more widespread and dangerous form to take root.

The continent has seemed so wide, the area over which population might yet pour so vast, that familiarized by habit with the idea of private property in land, we have not realized its essential injustice. For not merely has this background of unsettled land prevented the full effect of private appropriation from being felt, even in the older sections, but to permit a man to take more land than he could use, that he might compel those who afterwards needed it to pay him for the privilege of using it, has not seemed so unjust when others in their turn might do the same thing by going further on. And more than this, the very fortunes that have resulted from the appropria-

tion of land, and that have thus really been drawn from taxes levied upon the wages of labor, have seemed, and have been heralded, as prizes held out to the laborer. In all the newer States, and even to a considerable extent in the older ones, our landed aristocracy is yet in its first generation. Those who have profited by the increase in the value of land have been largely men who began life without a cent. Their great fortunes, many of them running up high into the millions, seem to them, and to many others, as the best proofs of the justice of existing social conditions in rewarding prudence, foresight, industry, and thrift; whereas, the truth is that these fortunes are but the gains of monopoly, and are necessarily made at the expense of labor. But the fact that those thus enriched started as laborers hides this, and the same feeling which leads every ticket holder in a lottery to delight in imagination in the magnitude of the prizes has prevented even the poor from quarreling with a system which thus made many poor men rich.

In short, the American people have failed to see the essential injustice of private property in land, because as yet they have not felt its full effects. This public domain—the vast extent of land yet to be reduced to private possession, the enormous common to which the faces of the energetic were always turned, has been the great fact that, since the days when the first settlements began to fringe the Atlantic Coast, has formed our national character and colored our national thought. It is not that we have eschewed a titled aristocracy and abolished primogeniture; that we elect all our officers from school director up to president; that our laws run in the name of the people, instead of in the name of a prince; that the State knows no religion, and our judges wear no wigs—that we have been exempted from the ills that Fourth of July orators used to point to as characteristic of the effete despotisms of the Old World. The

general intelligence, the general comfort, the active invention, the power of adaptation and assimilation, the free, independent spirit, the energy and hopefulness that have marked our people, are not causes, but results—they have sprung from unfenced land. This public domain has been the transmuting force which has turned the thriftless, unambitious European peasant into the self-reliant Western farmer; it has given a consciousness of freedom even to the dweller in crowded cities, and has been a well-spring of hope even to those who have never thought of taking refuge upon it. The child of the people, as he grows to manhood in Europe, finds all the best seats at the banquet of life marked “taken,” and must struggle with his fellows for the crumbs that fall, without one chance in a thousand of forcing or sneaking his way to a seat. In America, whatever his condition, there has always been the consciousness that the public domain lay behind him; and the knowledge of this fact, acting and reacting, has penetrated our whole national life, giving to it generosity and independence, elasticity and ambition. All that we are proud of in the American character; all that makes our conditions and institutions better than those of older countries, we may trace to the fact that land has been cheap in the United States, because new soil has been open to the emigrant.

But our advance has reached the Pacific. Further west we cannot go, and increasing population can but expand north and south and fill up what has been passed over. North, it is already filling up the valley of the Red River, pressing into that of the Saskatchewan and pre-empting Washington Territory; south, it is covering Western Texas and taking up the arable valleys of New Mexico and Arizona.

The republic has entered upon a new era, an era in which the monopoly of the land will tell with accelerating effect. The great fact which has been so potent is

ceasing to be. The public domain is almost gone—a very few years will end its influence, already rapidly failing. I do not mean to say that there will be no public domain. For a long time to come there will be millions of acres of public lands carried on the books of the Land Department. But it must be remembered that the best part of the continent for agricultural purposes is already overrun, and that it is the poorest land that is left. It must be remembered that what remains comprises the great mountain ranges, the sterile deserts, the high plains fit only for grazing. And it must be remembered that much of this land which figures in the reports as open to settlement is unsurveyed land, which has been appropriated by possessory claims or locations which do not appear until the land is returned as surveyed. California figures on the books of the Land Department as the greatest land State of the Union, containing nearly 100,000,000 acres of public land—something like one-twelfth of the whole public domain. Yet so much of this is covered by railroad grants or held in the way of which I have spoken; so much consists of untillable mountains or plains which require irrigation; so much is monopolized by locations which command the water, that as a matter of fact it is difficult to point the immigrant to any part of the State where he can take up a farm on which he can settle and maintain a family, and so men, weary of the quest, end by buying land or renting it on shares. It is not that there is any real scarcity of land in California—for, an empire in herself, California will some day maintain a population as large as that of France—but appropriation has got ahead of the settler and manages to keep just ahead of him.

Some twelve or fifteen years ago the late Ben Wade of Ohio said, in a speech in the United States Senate, that by the close of this century every acre of ordinary agricultural land in the United States would be worth \$50 in

gold. It is already clear that if he erred at all, it was in overstating the time. In the twenty-one years that remain of the present century, if our population keep on increasing at the rate which it has maintained since the institution of the government, with the exception of the decade which included the civil war, there will be an addition to our present population of something like forty-five millions, an addition of some seven millions more than the total population of the United States as shown by the census of 1870, and nearly half as much again as the present population of Great Britain. There is no question about the ability of the United States to support such a population and many hundreds of millions more, and, under proper social adjustments, to support them in increased comfort; but in view of such an increase of population, what becomes of the unappropriated public domain? Practically there will soon cease to be any. It will be a very long time before it is all in use; but it will be a very short time, as we are going, before all that men can turn to use will have an owner.

But the evil effects of making the land of a whole people the exclusive property of some do not wait for the final appropriation of the public domain to show themselves. It is not necessary to contemplate them in the future; we may see them in the present. They have grown with our growth, and are still increasing.

We plow new fields, we open new mines, we found new cities; we drive back the Indian and exterminate the buffalo; we girdle the land with iron roads and lace the air with telegraph wires; we add knowledge to knowledge, and utilize invention after invention; we build schools and endow colleges; yet it becomes no easier for the masses of our people to make a living. On the contrary, it is becoming harder. The wealthy class is becoming more wealthy; but the poorer class is becoming more dependent. The gulf between the em-

ployed and the employer is growing wider; social contrasts are becoming sharper; as liveried carriages appear, so do barefooted children. We are becoming used to talk of the working classes and the propertied classes; beggars are becoming so common that where it was once thought a crime little short of highway robbery to refuse food to one who asked for it, the gate is now barred and the bulldog loosed, while laws are passed against vagrants which suggest those of Henry VIII.

We call ourselves the most progressive people on earth. But what is the goal of our progress, if these are its wayside fruits?

These are the results of private property in land—the effects of a principle that must act with increasing and increasing force. It is not that laborers have increased faster than capital; it is not that population is pressing against subsistence; it is not that machinery has made “work scarce;” it is not that there is any real antagonism between labor and capital—it is simply that land is becoming more valuable; that the terms on which labor can obtain access to the natural opportunities which alone enable it to produce are becoming harder and harder. The public domain is receding and narrowing. Property in land is concentrating. The proportion of our people who have no legal right to the land on which they live is becoming steadily larger.

Says the *New York World*: “A non-resident proprietary, like that of Ireland, is getting to be the characteristic of large farming districts in New England, adding yearly to the nominal value of leasehold farms; advancing yearly the rent demanded, and steadily degrading the character of the tenantry.” And the *Nation*, alluding to the same section, says: “Increased nominal value of land, higher rents, fewer farms occupied by owners; diminished product; lower wages; a more ignorant population; increasing number of women

employed at hard, outdoor labor (surest sign of a declining civilization), and a steady deterioration in the style of farming—these are the conditions described by a cumulative mass of evidence that is perfectly irresistible.”

The same tendency is observable in the new States, where the large scale of cultivation recalls the *latifundia* that ruined ancient Italy. In California a very large proportion of the farming land is rented from year to year, at rates varying from a fourth to even half the crop.

The harder times, the lower wages, the increasing poverty perceptible in the United States are but results of the natural laws we have traced—laws as universal and as irresistible as that of gravitation. We did not establish the republic when, in the face of principalities and powers, we flung the declaration of the inalienable rights of man; we shall never establish the republic until we practically carry out that declaration by securing to the poorest child born among us an equal right to his native soil! We did not abolish slavery when we ratified the Fourteenth Amendment; to abolish slavery we must abolish private property in land! Unless we come back to first principles, unless we recognize natural perceptions of equity, unless we acknowledge the equal right of all to land, our free institutions will be in vain; our common schools will be in vain; our discoveries and inventions will but add to the force that presses the masses down!



# BOOK VIII.

## APPLICATION OF THE REMEDY.

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CHAPTER I.—PRIVATE PROPERTY IN LAND INCONSISTENT  
WITH THE BEST USE OF LAND.

CHAPTER II.—HOW EQUAL RIGHTS TO THE LAND MAY BE  
ASSERTED AND SECURED.

CHAPTER III.—THE PROPOSITION TRIED BY THE CANONS  
OF TAXATION.

CHAPTER IV.—INDORSEMENTS AND OBJECTIONS.

Why hesitate? Ye are full-bearded men,  
With God-implanted will, and courage if  
Ye dare but show it. Never yet was will  
But found some way or means to work it out,  
Nor e'er did Fortune frown on him who dared.  
Shall we in presence of this grievous wrong,  
In this supremest moment of all time,  
Stand trembling, cowering, when with one bold stroke  
These groaning millions might be ever free?—  
And that one stroke so just, so greatly good,  
So level with the happiness of man,  
That all the angels will applaud the deed.

—*E. R. Taylor.*

## CHAPTER I.

### PRIVATE PROPERTY IN LAND INCONSISTENT WITH THE BEST USE OF LAND.

There is a delusion resulting from the tendency to confound the accidental with the essential—a delusion which the law writers have done their best to extend, and political economists generally have acquiesced in, rather than endeavored to expose—that private property in land is necessary to the proper use of land, and that again to make land common property would be to destroy civilization and revert to barbarism.

This delusion may be likened to the idea which, according to Charles Lamb, so long prevailed among the Chinese after the savor of roast pork had been accidentally discovered by the burning down of Ho-ti's hut—that to cook a pig it was necessary to set fire to a house. But, though in Lamb's charming dissertation it was required that a sage should arise to teach people that they might roast pigs without burning down houses, it does not take a sage to see that what is required for the improvement of land is not absolute ownership of the land, but security for the improvements. This will be obvious to whoever will look around him. While there is no more necessity for making a man the absolute and exclusive owner of land, in order to induce him to improve it, than there is of burning down a house in order to cook a pig; while the making of land private property is as rude, wasteful, and uncertain a device for securing improvement, as the burning down of a house is a rude, wasteful, and uncertain device for roasting a pig, we have not

the excuse for persisting in the one that Lamb's Chinamen had for persisting in the other. Until the sage arose who invented the rude gridiron, which according to Lamb, preceded the spit and oven, no one had known or heard of a pig being roasted, except by a house being burned. But, among us, nothing is more common than for land to be improved by those who do not own it. The greater part of the land of Great Britain is cultivated by tenants, the greater part of the buildings of London are built upon leased ground, and even in the United States the same system prevails everywhere to a greater or less extent. Thus it is a common matter for use to be separated from ownership.

Would not all this land be cultivated and improved just as well if the rent went to the State or municipality, as now, when it goes to private individuals? If no private ownership in land were acknowledged, but all land were held in this way, the occupier or user paying rent to the State, would not land be used and improved as well and as securely as now? There can be but one answer: Of course it would. Then would the resumption of land as common property in nowise interfere with the proper use and improvement of land.

What is necessary for the use of land is not its private ownership, but the security of improvements. It is not necessary to say to a man, "this land is yours," in order to induce him to cultivate or improve it. It is only necessary to say to him, "whatever your labor or capital produces on this land shall be yours." Give a man security that he may reap, and he will sow; assure him of the possession of the house he wants to build, and he will build it. These are the natural rewards of labor. It is for the sake of the reaping that men sow; it is for the sake of possessing houses that men build. The ownership of land has nothing to do with it.

It was for the sake of obtaining this security, that in

the beginning of the feudal period so many of the smaller land holders surrendered the ownership of their lands to a military chieftain, receiving back the use of them in fief or trust, and kneeling bareheaded before the lord, with their hands between his hands, swore to serve him with life, and limb, and worldly honor. Similar instances of the giving up of ownership in land for the sake of security in its enjoyment are to be seen in Turkey, where a peculiar exemption from taxation and extortion attaches to *vakouf*, or church lands, and where it is a common thing for a land owner to sell his land to a mosque for a nominal price, with the understanding that he may remain as tenant upon it at a fixed rent.

It is not the magic of property, as Arthur Young said, that has turned Flemish sands into fruitful fields. It is the magic of security to labor. This can be secured in other ways than making land private property, just as the heat necessary to roast a pig can be secured in other ways than by burning down houses. The mere pledge of an Irish landlord that for twenty years he would not claim in rent any share in their cultivation induced Irish peasants to turn a barren mountain into gardens; on the mere security of a fixed ground rent for a term of years the most costly buildings of such cities as London and New York are erected on leased ground. If we give improvers such security, we may safely abolish private property in land.

The complete recognition of common rights to land need in no way interfere with the complete recognition of individual right to improvements or produce. Two men may own a ship without sawing her in half. The ownership of a railway may be divided into a hundred thousand shares, and yet trains be run with as much system and precision as if there were but a single owner. In London, joint stock companies have been formed to hold and manage real estate. Everything could go on as

now, and yet the common right to land be fully recognized by appropriating rent to the common benefit. There is a lot in the center of San Francisco to which the common rights of the people of that city are yet legally recognized. This lot is not cut up into infinitesimal pieces nor yet is it an unused waste. It is covered with fine buildings, the property of private individuals, that stand there in perfect security. The only difference between this lot and those around it, is that the rent of the one goes into the common school fund, the rent of the others into private pockets. What is to prevent the land of a whole country being held by the people of the country in this way?

It would be difficult to select any portion of the territory of the United States in which the conditions commonly taken to necessitate the reduction of land to private ownership exist in higher degree than on the little islets of St. Peter and St. Paul, in the Aleutian Archipelago, acquired by the Alaska purchase from Russia. These islands are the breeding places of the fur seal, an animal so timid and wary that the slightest fright causes it to abandon its accustomed resort, never to return. To prevent the utter destruction of this fishery, without which the islands are of no use to man, it is not only necessary to avoid killing the females and young cubs, but even such noises as the discharge of a pistol or the barking of a dog. The men who do the killing must be in no hurry, but quietly walk around among the seals who line the rocky beaches, until the timid animals, so clumsy on land but so graceful in water, show no more sign of fear than lazily to waddle out of the way. Then those who can be killed without diminution of future increase are carefully separated and gently driven inland, out of sight and hearing of the herds, where they are dispatched with clubs. To throw such a fishery as this open to whoever chose to go and

kill—which would make it to the interest of each party to kill as many as they could at the time without reference to the future—would be utterly to destroy it in a few seasons, as similar fisheries in other oceans have been destroyed. But it is not necessary, therefore, to make these islands private property. Though for reasons greatly less cogent, the great public domain of the American people has been made over to private ownership as fast as anybody could be got to take it, these islands have been leased at a rent of \$317,500 per year,\* probably not very much less than they could have been sold for at the time of the Alaska purchase. They have already yielded two millions and a half to the national treasury, and they are still, in unimpaired value (for under the careful management of the Alaska Fur Company the seals increase rather than diminish), the common property of the people of the United States.

So far from the recognition of private property in land being necessary to the proper use of land, the contrary is the case. Treating land as private property stands in the way of its proper use. Were land treated as public property it would be used and improved as soon as there was need for its use or improvement, but being treated as private property, the individual owner is permitted to prevent others from using or improving what he cannot or will not use or improve himself. When the title is in dispute, the most valuable land lies unimproved for years; in many parts of England improvement is stopped because, the estates being entailed, no security to improvers can be given; and large tracts of ground which, were they treated as public property, would be covered with buildings and crops, are kept idle to gratify the

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\* The fixed rent under the lease to the Alaska Fur Company is \$55,000 a year, with a payment of \$2.62 1-2 on each skin, which on 100,000 skins, to which the take is limited, amounts to \$262,500—a total rent of \$317,500.

caprice of the owner. In the thickly settled parts of the United States there is enough land to maintain three or four times our present population, lying unused, because its owners are holding it for higher prices, and immigrants are forced past this unused land to seek homes where their labor will be far less productive. In every city valuable lots may be seen lying vacant for the same reason. If the best use of land be the test, then private property in land is condemned, as it is condemned by every other consideration. It is as wasteful and uncertain a mode of securing the proper use of land as the burning down of houses is of roasting pigs.



## CHAPTER II.

### HOW EQUAL RIGHTS TO THE LAND MAY BE ASSERTED AND SECURED.

We have traced the want and suffering that everywhere prevail among the working classes, the recurring paroxysms of industrial depression, the scarcity of employment, the stagnation of capital, the tendency of wages to the starvation point, that exhibit themselves more and more strongly as material progress goes on, to the fact that the land on which and from which all must live is made the exclusive property of some.

We have seen that there is no possible remedy for these evils but the abolition of their cause; we have seen that private property in land has no warrant in justice, but stands condemned as the denial of natural right—a subversion of the law of nature that as social development goes on must condemn the masses of men to a slavery the hardest and most degrading.

We have weighed every objection, and seen that neither on the ground of equity or expediency is there anything to deter us from making land common property by confiscating rent.

But a question of method remains. How shall we do it?

We should satisfy the law of justice, we should meet all economic requirements, by at one stroke abolishing all private titles, declaring all land public property, and letting it out to the highest bidders in lots to suit, under such conditions as would sacredly guard the private right to improvements.

Thus we should secure, in a more complex state of

society, the same equality of rights that in a ruder state were secured by equal partitions of the soil, and by giving the use of the land to whoever could procure the most from it, we should secure the greatest production.

Such a plan, instead of being a wild, impracticable vagary, has (with the exception that he suggests compensation to the present holders of land—undoubtedly a careless concession which he upon reflection would reconsider) been indorsed by no less eminent a thinker than Herbert Spencer, who (“Social Statics,” Chap. IX, Sec. 8) says of it:

“Such a doctrine is consistent with the highest state of civilization; may be carried out without involving a community of goods, and need cause no very serious revolution in existing arrangements. The change required would simply be a change of landlords. Separate ownership would merge into the joint-stock ownership of the public. Instead of being in the possession of individuals, the country would be held by the great corporate body—society. Instead of leasing his acres from an isolated proprietor, the farmer would lease them from the nation. Instead of paying his rent to the agent of Sir John or his Grace, he would pay it to an agent or deputy agent of the community. Stewards would be public officials instead of private ones, and tenancy the only land tenure. A state of things so ordered would be in perfect harmony with the moral law. Under it all men would be equally landlords, all men would be alike free to become tenants. \* \* \* Clearly, therefore, on such a system, the earth might be enclosed, occupied and cultivated, in entire subordination to the law of equal freedom.”

But such a plan, though perfectly feasible, does not seem to me the best. Or rather I propose to accomplish the same thing in a simpler, easier, and quieter way, than that of formally confiscating all the land and formally letting it out to the highest bidders.

To do that would involve a needless shock to present customs and habits of thought—which is to be avoided.

To do that would involve a needless extension of governmental machinery—which is to be avoided.

It is an axiom of statesmanship, which the successful founders of tyranny have understood and acted upon—that great changes can best be brought about under old forms. We, who would free men, should heed the same truth. It is the natural method. When nature would make a higher type, she takes a lower one and develops it. This, also, is the law of social growth. Let us work by it. With the current we may glide fast and far. Against it, it is hard pulling and slow progress.

I do not propose either to purchase or to confiscate private property in land. The first would be unjust; the second, needless. Let the individuals who now hold it still retain, if they want to, possession of what they are pleased to call *their* land. Let them continue to call it *their* land. Let them buy and sell, and bequeath and devise it. We may safely leave them the shell, if we take the kernel. *It is not necessary to confiscate land; it is only necessary to confiscate rent.*

Nor to take rent for public uses is it necessary that the State should bother with the letting of lands, and assume the chances of the favoritism, collusion, and corruption this might involve. It is not necessary that any new machinery should be created. The machinery already exists. Instead of extending it, all we have to do is to simplify and reduce it. By leaving to land owners a percentage of rent which would probably be much less than the cost and loss involved in attempting to rent lands through State agency, and by making use of this existing machinery, we may, without jar or shock, assert the common right to land by taking rent for public uses.

We already take some rent in taxation. We have only to make some changes in our modes of taxation to take it all.

What I, therefore, propose, as the simple yet sovereign remedy, which will raise wages, increase the earnings of capital, extirpate pauperism, abolish poverty, give re-

munerative employment to whoever wishes it, afford free scope to human powers, lessen crime, elevate morals, and taste, and intelligence, purify government and carry civilization to yet nobler heights, is—*to appropriate rent by taxation.*

In this way the State may become the universal landlord without calling herself so, and without assuming a single new function. In form, the ownership of land would remain just as now. No owner of land need be dispossessed, and no restriction need be placed upon the amount of land any one could hold. For, rent being taken by the State in taxes, land, no matter in whose name it stood, or in what parcels it was held, would be really common property, and every member of the community would participate in the advantages of its ownership.

Now, insomuch as the taxation of rent, or land values, must necessarily be increased just as we abolish other taxes, we may put the proposition into practical form by proposing—

*To abolish all taxation save that upon land values.*

As we have seen, the value of land is at the beginning of society nothing, but as society develops by the increase of population and the advance of the arts, it becomes greater and greater. In every civilized country, even the newest, the value of the land taken as a whole is sufficient to bear the entire expenses of government. In the better developed countries it is much more than sufficient. Hence it will not be enough merely to place all taxes upon the value of land. It will be necessary, where rent exceeds the present governmental revenues, commensurately to increase the amount demanded in taxation, and to continue this increase as society progresses and rent advances. But this is so natural and easy a matter, that it may be considered as involved, or at least understood, in the proposition to put all taxes

on the value of land. That is the first step, upon which the practical struggle must be made. When the hare is once caught and killed, cooking him will follow as a matter of course. When the common right to land is so far appreciated that all taxes are abolished save those which fall upon rent, there is no danger of much more than is necessary to induce them to collect the public revenues being left to individual land holders.

Experience has taught me (for I have been for some years endeavoring to popularize this proposition) that wherever the idea of concentrating all taxation upon land values finds lodgment sufficient to induce consideration, it invariably makes way, but that there are few of the classes most to be benefited by it, who at first, or even for a long time afterward, see its full significance and power. It is difficult for workingmen to get over the idea that there is a real antagonism between capital and labor. It is difficult for small farmers and homestead owners to get over the idea that to put all taxes on the value of land would be unduly to tax them. It is difficult for both classes to get over the idea that to exempt capital from taxation would be to make the rich richer, and the poor poorer. These ideas spring from confused thought. But behind ignorance and prejudice there is a powerful interest, which has hitherto dominated literature, education, and opinion. A great wrong always dies hard, and the great wrong which in every civilized country condemns the masses of men to poverty and want, will not die without a bitter struggle.

I do not think the ideas of which I speak can be entertained by the reader who has followed me thus far; but inasmuch as any popular discussion must deal with the concrete, rather than with the abstract, let me ask him to follow me somewhat further, that we may try the remedy I have proposed by the accepted canons of taxation. In doing so, many incidental bearings may be seen that otherwise might escape notice.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE PROPOSITION TRIED BY THE CANONS OF TAXATION.

The best tax by which public revenues can be raised is evidently that which will closest conform to the following conditions:

1. That it bear as lightly as possible upon production—so as least to check the increase of the general fund from which taxes must be paid and the community maintained.

2. That it be easily and cheaply collected, and fall as directly as may be upon the ultimate payers—so as to take from the people as little as possible in addition to what it yields the government.

3. That it be certain—so as to give the least opportunity for tyranny or corruption on the part of officials, and the least temptation to law-breaking and evasion on the part of the taxpayers.

4. That it bear equally—so as to give no citizen an advantage or put any at a disadvantage, as compared with others.

Let us consider what form of taxation best accords with these conditions. Whatever it be, that evidently will be the best mode in which the public revenues can be raised.

#### *I.—The Effect of Taxes upon Production.*

All taxes must evidently come from the produce of land and labor, since there is no other source of wealth than the union of human exertion with the material and

forces of nature. But the manner in which equal amounts of taxation may be imposed may very differently affect the production of wealth. Taxation which lessens the reward of the producer necessarily lessens the incentive to production; taxation which is conditioned upon the act of production, or the use of any of the three factors of production, necessarily discourages production. Thus taxation which diminishes the earnings of the laborer or the returns of the capitalist tends to render the one less industrious and intelligent, the other less disposed to save and invest. Taxation which falls upon the processes of production interposes an artificial obstacle to the creation of wealth. Taxation which falls upon labor *as* it is exerted, wealth *as* it is used as capital, and *as* it is cultivated, will manifestly tend to discourage production much more powerfully than taxation to the same amount levied upon laborers, whether they work or play, upon wealth whether used productively or unproductively, or upon land whether cultivated or left waste.

The mode of taxation is, in fact, quite as important as the amount. As a small burden badly placed may distress a horse that could carry with ease a much larger one properly adjusted, so a people may be impoverished and their power of producing wealth destroyed by taxation, which, if levied in another way, could be borne with ease. A tax on date-trees, imposed by Mohammed Ali, caused the Egyptian fellahs to cut down their trees; but a tax of twice the amount imposed on the land produced no such result. The tax of ten per cent. on all sales, imposed by the Duke of Alva in the Netherlands, would, had it been maintained, have all but stopped exchange while yielding but little revenue.

But we need not go abroad for illustrations. The production of wealth in the United States is largely lessened by taxation which bears upon its processes. Ship-building, in which we excelled, has been all but

destroyed, so far as the foreign trade is concerned, and many branches of production and exchange seriously crippled, by taxes which divert industry from more to less productive forms.

This checking of production is in greater or less degree characteristic of most of the taxes by which the revenues of modern governments are raised. All taxes upon manufactures, all taxes upon commerce, all taxes upon capital, all taxes upon improvements, are of this kind. Their tendency is the same as that of Mohammed Ali's tax on date-trees, though their effect may not be so clearly seen.

All such taxes have a tendency to reduce the production of wealth, and should, therefore, never be resorted to when it is possible to raise money by taxes which do not check production. This becomes possible as society develops and wealth accumulates. Taxes which fall upon ostentation would simply turn into the public treasury what otherwise would be wasted in vain show for the sake of show; and taxes upon wills and devises of the rich would probably have little effect in checking the desire for accumulation, which, after it has fairly got hold of a man, becomes a blind passion. But the great class of taxes from which revenue may be derived without interference with production are taxes upon monopolies—for the profit of monopoly is in itself a tax levied upon production, and to tax it is simply to divert into the public coffers what production must in any event pay.

There are among us various sorts of monopolies. For instance, there are the temporary monopolies created by the patent and copyright laws. These it would be extremely unjust and unwise to tax, inasmuch as they are but recognitions of the right of labor to its intangible productions, and constitute a reward held out to inven-



tion and authorship.\* There are also the onerous monopolies alluded to in Chapter IV of Book III, which result from the aggregation of capital in businesses which are of the nature of monopolies. But while it would be extremely difficult, if not altogether impossible, to levy taxes by general law so that they would fall exclusively on the returns of such monopoly and not become taxes on production or exchange, it is much better that these monopolies should be abolished. In large part they spring from legislative commission or omission, as, for instance, the ultimate reason that San Francisco merchants are compelled to pay more for goods sent direct from New York to San Francisco by the Isthmus route than it costs to ship them from New York to Liverpool or Southampton and thence to San Francisco, is to be found in the "protective" laws which make it so costly

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\* Following the habit of confounding the exclusive right granted by a patent and that granted by a copyright as recognitions of the right of labor to its intangible productions, I in this fell into error which I subsequently acknowledged and corrected in the *Standard* of June 23, 1888. The two things are not alike, but essentially different. The copyright is not a right to the exclusive use of a fact, an idea, or a combination, which by the natural law of property all are free to use; but only to the labor expended in the thing itself. It does not prevent any one from using for himself the facts, the knowledge, the laws or combinations for a similar production, but only from using the identical form of the particular book or other production—the actual labor which has in short been expended in producing it. It rests therefore upon the natural, moral right of each one to enjoy the products of his own exertion, and involves no interference with the similar right of any one else to do likewise.

The patent, on the other hand, prohibits any one from doing a similar thing, and involves, usually for a specified time, an interference with the equal liberty on which the right of ownership rests. The copyright is therefore in accordance with the moral law—it gives to the man who has expended the intangible labor required to write a particular book or paint a picture security against the copying of that identical thing. The patent is in defiance of this natural right. It prohibits others from doing what has been already attempted. Every

to build American steamers and which forbid foreign steamers to carry goods between American ports. The reason that residents of Nevada are compelled to pay as much freight from the East as though their goods were carried to San Francisco and back again, is that the authority which prevents extortion on the part of a hack driver is not exercised in respect to a railroad company. And it may be said generally that businesses which are in their nature monopolies are properly part of the functions of the State, and should be assumed by the State. There is the same reason why Government should carry telegraphic messages as that it should carry letters; that railroads should belong to the public as that common roads should.

But all other monopolies are trivial in extent as compared with the monopoly of land. And the value of land expressing a monopoly, pure and simple, is in every respect fitted for taxation. That is to say, while the value of a railroad or telegraph line, the price of gas or of a patent medicine, may express the price of monopoly, it also expresses the exertion of labor and capital; but the value of land, or economic rent, as we have seen, is in no part made up from these factors, and expresses nothing but the advantage of appropriation. Taxes levied upon the value of land cannot check production in the slightest degree, until they exceed rent, or the value of land

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one has a moral right to think what I think, or to perceive what I perceive, or to do what I do—no matter whether he gets the hint from me or independently of me. Discovery can give no right of ownership, for whatever is discovered must have been already here to be discovered. If a man make a wheelbarrow, or a book, or a picture, he has a moral right to that particular wheelbarrow, or book, or picture, but no right to ask that others be prevented from making similar things. Such a prohibition, though given for the purpose of stimulating discovery and invention, really in the long run operates as a check upon them.

taken annually, for unlike taxes upon commodities, or exchange, or capital, or any of the tools or processes of production, they do not bear upon production. The value of land does not express the reward of production, as does the value of crops, of cattle, of buildings, or any of the things which are styled personal property and improvements. It expresses the exchange value of monopoly. It is not in any case the creation of the individual who owns the land; it is created by the growth of the community. Hence the community can take it all without in any way lessening the incentive to improvement or in the slightest degree lessening the production of wealth. Taxes may be imposed upon the value of land until all rent is taken by the State, without reducing the wages of labor or the reward of capital one iota; without increasing the price of a single commodity, or making production in any way more difficult.

But more than this. Taxes on the value of land not only do not check production as do most other taxes, but they tend to increase production, by destroying speculative rent. How speculative rent checks production may be seen not only in the valuable land withheld from use, but in the paroxysms of industrial depression which, originating in the speculative advance in land values, propagate themselves over the whole civilized world, everywhere paralyzing industry, and causing more waste and probably more suffering than would a general war. Taxation which would take rent for public uses would prevent all this; while if land were taxed to anything near its rental value, no one could afford to hold land that he was not using, and, consequently, land not in use would be thrown open to those who would use it. Settlement would be closer, and, consequently, labor and capital would be enabled to produce much more with the same exertion. The dog in the manger who, in this country especially, so wastes productive power, would be choked off.

There is yet an even more important way by which, through its effect upon distribution, the taking of rent to public uses by taxation would stimulate the production of wealth. But reference to that may be reserved. It is sufficiently evident that with regard to production, the tax upon the value of land is the best tax that can be imposed. Tax manufactures, and the effect is to check manufacturing; tax improvements, and the effect is to lessen improvement; tax commerce, and the effect is to prevent exchange; tax capital, and the effect is to drive it away. But the whole value of land may be taken in taxation, and the only effect will be to stimulate industry, to open new opportunities to capital, and to increase the production of wealth.

## *II.—As to Ease and Cheapness of Collection.*

With, perhaps, the exception of certain licenses and stamp duties, which may be made almost to collect themselves, but which can be relied on for only a trivial amount of revenue, a tax upon land values can, of all taxes, be most easily and cheaply collected. For land cannot be hidden or carried off; its value can be readily ascertained, and the assessment once made, nothing but a receiver is required for collection.

And as under all fiscal systems some part of the public revenues is collected from taxes on land, and the machinery for that purpose already exists and could as well be made to collect all as a part, the cost of collecting the revenue now obtained by other taxes might be entirely saved by substituting the tax on land values for all other taxes. What an enormous saving might thus be made can be inferred from the horde of officials now engaged in collecting these taxes.

This saving would largely reduce the difference between what taxation now costs the people and what it yields, but the substitution of a tax on land values for

all other taxes would operate to reduce this difference in an even more important way.

A tax on land values does not add to prices, and is thus paid directly by the persons on whom it falls; whereas, all taxes upon things of unfixed quantity increase prices, and in the course of exchange are shifted from seller to buyer, increasing as they go. If we impose a tax upon money loaned, as has been often attempted, the lender will charge the tax to the borrower, and the borrower must pay it or not obtain the loan. If the borrower uses it in his business, he in his turn must get back the tax from his customers, or his business becomes unprofitable. If we impose a tax upon buildings, the users of buildings must finally pay it, for the erection of buildings will cease until building rents become high enough to pay the regular profit and the tax besides. If we impose a tax upon manufactures or imported goods, the manufacturer or importer will charge it in a higher price to the jobber, the jobber to the retailer, and the retailer to the consumer. Now, the consumer, on whom the tax thus ultimately falls, must not only pay the amount of the tax, but also a profit on this amount to every one who has thus advanced it—for profit on the capital he has advanced in paying taxes is as much required by each dealer as profit on the capital he has advanced in paying for goods. Manila cigars cost, when bought of the importer in San Francisco, \$70 a thousand, of which \$14 is the cost of the cigars laid down in this port and \$56 is the customs duty. But the dealer who purchases these cigars to sell again must charge a profit, not on \$14, the real cost of the cigars, but on \$70, the cost of the cigars plus the duty. In this way all taxes which add to prices are shifted from hand to hand, increasing as they go, until they ultimately rest upon consumers, who thus pay much more than is received by the government. Now, the way taxes raise prices is by increasing the cost of pro-

duction, and checking supply. But land is not a thing of human production, and taxes upon rent cannot check supply. Therefore, though a tax on rent compels the land owners to pay more, it gives them no power to obtain more for the use of their land, as it in no way tends to reduce the supply of land. On the contrary, by compelling those who hold land on speculation to sell or let for what they can get, a tax on land values tends to increase the competition between owners, and thus to reduce the price of land.

Thus in all respects a tax upon land values is the cheapest tax by which a large revenue can be raised—giving to the government the largest net revenue in proportion to the amount taken from the people.

### *III.—As to Certainty.*

Certainty is an important element in taxation, for just as the collection of a tax depends upon the diligence and faithfulness of the collectors and the public spirit and honesty of those who are to pay it, will opportunities for tyranny and corruption be opened on the one side, and for evasions and frauds on the other.

The methods by which the bulk of our revenues are collected are condemned on this ground, if on no other. The gross corruptions and fraud occasioned in the United States by the whisky and tobacco taxes are well known; the constant undervaluations of the Custom House, the ridiculous untruthfulness of income tax returns, and the absolute impossibility of getting anything like a just valuation of personal property, are matters of notoriety. The material loss which such taxes inflict—the item of cost which this uncertainty adds to the amount paid by the people but not received by the government—is very great. When, in the days of the protective system of England, her coasts were lined with an army of men endeavoring to prevent smuggling, and an

other army of men were engaged in evading them, it is evident that the maintenance of both armies had to come from the produce of labor and capital; that the expenses and profits of the smugglers, as well as the pay and bribes of the Custom House officers, constituted a tax upon the industry of the nation, in addition to what was received by the government. And so, all *douceurs* to assessors; all bribes to customs officials; all moneys expended in electing pliable officers or in procuring acts or decisions which avoid taxation; all the costly modes of bringing in goods so as to evade duties, and of manufacturing so as to evade imposts; all *moieties*, and expenses of detectives and spies; all expenses of legal proceedings and punishments, not only to the government, but to those prosecuted, are so much which these taxes take from the general fund of wealth, without adding to the revenue.

Yet this is the least part of the cost. Taxes which lack the element of certainty tell most fearfully upon morals. Our revenue laws as a body might well be entitled, "Acts to promote the corruption of public officials, to suppress honesty and encourage fraud, to set a premium upon perjury and the subornation of perjury, and to divorce the idea of law from the idea of justice." This is their true character, and they succeed admirably. A Custom House oath is a by-word; our assessors regularly swear to assess all property at its full, true, cash value, and habitually do nothing of the kind; men who pride themselves on their personal and commercial honor bribe officials and make false returns; and the demoralizing spectacle is constantly presented of the same court trying a murderer one day and a vender of unstamped matches the next!

So uncertain and so demoralizing are these modes of taxation that the New York Commission, composed of David A. Wells, Edwin Dodge and George W. Cuyler,

who investigated the subject of taxation in that State, proposed to substitute for most of the taxes now levied, other than that on real estate, an arbitrary tax on each individual, estimated on the rental value of the premises he occupied.

But there is no necessity of resorting to any arbitrary assessment. The tax on land values, which is the least arbitrary of taxes, possesses in the highest degree the element of certainty. It may be assessed and collected with a definiteness that partakes of the immovable and unconcealable character of the land itself. Taxes levied on land may be collected to the last cent, and though the assessment of land is now often unequal, yet the assessment of personal property is far more unequal, and these inequalities in the assessment of land largely arise from the taxation of improvements with land, and from the demoralization that, springing from the causes to which I have referred, affects the whole scheme of taxation. Were all taxes placed upon land values, irrespective of improvements, the scheme of taxation would be so simple and clear, and public attention would be so directed to it, that the valuation of taxation could and would be made with the same certainty that a real estate agent can determine the price a seller can get for a lot.

#### *IV.—As to Equality.*

Adam Smith's canon is, that "The subjects of every state ought to contribute toward the support of the government as nearly as possible in proportion to their respective abilities; that is, in proportion to the revenue which they respectively enjoy under the protection of the state." Every tax, he goes on to say, which falls only upon rent, or only upon wages, or only upon interest, is necessarily unequal. In accordance with this is the common idea which our systems of taxing everything vainly attempt to carry out—that every one should



pay taxes in proportion to his means, or in proportion to his income.

But, waiving all the insuperable practical difficulties in the way of taxing every one according to his means, it is evident that justice cannot be thus attained.

Here, for instance, are two men of equal means, or equal incomes, one having a large family, the other having no one to support but himself. Upon these two men indirect taxes fall very unequally, as the one cannot avoid the taxes on the food, clothing, etc., consumed by his family, while the other need pay only upon the necessaries consumed by himself. But, supposing taxes levied directly, so that each pays the same amount. Still there is injustice. The income of the one is charged with the support of six, eight, or ten persons; the income of the other with that of but a single person. And unless the Malthusian doctrine be carried to the extent of regarding the rearing of a new citizen as an injury to the state, here is a gross injustice.

But it may be said that this is a difficulty which cannot be got over; that it is Nature herself that brings human beings helpless into the world and devolves their support upon the parents, providing in compensation therefor her own sweet and great rewards. Very well, then, let us turn to Nature, and read the mandates of justice in her law.

Nature gives to labor; and to labor alone. In a very Garden of Eden a man would starve but for human exertion. Now, here are two men of equal incomes—that of the one derived from the exertion of his labor, that of the other from the rent of land. Is it just that they should equally contribute to the expenses of the state? Evidently not. The income of the one represents wealth he creates and adds to the general wealth of the state; the income of the other represents merely wealth that he takes from the general stock, returning nothing.

The right of the one to the enjoyment of his income rests on the warrant of nature, which returns wealth to labor; the right of the other to the enjoyment of his income is a mere fictitious right, the creation of municipal regulation, which is unknown and unrecognized by nature. The father who is told that from his labor he must support his children must acquiesce, for such is the natural decree; but he may justly demand that from the income gained by his labor not one penny shall be taken, so long as a penny remains of incomes which are gained by a monopoly of the natural opportunities which Nature offers impartially to all, and in which his children have as their birthright an equal share.

Adam Smith speaks of incomes as "enjoyed under the protection of the state;" and this is the ground upon which the equal taxation of all species of property is commonly insisted upon—that it is equally protected by the state. The basis of this idea is evidently that the enjoyment of property is made possible by the state—that there is a value created and maintained by the community, which is justly called upon to meet community expenses. Now, of what values is this true? Only of the value of land. This is a value that does not arise until a community is formed, and that, unlike other values, grows with the growth of the community. It exists only as the community exists. Scatter again the largest community, and land, now so valuable, would have no value at all. With every increase of population the value of land rises; with every decrease it falls. This is true of nothing else save of things which, like the ownership of land, are in their nature monopolies.

The tax upon land values is, therefore, the most just and equal of all taxes. It falls only upon those who receive from society a peculiar and valuable benefit, and upon them in proportion to the benefit they receive. It

is the taking by the community, for the use of the community, of that value which is the creation of the community. It is the application of the common property to common uses. When all rent is taken by taxation for the needs of the community, then will the equality ordained by nature be attained. No citizen will have an advantage over any other citizen save as is given by his industry, skill, and intelligence; and each will obtain what he fairly earns. Then, but not till then, will labor get its full reward, and capital its natural return.

## CHAPTER IV.

### INDORSEMENTS AND OBJECTIONS.

The grounds from which we have drawn the conclusion that the tax on land values or rent is the best method of raising public revenues have been admitted expressly or tacitly by all economists of standing, since the determination of the nature and law of rent.

Ricardo says (Chap. X), "a tax on rent would fall wholly on landlords, and could not be shifted to any class of consumers," for it "would leave unaltered the difference between the produce obtained from the least productive land in cultivation and that obtained from land of every other quality. \* \* \* A tax on rent would not discourage the cultivation of fresh land, for such land pays no rent and would be untaxed."

McCulloch (Note XXIV to "Wealth of Nations") declares that "in a practical point of view taxes on the rent of land are among the most unjust and impolitic that can be imagined," but he makes this assertion solely on the ground of his assumption that it is practically impossible to distinguish in taxation between the sum paid for the use of the soil and that paid on account of the capital expended upon it. But, supposing that this separation could be effected, he admits that the sum paid to landlords for the use of the natural powers of the soil might be entirely swept away by a tax without their having it in their power to throw any portion of the burden upon any one else, and without affecting the price of produce.

John Stuart Mill not only admits all this, but expressly

declares the expediency and justice of a peculiar tax on rent, asking what right the landlords have to the accession of riches that comes to them from the general progress of society without work, risk, or economizing on their part, and although he expressly disapproves of interfering with their claim to the present value of land, he proposes to take the whole future increase as belonging to society by natural right.

Mrs. Fawcett, in the little compendium of the writings of her husband, entitled "Political Economy for Beginners," says: "The land tax, whether small or great in amount, partakes of the nature of a rent paid by the owner of land to the state. In a great part of India the land is owned by the government and therefore the land tax is rent paid direct to the state. The economic perfection of this system of tenure may be readily perceived."

In fact, that rent should, both on grounds of expediency and justice, be the peculiar subject of taxation, is involved in the accepted doctrine of rent, and may be found in embryo in the works of all economists who have accepted the law of Ricardo. That these principles have not been pushed to their necessary conclusions, as I have pushed them, evidently arises from the indisposition to endanger or offend the enormous interest involved in private ownership in land, and from the false theories in regard to wages and the cause of poverty which have dominated economic thought.

But there has been a school of economists who plainly perceived, what is clear to the natural perceptions of men when uninfluenced by habit—that the revenues of the common property, land, ought to be appropriated to the common service. The French Economists of the last century, headed by Quesnay and Turgot, proposed just what I have proposed, that all taxation should be abolished save a tax upon the value of land. As I am

acquainted with the doctrines of Quesnay and his disciples only at second hand through the medium of the English writers, I am unable to say how far his peculiar ideas as to agriculture being the only productive avocation, etc., are erroneous apprehensions, or mere peculiarities of terminology. But of this I am certain from the proposition in which his theory culminated—that he saw the fundamental relation between land and labor which has since been lost sight of, and that he arrived at practical truth, though, it may be, through a course of defectively expressed reasoning. The causes which leave in the hands of the landlord a “produce net” were by the Physiocrats no better explained than the suction of a pump was explained by the assumption that nature abhors a vacuum, but the fact in its practical relations to social economy was recognized, and the benefit which would result from the perfect freedom given to industry and trade by a substitution of a tax on rent for all the impositions which hamper and distort the application of labor was doubtless as clearly seen by them as it is by me. One of the things most to be regretted about the French Revolution is that it overwhelmed the ideas of the Economists, just as they were gaining strength among the thinking classes, and were apparently about to influence fiscal legislation.

Without knowing anything of Quesnay or his doctrines, I have reached the same practical conclusion by a route which cannot be disputed, and have based it on grounds which cannot be questioned by the accepted political economy.

The only objection to the tax on rent or land values which is to be met with in standard politico-economic works is one which concedes its advantages—for it is, that from the difficulty of separation, we might, in taxing the rent of land, tax something else. McCulloch, for instance, declares taxes on the rent of land to be

impolitic and unjust because the return received for the natural and inherent powers of the soil cannot be clearly distinguished from the return received from improvements and meliorations, which might thus be discouraged. Macaulay somewhere says that if the admission of the attraction of gravitation were inimical to any considerable pecuniary interest, there would not be wanting arguments against gravitation—a truth of which this objection is an illustration. For admitting that it is impossible invariably to separate the value of land from the value of improvements, is this necessity of continuing to tax *some* improvements any reason why we should continue to tax *all* improvements? If it discourage production to tax values which labor and capital have intimately combined with that of land, how much greater discouragement is involved in taxing not only these, but all the clearly distinguishable values which labor and capital create?

But, as a matter of fact, the value of land can always be readily distinguished from the value of improvements. In countries like the United States there is much valuable land that has never been improved; and in many of the States the value of the land and the value of improvements are habitually estimated separately by the assessors, though afterward reunited under the term real estate. Nor where ground has been occupied from immemorial times, is there any difficulty in getting at the value of the bare land, for frequently the land is owned by one person and the buildings by another, and when a fire occurs and improvements are destroyed, a clear and definite value remains in the land. In the oldest country in the world no difficulty whatever can attend the separation, if all that be attempted is to separate the value of the clearly distinguishable improvements, made within a moderate period, from the value of the land, should they be destroyed. This, manifestly, is all that justice or policy

requires. Absolute accuracy is impossible in any system, and to attempt to separate all that the human race has done from what nature originally provided would be as absurd as impracticable. A swamp drained or a hill terraced by the Romans constitutes now as much a part of the natural advantages of the British Isles as though the work had been done by earthquake or glacier. The fact that after a certain lapse of time the value of such permanent improvements would be considered as having lapsed into that of the land, and would be taxed accordingly, could have no deterrent effect on such improvements, for such works are frequently undertaken upon leases for years. The fact is, that each generation builds and improves for itself, and not for the remote future. And the further fact is, that each generation is heir, not only to the natural powers of the earth, but to all that remains of the work of past generations.

An objection of a different kind may however be made. It may be said that where political power is diffused, it is highly desirable that taxation should fall not on one class, such as land owners, but on all; in order that all who exercise political power may feel a proper interest in economical government. Taxation and representation, it will be said, cannot safely be divorced.

But however desirable it may be to combine with political power the consciousness of public burdens, the present system certainly does not secure it. Indirect taxes are largely raised from those who pay little or nothing consciously. In the United States the class is rapidly growing who not only feel no interest in taxation, but who have no concern in good government. In our large cities elections are in great measure determined not by considerations of public interest, but by such influences as determined elections in Rome when the masses had ceased to care for anything but bread and the circus.

The effect of substituting for the manifold taxes now



imposed a single tax on the value of land would hardly lessen the number of conscious taxpayers, for the division of land now held on speculation would much increase the number of land holders. But it would so equalize the distribution of wealth as to raise even the poorest above that condition of abject poverty in which public considerations have no weight; while it would at the same time cut down those overgrown fortunes which raise their possessors above concern in government. The dangerous classes politically are the very rich and very poor. It is not the taxes that he is conscious of paying that gives a man a stake in the country, an interest in its government; it is the consciousness of feeling that he is an integral part of the community; that its prosperity is his prosperity, and its disgrace his shame. Let but the citizen feel this; let him be surrounded by all the influences that spring from and cluster round a comfortable home, and the community may rely upon him, even to limb or to life. Men do not vote patriotically, any more than they fight patriotically, because of their payment of taxes. Whatever conduces to the comfortable and independent material condition of the masses will best foster public spirit, will make the ultimate governing power more intelligent and more virtuous.

But it may be asked: If the tax on land values is so advantageous a mode of raising revenue, how is it that so many other taxes are resorted to in preference by all governments?

The answer is obvious: The tax on land values is the only tax of any importance that does not distribute itself. It falls upon the owners of land, and there is no way in which they can shift the burden upon any one else. Hence, a large and powerful class are directly interested in keeping down the tax on land values and substituting, as a means for raising the required revenue, taxes on other things, just as the land owners of England, two

hundred years ago, succeeded in establishing an excise, which fell on all consumers, for the dues under the feudal tenures, which fell only on them.

There is, thus, a definite and powerful interest opposed to the taxation of land values; but to the other taxes upon which modern governments so largely rely there is no special opposition. The ingenuity of statesmen has been exercised in devising schemes of taxation which drain the wages of labor and the earnings of capital as the vampire bat is said to suck the lifeblood of its victim. Nearly all of these taxes are ultimately paid by that indefinable being, the consumer; and he pays them in a way which does not call his attention to the fact that he is paying a tax—pays them in such small amounts and in such insidious modes that he does not notice it, and is not likely to take the trouble to remonstrate effectually. Those who pay the money directly to the tax collector are not only not interested in opposing a tax which they so easily shift from their own shoulders, but are very frequently interested in its imposition and maintenance, as are other powerful interests which profit, or expect to profit, by the increase of prices which such taxes bring about.

Nearly all of the manifold taxes by which the people of the United States are now burdened have been imposed rather with a view to private advantage than to the raising of revenue, and the great obstacle to the simplification of taxation is these private interests, whose representatives cluster in the lobby whenever a reduction of taxation is proposed, to see that the taxes by which they profit are not reduced. The fastening of a protective tariff upon the United States has been due to these influences, and not to the acceptance of absurd theories of protection upon their own merits. The large revenue which the civil war rendered necessary was the golden opportunity of these special interests, and taxes were

piled up on every possible thing, not so much to raise revenue as to enable particular classes to participate in the advantages of tax-gathering and tax-pocketing. And, since the war, these interested parties have constituted the great obstacle to the reduction of taxation; those taxes which cost the people least having, for this reason, been found easier to abolish than those taxes which cost the people most. And, thus, even popular governments, which have for their avowed principle the securing of the greatest good to the greatest number, are, in a most important function, used to secure a questionable good to a small number, at the expense of a great evil to the many.

License taxes are generally favored by those on whom they are imposed, as they tend to keep others from entering the business; imposts upon manufactures are frequently grateful to large manufacturers for similar reasons, as was seen in the opposition of the distillers to the reduction of the whisky tax; duties on imports not only tend to give certain producers special advantages, but accrue to the benefit of importers or dealers who have large stocks on hand; and so, in the case of all such taxes, there are particular interests, capable of ready organization and concerted action, which favor the imposition of the tax, while, in the case of a tax upon the value of land, there is a solid and sensitive interest steadily and bitterly to oppose it.

But if once the truth which I am trying to make clear is understood by the masses, it is easy to see how a union of political forces strong enough to carry it into practice becomes possible.



# BOOK IX.

## EFFECTS OF THE REMEDY.

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CHAPTER I.—OF THE EFFECT UPON THE PRODUCTION OF WEALTH.

CHAPTER II.—OF THE EFFECT UPON DISTRIBUTION AND THENCE UPON PRODUCTION.

CHAPTER III.—OF THE EFFECT UPON INDIVIDUALS AND CLASSES.

CHAPTER IV.—OF THE CHANGES THAT WOULD BE WROUGHT IN SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND SOCIAL LIFE.

I cannot play upon any stringed instrument; but I can tell you how of a little village to make a great and glorious city.—*Themistocles*.

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Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree.

And they shall build houses and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat.—*Isaiah*.

## CHAPTER I.

### OF THE EFFECT UPON THE PRODUCTION OF WEALTH.

The elder Mirabeau, we are told, ranked the proposition of Quesnay, to substitute one single tax on rent (the *impôt unique*) for all other taxes, as a discovery equal in utility to the invention of writing or the substitution of the use of money for barter.

To whomsoever will think over the matter, this saying will appear an evidence of penetration rather than of extravagance. The advantages which would be gained by substituting for the numerous taxes by which the public revenues are now raised, a single tax levied upon the value of land, will appear more and more important the more they are considered. This is the secret which would transform the little village into the great city. With all the burdens removed which now oppress industry and hamper exchange, the production of wealth would go on with a rapidity now undreamed of. This, in its turn, would lead to an increase in the value of land—a new surplus which society might take for general purposes. And released from the difficulties which attend the collection of revenue in a way that begets corruption and renders legislation the tool of special interests, society could assume functions which the increasing complexity of life makes it desirable to assume, but which the prospect of political demoralization under the present system now leads thoughtful men to shrink from.

Consider the effect upon the production of wealth.

To abolish the taxation which, acting and reacting,

now hampers every wheel of exchange and presses upon every form of industry, would be like removing an immense weight from a powerful spring. Imbued with fresh energy, production would start into new life, and trade would receive a stimulus which would be felt to the remotest arteries. The present method of taxation operates upon exchange like artificial deserts and mountains; it costs more to get goods through a custom house than it does to carry them around the world. It operates upon energy, and industry, and skill, and thrift, like a fine upon those qualities. If I have worked harder and built myself a good house while you have been contented to live in a hovel, the tax-gatherer now comes annually to make me pay a penalty for my energy and industry, by taxing me more than you. If I have saved while you wasted, I am mulct, while you are exempt. If a man build a ship we make him pay for his temerity, as though he had done an injury to the state; if a railroad be opened, down comes the tax-collector upon it, as though it were a public nuisance; if a manufactory be erected we levy upon it an annual sum which would go far toward making a handsome profit. We say we want capital, but if any one accumulate it, or bring it among us, we charge him for it as though we were giving him a privilege. We punish with a tax the man who covers barren fields with ripening grain; we fine him who puts up machinery, and him who drains a swamp. How heavily these taxes burden production only those realize who have attempted to follow our system of taxation through its ramifications, for, as I have before said, the heaviest part of taxation is that which falls in increased prices. But manifestly these taxes are in their nature akin to the Egyptian Pasha's tax upon date-trees. If they do not cause the trees to be cut down, they at least discourage the planting.

To abolish these taxes would be to lift the whole enor-



mous weight of taxation from productive industry. The needle of the seamstress and the great manufactory; the cart-horse and the locomotive; the fishing boat and the steamship; the farmer's plow and the merchant's stock, would be alike untaxed. All would be free to make or to save, to buy or to sell, unfinned by taxes, unannoyed by the tax-gatherer. Instead of saying to the producer, as it does now, "The more you add to the general wealth the more shall you be taxed!" the state would say to the producer, "Be as industrious, as thrifty, as enterprising as you choose, you shall have your full reward! You shall not be fined for making two blades of grass grow where one grew before; you shall not be taxed for adding to the aggregate wealth."

And will not the community gain by thus refusing to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs; by thus refraining from muzzling the ox that treadeth out the corn; by thus leaving to industry, and thrift, and skill, their natural reward, full and unimpaired? For there is to the community also a natural reward. The law of society is, each for all, as well as all for each. No one can keep to himself the good he may do, any more than he can keep the bad. Every productive enterprise, besides its return to those who undertake it, yields collateral advantages to others. If a man plant a fruit-tree, his gain is that he gathers the fruit in its time and season. But in addition to his gain, there is a gain to the whole community. Others than the owner are benefited by the increased supply of fruit; the birds which it shelters fly far and wide; the rain which it helps to attract falls not alone on his field; and, even to the eye which rests upon it from a distance, it brings a sense of beauty. And so with everything else. The building of a house, a factory, a ship, or a railroad, benefits others besides those who get the direct profits. Nature laughs at a miser. He is like the squirrel who buries his nuts and refrains

from digging them up again. Lo! they sprout and grow into trees. In fine linen, steeped in costly spices, the mummy is laid away. Thousands and thousands of years thereafter, the Bedouin cooks his food by a fire of its encasings, it generates the steam by which the traveler is whirled on his way, or it passes into far-off lands to gratify the curiosity of another race. The bee fills the hollow tree with honey, and along comes the bear or the man.

Well may the community leave to the individual producer all that prompts him to exertion; well may it let the laborer have the full reward of his labor, and the capitalist the full return of his capital. For the more that labor and capital produce, the greater grows the common wealth in which all may share. And in the value or rent of land is this general gain expressed in a definite and concrete form. Here is a fund which the state may take while leaving to labor and capital their full reward. With increased activity of production this would commensurately increase.

And to shift the burden of taxation from production and exchange to the value or rent of land would not merely be to give new stimulus to the production of wealth; it would be to open new opportunities. For under this system no one would care to hold land unless to use it, and land now withheld from use would everywhere be thrown open to improvement.

The selling price of land would fall; land speculation would receive its death blow; land monopolization would no longer pay. Millions and millions of acres from which settlers are now shut out by high prices would be abandoned by their present owners or sold to settlers upon nominal terms. And this not merely on the frontiers, but within what are now considered well settled districts. Within a hundred miles of San Francisco would be thus thrown open land enough to support,

even with present modes of cultivation, an agricultural population equal to that now scattered from the Oregon boundary to the Mexican line—a distance of 800 miles. In the same degree would this be true of most of the Western States, and in a great degree of the older Eastern States, for even in New York and Pennsylvania is population yet sparse as compared with the capacity of the land. And even in densely populated England would such a policy throw open to cultivation many hundreds of thousands of acres now held as private parks, deer preserves, and shooting grounds.

For this simple device of placing all taxes on the value of land would be in effect putting up the land at auction to whomsoever would pay the highest rent to the state. The demand for land fixes its value, and hence, if taxes were placed so as very nearly to consume that value, the man who wished to hold land without using it would have to pay very nearly what it would be worth to any one who wanted to use it.

And it must be remembered that this would apply, not merely to agricultural land, but to all land. Mineral land would be thrown open to use, just as agricultural land; and in the heart of a city no one could afford to keep land from its most profitable use, or on the outskirts to demand more for it than the use to which it could at the time be put would warrant. Everywhere that land had attained a value, taxation, instead of operating, as now, as a fine upon improvement, would operate to force improvement. Whoever planted an orchard, or sowed a field, or built a house, or erected a manufactory, no matter how costly, would have no more to pay in taxes than if he kept so much land idle. The monopolist of agricultural land would be taxed as much as though his land were covered with houses and barns, with crops and with stock. The owner of a vacant city lot would have to pay as much for the privilege of keep-

ing other people off of it until he wanted to use it, as his neighbor who has a fine house upon his lot. It would cost as much to keep a row of tumble-down shanties upon valuable land as though it were covered with a grand hotel or a pile of great warehouses filled with costly goods.

Thus, the bonus that wherever labor is most productive must now be paid before labor can be exerted would disappear. The farmer would not have to pay out half his means, or mortgage his labor for years, in order to obtain land to cultivate; the builder of a city homestead would not have to lay out as much for a small lot as for the house he puts upon it; the company that proposed to erect a manufactory would not have to expend a great part of their capital for a site. And what would be paid from year to year to the state would be in lieu of all the taxes now levied upon improvements, machinery, and stock.

Consider the effect of such a change upon the labor market. Competition would no longer be one-sided, as now. Instead of laborers competing with each other for employment, and in their competition cutting down wages to the point of bare subsistence, employers would everywhere be competing for laborers, and wages would rise to the fair earnings of labor. For into the labor market would have entered the greatest of all competitors for the employment of labor, a competitor whose demand cannot be satisfied until want is satisfied—the demand of labor itself. The employers of labor would not have merely to bid against other employers, all feeling the stimulus of greater trade and increased profits, but against the ability of laborers to become their own employers upon the natural opportunities freely opened to them by the tax which prevented monopolization.

With natural opportunities thus free to labor; with capital and improvements exempt from tax, and exchange

released from restrictions, the spectacle of willing men unable to turn their labor into the things they are suffering for would become impossible; the recurring paroxysms which paralyze industry would cease; every wheel of production would be set in motion; demand would keep pace with supply, and supply with demand; trade would increase in every direction, and wealth augment on every hand.

## CHAPTER II.

### OF THE EFFECT UPON DISTRIBUTION AND THENCE UPON PRODUCTION.

But great as they thus appear, the advantages of a transference of all public burdens to a tax upon the value of land cannot be fully appreciated until we consider the effect upon the distribution of wealth.

Tracing out the cause of the unequal distribution of wealth which appears in all civilized countries, with a constant tendency to greater and greater inequality as material progress goes on, we have found it in the fact that, as civilization advances, the ownership of land, now in private hands, gives a greater and greater power of appropriating the wealth produced by labor and capital.

Thus, to relieve labor and capital from all taxation, direct and indirect, and to throw the burden upon rent, would be, as far as it went, to counteract this tendency to inequality, and, if it went so far as to take in taxation the whole of rent, the cause of inequality would be totally destroyed. Rent, instead of causing inequality, as now, would then promote equality. Labor and capital would then receive the whole produce, minus that portion taken by the state in the taxation of land values, which, being applied to public purposes, would be equally distributed in public benefits.

That is to say, the wealth produced in every community would be divided into two portions. One part would be distributed in wages and interest between individual producers, according to the part each had taken in the work of production; the other part would go to the community as a whole, to be distributed in public benefits to

all its members. In this all would share equally—the weak with the strong, young children and decrepit old men, the maimed, the halt, and the blind, as well as the vigorous. And justly so—for while one part represents the result of individual effort in production, the other represents the increased power with which the community as a whole aids the individual.

Thus, as material progress tends to increase rent, were rent taken by the community for common purposes the very cause which now tends to produce inequality as material progress goes on would then tend to produce greater and greater equality. Fully to understand this effect, let us revert to principles previously worked out.

We have seen that wages and interest must everywhere be fixed by the rent line or margin of cultivation—that is to say, by the reward which labor and capital can secure on land for which no rent is paid; that the aggregate amount of wealth, which the aggregate of labor and capital employed in production will receive, will be the amount of wealth produced (or rather, when we consider taxes, the net amount), minus what is taken as rent.

We have seen that with material progress, as it is at present going on, there is a twofold tendency to the advance of rent. Both are to the increase of the proportion of the wealth produced which goes as rent, and to the decrease of the proportion which goes as wages and interest. But the first, or natural tendency, which results from the laws of social development, is to the increase of rent as a quantity, without the reduction of wages and interest as quantities, or even with their quantitative increase. The other tendency, which results from the unnatural appropriation of land to private ownership, is to the increase of rent as a quantity by the reduction of wages and interest as quantities.

Now, it is evident that to take rent in taxation for public purposes, which virtually abolishes private owner-

ship in land, would be to destroy the tendency to an absolute decrease in wages and interest, by destroying the speculative monopolization of land and the speculative increase in rent. It would be very largely to increase wages and interest, by throwing open natural opportunities now monopolized and reducing the price of land. Labor and capital would thus not merely gain what is now taken from them in taxation, but would gain by the positive decline in rent caused by the decrease in speculative land values. A new equilibrium would be established, at which the common rate of wages and interest would be much higher than now.

But this new equilibrium established, further advances in productive power, and the tendency in this direction would be greatly accelerated, would result in still increasing rent, not at the expense of wages and interest, but by new gains in production, which, as rent would be taken by the community for public uses, would accrue to the advantage of every member of the community. Thus, as material progress went on, the condition of the masses would constantly improve. Not merely one class would become richer, but all would become richer; not merely one class would have more of the necessaries, conveniences, and elegancies of life, but all would have more. For, the increasing power of production, which comes with increasing population, with every new discovery in the productive arts, with every labor-saving invention, with every extension and facilitation of exchanges, could be monopolized by none. That part of the benefit which did not go directly to increase the reward of labor and capital would go to the state—that is to say, to the whole community. With all the enormous advantages, material and mental, of a dense population, would be united the freedom and equality that can now be found only in new and sparsely settled districts.

And, then, consider how equalization in the distribu-



tion of wealth would react upon production, everywhere preventing waste, everywhere increasing power.

If it were possible to express in figures the direct pecuniary loss which society suffers from the social maladjustments which condemn large classes to poverty and vice, the estimate would be appalling. England maintains over a million paupers on official charity; the city of New York alone spends over seven million dollars a year in a similar way. But what is spent from public funds, what is spent by charitable societies and what is spent in individual charity, would, if aggregated, be but the first and smallest item in the account. The potential earnings of the labor thus going to waste, the cost of the reckless, improvident and idle habits thus generated; the pecuniary loss, to consider nothing more, suggested by the appalling statistics of mortality, and especially infant mortality, among the poorer classes; the waste indicated by the gin palaces or low grogeries which increase as poverty deepens; the damage done by the vermin of society that are bred of poverty and destitution—the thieves, prostitutes, beggars, and tramps; the cost of guarding society against them, are all items in the sum which the present unjust and unequal distribution of wealth takes from the aggregate which, with present means of production, society might enjoy. Nor yet shall we have completed the account. The ignorance and vice, the recklessness and immorality engendered by the inequality in the distribution of wealth show themselves in the imbecility and corruption of government; and the waste of public revenues, and the still greater waste involved in the ignorant and corrupt abuse of public powers and functions, are their legitimate consequences.

But the increase in wages, and the opening of new avenues of employment which would result from the appropriation of rent to public purposes, would not merely stop these wastes and relieve society of these

enormous losses; new power would be added to labor. It is but a truism that labor is most productive where its wages are largest. Poorly paid labor is inefficient labor, the world over.

What is remarked between the efficiency of labor in the agricultural districts of England where different rates of wages prevail; what Brassey noticed as between the work done by his better paid English navvies and that done by the worse paid labor of the continent; what was evident in the United States as between slave labor and free labor; what is seen by the astonishing number of mechanics or servants required in India or China to get anything done, is universally true. The efficiency of labor always increases with the habitual wages of labor—for high wages mean increased self-respect, intelligence, hope, and energy. Man is not a machine, that will do so much and no more; he is not an animal, whose powers may reach thus far and no further. It is mind, not muscle, which is the great agent of production. The physical power evolved in the human frame is one of the weakest of forces, but for the human intelligence the resistless currents of nature flow, and matter becomes plastic to the human will. To increase the comforts, and leisure, and independence of the masses is to increase their intelligence; it is to bring the brain to the aid of the hand; it is to engage in the common work of life the faculty which measures the animalcule and traces the orbits of the stars!

Who can say to what infinite powers the wealth-producing capacity of labor may not be raised by social adjustments which will give to the producers of wealth their fair proportion of its advantages and enjoyments! With present processes the gain would be simply incalculable, but just as wages are high, so do the invention and utilization of improved processes and machinery go on with greater rapidity and ease. That the wheat crops

of Southern Russia are still reaped with the scythe and beaten out with the flail is simply because wages are there so low. American invention, American aptitude for labor-saving processes and machinery are the result of the comparatively high wages that have prevailed in the United States. Had our producers been condemned to the low reward of the Egyptian fellah or Chinese coolie, we would be drawing water by hand and transporting goods on the shoulders of men. The increase in the reward of labor and capital would still further stimulate invention and hasten the adoption of improved processes, and these would truly appear, what in themselves they really are—an unmixed good. The injurious effects of labor-saving machinery upon the working classes, that are now so often apparent, and that, in spite of all argument, make so many people regard machinery as an evil instead of a blessing, would disappear. Every new power engaged in the service of man would improve the condition of all. And from the general intelligence and mental activity springing from this general improvement of condition would come new developments of power of which we as yet cannot dream.

But I shall not deny, and do not wish to lose sight of the fact, that while thus preventing waste and thus adding to the efficiency of labor, the equalization in the distribution of wealth that would result from the simple plan of taxation that I propose, must lessen the intensity with which wealth is pursued. It seems to me that in a condition of society in which no one need fear poverty, no one would desire great wealth—at least, no one would take the trouble to strive and to strain for it as men do now. For, certainly, the spectacle of men who have only a few years to live, slaving away their time for the sake of dying rich, is in itself so unnatural and absurd, that in a state of society where the abolition of the fear of want had dissipated the envious admiration with which

the masses of men now regard the possession of great riches, whoever would toil to acquire more than he cared to use would be looked upon as we would now look on a man who would thatch his head with half a dozen hats, or walk around in the hot sun with an overcoat on. When every one is sure of being able to get enough, no one will care to make a pack-horse of himself.

And though this incentive to production be withdrawn, can we not spare it? Whatever may have been its office in an earlier stage of development, it is not needed now. The dangers that menace our civilization do not come from the weakness of the springs of production. What it suffers from, and what, if a remedy be not applied, it must die from, is unequal distribution!

Nor would the removal of this incentive, regarded only from the standpoint of production, be an unmixed loss. For, that the aggregate of production is greatly reduced by the greed with which riches are pursued, is one of the most obtrusive facts of modern society. While, were this insane desire to get rich at any cost lessened, mental activities now devoted to scraping together riches would be translated into far higher spheres of usefulness.

## CHAPTER III.

### OF THE EFFECT UPON INDIVIDUALS AND CLASSES.

When it is first proposed to put all taxes upon the value of land, and thus confiscate rent, all land holders are likely to take the alarm, and there will not be wanting appeals to the fears of small farm and homestead owners, who will be told that this is a proposition to rob them of their hard-earned property. But a moment's reflection will show that this proposition should commend itself to all whose interests as land holders do not largely exceed their interests as laborers or capitalists, or both. And further consideration will show that though the large land holders may lose relatively, yet even in their case there will be an absolute gain. For, the increase in production will be so great that labor and capital will gain very much more than will be lost to private land ownership, while in these gains, and in the greater ones involved in a more healthy social condition, the whole community, including the land owners themselves, will share.

In a preceding chapter I have gone over the question of what is due to the present land holders, and have shown that they have no claim to compensation. But there is still another ground on which we may dismiss all idea of compensation. They will not really be injured.

It is manifest, of course, that the change I propose will greatly benefit all those who live by wages, whether of hand or of head—laborers, operatives, mechanics, clerks, professional men of all sorts. It is manifest, also, that it will benefit all those who live partly by wages

and partly by the earnings of their capital—storekeepers, merchants, manufacturers, employing or undertaking producers and exchangers of all sorts—from the peddler or drayman to the railroad or steamship owner—and it is likewise manifest that it will increase the incomes of those whose incomes are drawn from the earnings of capital, or from investments other than in lands, save perhaps the holders of government bonds or other securities bearing fixed rates of interest, which will probably depreciate in selling value, owing to the rise in the general rate of interest, though the income from them will remain the same.

Take, now, the case of the homestead owner—the mechanic, storekeeper, or professional man who has secured himself a house and lot, where he lives, and which he contemplates with satisfaction as a place from which his family cannot be ejected in case of his death. He will not be injured; on the contrary, he will be the gainer. The selling value of his lot will diminish—theoretically it will entirely disappear. But its usefulness to him will not disappear. It will serve his purpose as well as ever. While, as the value of all other lots will diminish or disappear in the same ratio, he retains the same security of always having a lot that he had before. That is to say, he is a loser only as the man who has bought himself a pair of boots may be said to be a loser by a subsequent fall in the price of boots. His boots will be just as useful to him, and the next pair of boots he can get cheaper. So, to the homestead owner, his lot will be as useful, and should he look forward to getting a larger lot, or having his children, as they grow up, get homesteads of their own, he will, even in the matter of lots, be the gainer. And in the present, other things considered, he will be much the gainer. For though he will have more taxes to pay upon his land, he will be released from taxes upon his house and improvements,

upon his furniture and personal property, upon all that he and his family eat, drink, and wear, while his earnings will be largely increased by the rise of wages, the constant employment, and the increased briskness of trade. His only loss will be, if he wants to sell his lot without getting another, and this will be a small loss compared with the great gain.

And so with the farmer. I speak not now of the farmers who never touch the handles of a plow, who cultivate thousands of acres and enjoy incomes like those of the rich Southern planters before the war; but of the working farmers who constitute such a large class in the United States—men who own small farms, which they cultivate with the aid of their boys, and perhaps some hired help, and who in Europe would be called peasant proprietors. Paradoxical as it may appear to these men until they understand the full bearings of the proposition, of all classes above that of the mere laborer they have most to gain by placing all taxes upon the value of land. That they do not now get as good a living as their hard work ought to give them, they generally feel, though they may not be able to trace the cause. The fact is that taxation, as now levied, falls on them with peculiar severity. They are taxed on all their improvements—houses, barns, fences, crops, stock. The personal property which they have cannot be as readily concealed or undervalued as can the more valuable kinds which are concentrated in the cities. They are not only taxed on personal property and improvements, which the owners of unused land escape, but their land is generally taxed at a higher rate than land held on speculation, simply because it is improved. But further than this, all taxes imposed on commodities, and especially the taxes which, like our protective duties, are imposed with a view of raising the prices of commodities, fall on the farmer without mitigation. For in a country like the

United States, which exports agricultural produce, the farmer cannot be protected. Whoever gains, he must lose. Some years ago the Free Trade League of New York published a broadside containing cuts of various articles of necessity marked with the duties imposed by the tariff, and which read something in this wise: "The farmer rises in the morning and draws on his pantaloons taxed 40 per cent. and his boots taxed 30 per cent., striking a light with a match taxed 200 per cent.," and so on, following him through the day and through life, until, killed by taxation, he is lowered into the grave with a rope taxed 45 per cent. This is but a graphic illustration of the manner in which such taxes ultimately fall. The farmer would be a great gainer by the substitution of a single tax upon the value of land for all these taxes, for the taxation of land values would fall with greatest weight, not upon the agricultural districts, where land values are comparatively small, but upon the towns and cities where land values are high; whereas taxes upon personal property and improvements fall as heavily in the country as in the city. And in sparsely settled districts there would be hardly any taxes at all for the farmer to pay. For taxes, being levied upon the value of the bare land, would fall as heavily upon unimproved as upon improved land. Acre for acre, the improved and cultivated farm, with its buildings, fences, orchard, crops, and stock could be taxed no more than unused land of equal quality. The result would be that speculative values would be kept down, and that cultivated and improved farms would have no taxes to pay until the country around them had been well settled. In fact, paradoxical as it may at first seem to them, the effect of putting all taxation upon the value of land would be to relieve the harder working farmers of all taxation.

But the great gain of the working farmer can be seen only when the effect upon the distribution of population



is considered. The destruction of speculative land values would tend to diffuse population where it is too dense and to concentrate it where it is too sparse; to substitute for the tenement house, homes surrounded by gardens, and fully to settle agricultural districts before people were driven far from neighbors to look for land. The people of the cities would thus get more of the pure air and sunshine of the country, the people of the country more of the economies and social life of the city. If, as is doubtless the case, the application of machinery tends to large fields, agricultural population will assume the primitive form and cluster in villages. The life of the average farmer is now unnecessarily dreary. He is not only compelled to work early and late, but he is cut off by the sparseness of population from the conveniences, the amusements, the educational facilities, and the social and intellectual opportunities that come with the closer contact of man with man. He would be far better off in all these respects, and his labor would be far more productive, if he and those around him held no more land than they wanted to use.\* While his children, as they grew up, would neither be so impelled to seek the excitement of a city nor would they be driven so far away to seek farms of their own. Their means of living would be in their own hands, and at home.

In short, the working farmer is both a laborer and a capitalist, as well as a land owner, and it is by his labor

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\* Besides the enormous increase in the productive power of labor which would result from the better distribution of population, there would be also a similar economy in the productive power of land. The concentration of population in cities fed by the exhaustive cultivation of large, sparsely populated areas, results in a literal draining into the sea of the elements of fertility. How enormous this waste is may be seen from the calculations that have been made as to the sewage of our cities, and its practical result is to be seen in the diminishing productiveness of agriculture in large sections. In a great part of the United States we are steadily exhausting our lands.

and capital that his living is made. His loss would be nominal; his gain would be real and great.

In varying degrees is this true of all land holders. Many land holders are laborers of one sort or another. And it would be hard to find a land owner not a laborer, who is not also a capitalist—while the general rule is, that the larger the land owner the greater the capitalist. So true is this that in common thought the characters are confounded. Thus to put all taxes on the value of land, while it would be largely to reduce all great fortunes, would in no case leave the rich man penniless. The Duke of Westminster, who owns a considerable part of the site of London, is probably the richest land owner in the world. To take all his ground rents by taxation would largely reduce his enormous income, but would still leave him his buildings and all the income from them, and doubtless much personal property in various other shapes. He would still have all he could by any possibility enjoy, and a much better state of society in which to enjoy it.

So would the Astors of New York remain very rich. And so, I think, it will be seen throughout—this measure would make no one poorer but such as could be made a great deal poorer without being really hurt. It would cut down great fortunes, but it would impoverish no one.

Wealth would not only be enormously increased; it would be equally distributed. I do not mean that each individual would get the same amount of wealth. That would not be equal distribution, so long as different individuals have different powers and different desires. But I mean that wealth would be distributed in accordance with the degree in which the industry, skill, knowledge, or prudence of each contributed to the common stock. The great cause which concentrates wealth in the hands of those who do not produce, and takes it from the hands of those who do, would be gone. The

inequalities that continued to exist would be those of nature, not the artificial inequalities produced by the denial of natural law. The non-producer would no longer roll in luxury while the producer got but the barest necessities of animal existence.

The monopoly of the land gone, there need be no fear of large fortunes. For then the riches of any individual must consist of wealth, properly so-called—of wealth, which is the product of labor, and which constantly tends to dissipation, for national debts, I imagine, would not long survive the abolition of the system from which they spring. All fear of great fortunes might be dismissed, for when every one gets what he fairly earns, no one can get more than he fairly earns. How many men are there who fairly earn a million dollars?

## CHAPTER IV.

### OF THE CHANGES THAT WOULD BE WROUGHT IN SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND SOCIAL LIFE.

We are dealing only with general principles. There are some matters of detail—such as those arising from the division of revenues between local and general governments—which upon application of these principles would come up, but these it is not necessary here to discuss. When once principles are settled, details will be readily adjusted.

Nor without too much elaboration is it possible to notice all the changes which would be wrought, or would become possible, by a change which would readjust the very foundation of society, but to some main features let me call attention.

Noticeable among these is the great simplicity which would become possible in government. To collect taxes, to prevent and punish evasions, to check and counter-check revenues drawn from so many distinct sources, now make up probably three-fourths, perhaps seven-eighths of the business of government, outside of the preservation of order, the maintenance of the military arm, and the administration of justice. An immense and complicated network of governmental machinery would thus be dispensed with.

In the administration of justice there would be a like saving of strain. Much of the civil business of our courts arises from disputes as to ownership of land. These would cease when the state was virtually acknowledged as the sole owner of land, and all occupiers became

practically rent-paying tenants. The growth of morality consequent upon the cessation of want would tend to a like diminution in other civil business of the courts, which could be hastened by the adoption of the common sense proposition of Bentham to abolish all laws for the collection of debts and the enforcement of private contracts. The rise of wages, the opening of opportunities for all to make an easy and comfortable living, would at once lessen and would soon eliminate from society the thieves, swindlers, and other classes of criminals who spring from the unequal distribution of wealth. Thus the administration of the criminal law, with all its paraphernalia of policemen, detectives, prisons, and penitentiaries, would, like the administration of the civil law, cease to make such a drain upon the vital force and attention of society. We should get rid, not only of many judges, bailiffs, clerks and prison keepers, but of the great host of lawyers who are now maintained at the expense of producers; and talent now wasted in legal subtleties would be turned to higher pursuits.

The legislative, judicial, and executive functions of government would in this way be vastly simplified. Nor can I think that the public debts and the standing armies, which are historically the outgrowth of the change from feudal to allodial tenures, would long remain after the reversion to the old idea that the land of a country is the common right of the people of the country. The former could readily be paid off by a tax that would not lessen the wages of labor nor check production, and the latter the growth of intelligence and independence among the masses, aided, perhaps, by the progress of invention, which is revolutionizing the military art, must soon cause to disappear.

Society would thus approach the ideal of Jeffersonian democracy, the promised land of Herbert Spencer, the abolition of government. But of government only as a

directing and repressive power. It would at the same time, and in the same degree, become possible for it to realize the dream of socialism. All this simplification and abrogation of the present functions of government would make possible the assumption of certain other functions which are now pressing for recognition. Government could take upon itself the transmission of messages by telegraph, as well as by mail; of building and operating railroads, as well as of opening and maintaining common roads. With present functions so simplified and reduced, functions such as these could be assumed without danger or strain, and would be under the supervision of public attention, which is now distracted. There would be a great and increasing surplus revenue from the taxation of land values, for material progress, which would go on with greatly accelerated rapidity, would tend constantly to increase rent. This revenue arising from the common property could be applied to the common benefit, as were the revenues of Sparta. We might not establish public tables—they would be unnecessary; but we could establish public baths, museums, libraries, gardens, lecture rooms, music and dancing halls, theaters, universities, technical schools, shooting galleries, play grounds, gymnasiums, etc. Heat, light, and motive power, as well as water, might be conducted through our streets at public expense; our roads be lined with fruit trees; discoverers and inventors rewarded, scientific investigations supported; and in a thousand ways the public revenues made to foster efforts for the public benefit. We should reach the ideal of the socialist, but not through governmental repression. Government would change its character, and would become the administration of a great co-operative society. It would become merely the agency by which the common property was administered for the common benefit.

Does this seem impracticable? Consider for a moment

the vast changes that would be wrought in social life by a change which would assure to labor its full reward; which would banish want and the fear of want; and give to the humblest freedom to develop in natural symmetry.

In thinking of the possibilities of social organization, we are apt to assume that greed is the strongest of human motives, and that systems of administration can be safely based only upon the idea that the fear of punishment is necessary to keep men honest—that selfish interests are always stronger than general interests. Nothing could be further from the truth.

From whence springs this lust for gain, to gratify which men tread everything pure and noble under their feet; to which they sacrifice all the higher possibilities of life; which converts civility into a hollow pretense, patriotism into a sham, and religion into hypocrisy; which makes so much of civilized existence an Ishmaelitish warfare, of which the weapons are cunning and fraud?

Does it not spring from the existence of want? Carlyle somewhere says that poverty is the hell of which the modern Englishman is most afraid. And he is right. Poverty is the open-mouthed, relentless hell which yawns beneath civilized society. And it is hell enough. The Vedas declare no truer thing than when the wise crow Bushanda tells the eagle-bearer of Vishnu that the keenest pain is in poverty. For poverty is not merely deprivation; it means shame, degradation; the searing of the most sensitive parts of our moral and mental nature as with hot irons; the denial of the strongest impulses and the sweetest affections; the wrenching of the most vital nerves. You love your wife, you love your children; but would it not be easier to see them die than to see them reduced to the pinch of want in which large classes in every highly civilized community live? The strongest of animal passions is that with which we cling to life,

but it is an everyday occurrence in civilized societies for men to put poison to their mouths or pistols to their heads from fear of poverty, and for one who does this there are probably a hundred who have the desire, but are restrained by instinctive shrinking, by religious considerations, or by family ties.

From this hell of poverty, it is but natural that men should make every effort to escape. With the impulse to self-preservation and self-gratification combine nobler feelings, and love as well as fear urges in the struggle. Many a man does a mean thing, a dishonest thing, a greedy and grasping and unjust thing, in the effort to place above want, or the fear of want, mother or wife or children.

And out of this condition of things arises a public opinion which enlists, as an impelling power in the struggle to grasp and to keep, one of the strongest—perhaps with many men the very strongest—springs of human action. The desire for approbation, the feeling that urges us to win the respect, admiration, or sympathy of our fellows, is instinctive and universal. Distorted sometimes into the most abnormal manifestations, it may yet be everywhere perceived. It is potent with the veriest savage, as with the most highly cultivated member of the most polished society; it shows itself with the first gleam of intelligence, and persists to the last breath. It triumphs over the love of ease, over the sense of pain, over the dread of death. It dictates the most trivial and the most important actions.

The child just beginning to toddle or to talk will make new efforts as its cunning little tricks excite attention and laughter; the dying master of the world gathers his robes around him, that he may pass away as becomes a king; Chinese mothers will deform their daughters' feet by cruel stocks, European women will sacrifice their own comfort and the comfort of their families to similar



dictates of fashion; the Polynesian, that he may excite admiration by his beautiful tattoo, will hold himself still while his flesh is torn by sharks' teeth; the North American Indian, tied to the stake, will bear the most fiendish tortures without a moan, and, that he may be respected and admired as a great brave, will taunt his tormentors to new cruelties. It is this that leads the forlorn hope; it is this that trims the lamp of the pale student; it is this that impels men to strive, to strain, to toil, and to die. It is this that raised the pyramids and that fired the Ephesian dome.

Now, men admire what they desire. How sweet to the storm-stricken seems the safe harbor; food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, warmth to the shivering, rest to the weary, power to the weak, knowledge to him in whom the intellectual yearnings of the soul have been aroused. And thus the sting of want and the fear of want make men admire above all things the possession of riches, and to become wealthy is to become respected, and admired, and influential. Get money—honestly, if you can, but at any rate get money! This is the lesson that society is daily and hourly dinning in the ears of its members. Men instinctively admire virtue and truth, but the sting of want and the fear of want make them even more strongly admire the rich and sympathize with the fortunate. It is well to be honest and just, and men will commend it; but he who by fraud and injustice gets him a million dollars will have more respect, and admiration, and influence, more eye service and lip service, if not heart service, than he who refuses it. The one may have his reward in the future; he may know that his name is writ in the Book of Life, and that for him is the white robe and the palm branch of the victor against temptation; but the other has his reward in the present. His name is writ in the list of "our substantial citizens;" he has the courtship of men and the flattery of women;

the best pew in the church and the personal regard of the eloquent clergyman who in the name of Christ preaches the Gospel of Dives, and tones down into a meaningless flower of Eastern speech the stern metaphor of the camel and the needle's eye. He may be a patron of arts, a Mæcenas to men of letters; may profit by the converse of the intelligent, and be polished by the attrition of the refined. His alms may feed the poor, and help the struggling, and bring sunshine into desolate places; and noble public institutions commemorate, after he is gone, his name and his fame. It is not in the guise of a hideous monster, with horns and tail, that Satan tempts the children of men, but as an angel of light. His promises are not alone of the kingdoms of the world, but of mental and moral principalities and powers. He appeals not only to the animal appetites, but to the cravings that stir in man because he is more than an animal.

Take the case of those miserable "men with muck-rakes," who are to be seen in every community as plainly as Bunyan saw their type in his vision—who, long after they have accumulated wealth enough to satisfy every desire, go on working, scheming, striving to add riches to riches. It was the desire "to be something;" nay, in many cases, the desire to do noble and generous deeds, that started them on a career of money getting. And what compels them to it long after every possible need is satisfied, what urges them still with unsatisfied and ravenous greed, is not merely the force of tyrannous habit, but the subtler gratifications which the possession of riches gives—the sense of power and influence, the sense of being looked up to and respected, the sense that their wealth not merely raises them above want, but makes them men of mark in the community in which they live. It is this that makes the rich man so loath to part with his money, so anxious to get more.

Against temptations that thus appeal to the strongest impulses of our nature, the sanctions of law and the precepts of religion can effect but little; and the wonder is, not that men are so self-seeking, but that they are not much more so. That under present circumstances men are not more grasping, more unfaithful, more selfish than they are, proves the goodness and fruitfulness of human nature, the ceaseless flow of the perennial fountains from which its moral qualities are fed. All of us have mothers; most of us have children, and so faith, and purity, and unselfishness can never be utterly banished from the world, howsoever bad be social adjustments.

But whatever is potent for evil may be made potent for good. The change I have proposed would destroy the conditions that distort impulses in themselves beneficent, and would transmute the forces which now tend to disintegrate society into forces which would tend to unite and purify it.

Give labor a free field and its full earnings; take for the benefit of the whole community that fund which the growth of the community creates, and want and the fear of want would be gone. The springs of production would be set free, and the enormous increase of wealth would give the poorest ample comfort. Men would no more worry about finding employment than they worry about finding air to breathe; they need have no more care about physical necessities than do the lilies of the field. The progress of science, the march of invention, the diffusion of knowledge, would bring their benefits to all.

With this abolition of want and the fear of want, the admiration of riches would decay, and men would seek the respect and approbation of their fellows in other modes than by the acquisition and display of wealth. In this way there would be brought to the management of public affairs, and the administration of common funds,

the skill, the attention, the fidelity, and integrity that can now be secured only for private interests, and a railroad or gas works might be operated on public account, not only more economically and efficiently than as at present, under joint stock management, but as economically and efficiently as would be possible under a single ownership. The prize of the Olympian games, that called forth the most strenuous exertions of all Greece, was but a wreath of wild olive; for a bit of ribbon men have over and over again performed services no money could have bought.

Shortsighted is the philosophy which counts on selfishness as the master motive of human action. It is blind to facts of which the world is full. It sees not the present, and reads not the past aright. If you would move men to action, to what shall you appeal? Not to their pockets, but to their patriotism; not to selfishness, but to sympathy. Self-interest is, as it were, a mechanical force—potent, it is true; capable of large and wide results. But there is in human nature what may be likened to a chemical force; which melts and fuses and overwhelms; to which nothing seems impossible. “All that a man hath will he give for his life”—that is self-interest. But in loyalty to higher impulses men will give even life.

It is not selfishness that enriches the annals of every people with heroes and saints. It is not selfishness that on every page of the world’s history bursts out in sudden splendor of noble deeds or sheds the soft radiance of benignant lives. It was not selfishness that turned Gautama’s back to his royal home or bade the Maid of Orleans lift the sword from the altar; that held the Three Hundred in the Pass of Thermopylæ, or gathered into Winkelried’s bosom the sheaf of spears; that chained Vincent de Paul to the bench of the galley, or brought little starving children, during the Indian

famine, tottering to the relief stations with yet weaker starvelings in their arms. Call it religion, patriotism, sympathy, the enthusiasm for humanity, or the love of God—give it what name you will; there is yet a force which overcomes and drives out selfishness; a force which is the electricity of the moral universe; a force beside which all others are weak. Everywhere that men have lived it has shown its power, and to-day, as ever, the world is full of it. To be pitied is the man who has never seen and never felt it. Look around! among common men and women, amid the care and the struggle of daily life, in the jar of the noisy street and amid the squalor where want hides—every here and there is the darkness lighted with the tremulous play of its lambent flames. He who has not seen it has walked with shut eyes. He who looks may see, as says Plutarch, that “the soul has a principle of kindness in itself, and is born to love, as well as to perceive, think, or remember.”

And this force of forces—that now goes to waste or assumes perverted forms—we may use for the strengthening, and building up, and ennobling of society, if we but will, just as we now use physical forces that once seemed but powers of destruction. All we have to do is but to give it freedom and scope. The wrong that produces inequality; the wrong that in the midst of abundance tortures men with want or harries them with the fear of want; that stunts them physically, degrades them intellectually, and distorts them morally, is what alone prevents harmonious social development. For “all that is from the gods is full of providence. We are made for co-operation—like feet, like hands, like eyelids, like the rows of the upper and lower teeth.”

There are people into whose heads it never enters to conceive of any better state of society than that which now exists—who imagine that the idea that there could be a state of society in which greed would be banished,

prisons stand empty, individual interests be subordinated to general interests, and no one seek to rob or to oppress his neighbor, is but the dream of impracticable dreamers, for whom these practical level-headed men, who pride themselves on recognizing facts as they are, have a hearty contempt. But such men—though some of them write books, and some of them occupy the chairs of universities, and some of them stand in pulpits—do not think.

If they were accustomed to dine in such eating houses as are to be found in the lower quarters of London and Paris, where the knives and forks are chained to the table, they would deem it the natural, ineradicable disposition of man to carry off the knife and fork with which he has eaten.

Take a company of well-bred men and women dining together. There is no struggling for food, no attempt on the part of any one to get more than his neighbor; no attempt to gorge or to carry off. On the contrary, each one is anxious to help his neighbor before he partakes himself; to offer to others the best rather than pick it out for himself; and should any one show the slightest disposition to prefer the gratification of his own appetite to that of the others, or in any way to act the pig or pilferer, the swift and heavy penalty of social contempt and ostracism would show how such conduct is reprobated by common opinion.

All this is so common as to excite no remark, as to seem the natural state of things. Yet it is no more natural that men should not be greedy of food than that they should not be greedy of wealth. They *are* greedy of food when they are not assured that there will be a fair and equitable distribution which will give each enough. But when these conditions are assured, they cease to be greedy of food. And so in society, as at present constituted, men are greedy of wealth because the conditions of distribution are so unjust that instead

of each being sure of enough, many are certain to be condemned to want. It is the "devil catch the hindmost" of present social adjustments that causes the race and scramble for wealth, in which all considerations of justice, mercy, religion, and sentiment are trampled under foot; in which men forget their own souls, and struggle to the very verge of the grave for what they cannot take beyond. But an equitable distribution of wealth, that would exempt all from the fear of want, would destroy the greed of wealth, just as in polite society the greed of food has been destroyed.

On the crowded steamers of the early California lines there was often a marked difference between the manners of the steerage and the cabin, which illustrates this principle of human nature. An abundance of food was provided for the steerage as for the cabin, but in the former there were no regulations which insured efficient service, and the meals became a scramble. In the cabin, on the contrary, where each was allotted his place and there was no fear that every one would not get enough, there was no such scrambling and waste as were witnessed in the steerage. The difference was not in the character of the people, but simply in this fact. The cabin passenger transferred to the steerage would participate in the greedy rush, and the steerage passenger transferred to the cabin would at once become decorous and polite. The same difference would show itself in society in general were the present unjust distribution of wealth replaced by a just distribution.

Consider this existing fact of a cultivated and refined society, in which all the coarser passions are held in check, not by force, not by law, but by common opinion and the mutual desire of pleasing. If this is possible for a part of a community, it is possible for a whole community. There are states of society in which every one has to go armed—in which every one has to hold him-

self in readiness to defend person and property with the strong hand. If we have progressed beyond that, we may progress still further.

But it may be said, to banish want and the fear of want, would be to destroy the stimulus to exertion; men would become simply idlers, and such a happy state of general comfort and content would be the death of progress. This is the old slaveholders' argument, that men can be driven to labor only with the lash. Nothing is more untrue.

Want might be banished, but desire would remain. Man is the unsatisfied animal. He has but begun to explore, and the universe lies before him. Each step that he takes opens new vistas and kindles new desires. He is the constructive animal; he builds, he improves, he invents, and puts together, and the greater the thing he does, the greater the thing he wants to do. He is more than an animal. Whatever be the intelligence that breathes through nature, it is in that likeness that man is made. The steamship, driven by her throbbing engines through the sea, is in kind, though not in degree, as much a creation as the whale that swims beneath. The telescope and the microscope, what are they but added eyes, which man has made for himself; the soft webs and fair colors in which our women array themselves, do they not answer to the plumage that nature gives the bird? Man must be doing something, or fancy that he is doing something, for in him throbs the creative impulse; the mere basker in the sunshine is not a natural, but an abnormal man.

As soon as a child can command its muscles, it will begin to make mud pies or dress a doll; its play is but the imitation of the work of its elders; its very destructiveness arises from the desire to be doing something, from the satisfaction of seeing itself accomplish something. There is no such thing as the pursuit of pleasure for the



sake of pleasure. Our very amusements amuse only as they are, or simulate, the learning or the doing of something. The moment they cease to appeal either to our inquisitive or to our constructive powers, they cease to amuse. It will spoil the interest of the novel reader to be told just how the story will end; it is only the chance and the skill involved in the game that enable the card-player to "kill time" by shuffling bits of pasteboard. The luxurious frivolities of Versailles were possible to human beings only because the king thought he was governing a kingdom and the courtiers were in pursuit of fresh honors and new pensions. People who lead what are called lives of fashion and pleasure must have some other object in view, or they would die of *ennui*; they support it only because they imagine that they are gaining position, making friends, or improving the chances of their children. Shut a man up, and deny him employment, and he must either die or go mad.

It is not labor in itself that is repugnant to man; it is not the natural necessity for exertion which is a curse. It is only labor which produces nothing—exertion of which he cannot see the results. To toil day after day, and yet get but the necessaries of life, this is indeed hard; it is like the infernal punishment of compelling a man to pump lest he be drowned, or to trudge on a treadmill lest he be crushed. But, released from this necessity, men would but work the harder and the better, for then they would work as their inclinations led them; then would they seem to be really doing something for themselves or for others. Was Humboldt's life an idle one? Did Franklin find no occupation when he retired from the printing business with enough to live on? Is Herbert Spencer a laggard? Did Michael Angelo paint for board and clothes?

The fact is that the work which improves the condition of mankind, the work which extends knowledge and

increases power, and enriches literature, and elevates thought, is not done to secure a living. It is not the work of slaves, driven to their task either by the lash of a master or by animal necessities. It is the work of men who perform it for its own sake, and not that they may get more to eat or drink, or wear, or display. In a state of society where want was abolished, work of this sort would be enormously increased.

I am inclined to think that the result of confiscating rent in the manner I have proposed would be to cause the organization of labor, wherever large capitals were used, to assume the co-operative form, since the more equal diffusion of wealth would unite capitalist and laborer in the same person. But whether this would be so or not is of little moment. The hard toil of routine labor would disappear. Wages would be too high and opportunities too great to compel any man to stint and starve the higher qualities of his nature, and in every avocation the brain would aid the hand. Work, even of the coarser kinds, would become a lightsome thing, and the tendency of modern production to subdivision would not involve monotony or the contraction of ability in the worker; but would be relieved by short hours, by change, by the alternation of intellectual with manual occupations. There would result, not only the utilization of productive forces now going to waste; not only would our present knowledge, now so imperfectly applied, be fully used; but from the mobility of labor and the mental activity which would be generated, there would result advances in the methods of production that we now cannot imagine.

For, greatest of all the enormous wastes which the present constitution of society involves, is that of mental power. How infinitesimal are the forces that concur to the advance of civilization, as compared to the forces that lie latent! How few are the thinkers, the discover-

ers, the inventors, the organizers, as compared with the great mass of the people! Yet such men are born in plenty; it is the conditions that permit so few to develop. There are among men infinite diversities of aptitude and inclination, as there are such infinite diversities in physical structure that among a million there will not be two that cannot be told apart. But, both from observation and reflection, I am inclined to think that the differences of natural power are no greater than the differences of stature or of physical strength. Turn to the lives of great men, and see how easily they might never have been heard of. Had Cæsar come of a proletarian family; had Napoleon entered the world a few years earlier; had Columbus gone into the Church instead of going to sea; had Shakespeare been apprenticed to a cobbler or chimney-sweep; had Sir Isaac Newton been assigned by fate the education and the toil of an agricultural laborer; had Dr. Adam Smith been born in the coal hews, or Herbert Spencer forced to get his living as a factory operative, what would their talents have availed? But there would have been, it will be said, other Cæsars or Napoleons, Columbuses or Shakespeares, Newtons, Smiths or Spencers. This is true. And it shows how prolific is our human nature. As the common worker is on need transformed into queen bee, so, when circumstances favor his development, what might otherwise pass for a common man rises into a hero or leader, discoverer or teacher, sage or saint. So widely has the sower scattered the seed, so strong is the germinative force that bids it bud and blossom. But, alas, for the stony ground, and the birds and the tares! For one who attains his full stature, how many are stunted and deformed.

The will within us is the ultimate fact of consciousness. Yet how little have the best of us, in acquirements, in position, even in character, that may be cred-

ited entirely to ourselves; how much to the influences that have molded us. Who is there, wise, learned, discreet, or strong, who might not, were he to trace the inner history of his life, turn, like the Stoic Emperor, to give thanks to the gods, that by this one and that one, and here and there, good examples have been set him, noble thoughts have reached him, and happy opportunities opened before him. Who is there, who, with his eyes about him, has reached the meridian of life, who has not sometimes echoed the thought of the pious Englishman, as the criminal passed to the gallows, "But for the grace of God, there go I." How little does heredity count as compared with conditions. This one, we say, is the result of a thousand years of European progress, and that one of a thousand years of Chinese petrification; yet, placed an infant in the heart of China, and but for the angle of the eye or the shade of the hair, the Caucasian would grow up as those around him, using the same speech, thinking the same thoughts, exhibiting the same tastes. Change Lady Vere de Vere in her cradle with an infant of the slums, and will the blood of a hundred earls give you a refined and cultured woman?

To remove want and the fear of want, to give to all classes leisure, and comfort, and independence, the decencies and refinements of life, the opportunities of mental and moral development, would be like turning water into a desert. The sterile waste would clothe itself with verdure, and the barren places where life seemed banned would ere long be dappled with the shade of trees and musical with the song of birds. Talents now hidden, virtues unsuspected, would come forth to make human life richer, fuller, happier, nobler. For in these round men who are stuck into three-cornered holes, and three-cornered men who are jammed into round holes; in these men who are wasting their energies in the scramble to be rich; in these who in factories are turned into ma-

chines, or are chained by necessity to bench or plow; in these children who are growing up in squalor, and vice, and ignorance, are powers of the highest order, talents the most splendid. They need but the opportunity to bring them forth.

Consider the possibilities of a state of society that gave that opportunity to all. Let imagination fill out the picture; its colors grow too bright for words to paint. Consider the moral elevation, the intellectual activity, the social life. Consider how by a thousand actions and interactions the members of every community are linked together, and how in the present condition of things even the fortunate few who stand upon the apex of the social pyramid must suffer, though they know it not, from the want, ignorance, and degradation that are underneath. Consider these things and then say whether the change I propose would not be for the benefit of every one—even the greatest land holder? Would he not be safer of the future of his children in leaving them penniless in such a state of society than in leaving them the largest fortune in this? Did such a state of society anywhere exist, would he not buy entrance to it cheaply by giving up all his possessions?

I have now traced to their source social weakness and disease. I have shown the remedy. I have covered every point and met every objection. But the problems that we have been considering, great as they are, pass into problems greater yet—into the grandest problems with which the human mind can grapple. I am about to ask the reader who has gone with me so far, to go with me further, into still higher fields. But I ask him to remember that in the little space which remains of the limits to which this book must be confined, I cannot fully treat the questions which arise. I can but suggest some thoughts, which may, perhaps, serve as hints for further thought.



# BOOK X.

## THE LAW OF HUMAN PROGRESS.

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CHAPTER I.—THE CURRENT THEORY OF HUMAN PROGRESS—ITS INSUFFICIENCY.

CHAPTER II.—DIFFERENCES IN CIVILIZATION—TO WHAT DUE.

CHAPTER III.—THE LAW OF HUMAN PROGRESS.

CHAPTER IV.—HOW MODERN CIVILIZATION MAY DECLINE.

CHAPTER V.—THE CENTRAL TRUTH.

What in me is dark  
Illumine, what is low raise and support;  
That to the height of this great argument  
I may assert eternal Providence  
And justify the ways of God to men.

—*Milton.*



## CHAPTER I.

### THE CURRENT THEORY OF HUMAN PROGRESS—ITS INSUFFICIENCY.

If the conclusions at which we have arrived are correct, they will fall under a larger generalization.

Let us, therefore, recommence our inquiry from a higher standpoint, whence we may survey a wider field.

*What is the law of human progress?*

This is a question which, were it not for what has gone before, I should hesitate to review in the brief space I can now devote to it, as it involves, directly or indirectly, some of the very highest problems with which the human mind can engage. But it is a question which naturally comes up. Are or are not the conclusions to which we have come consistent with the great law under which human development goes on?

What is that law? We must find the answer to our question; for the current philosophy, though it clearly recognizes the existence of such a law, gives no more satisfactory account of it than the current political economy does of the persistence of want amid advancing wealth.

Let us, as far as possible, keep to the firm ground of facts. Whether man was or was not gradually developed from an animal, it is not necessary to inquire. However intimate may be the connection between questions which relate to man as we know him and questions which relate to his genesis, it is only from the former upon the latter that light can be thrown. Inference cannot proceed from the unknown to the known. It is only from facts

of which we are cognizant that we can infer what has preceded cognizance.

However man may have originated, all we know of him is as man—just as he is now to be found. There is no record or trace of him in any lower condition than that in which savages are still to be met. By whatever bridge he may have crossed the wide chasm which now separates him from the brutes, there remain of it no vestiges. Between the lowest savages of whom we know and the highest animals, there is an irreconcilable difference—a difference not merely of degree, but of kind. Many of the characteristics, actions, and emotions of man are exhibited by the lower animals; but man, no matter how low in the scale of humanity, has never yet been found destitute of one thing of which no animal shows the slightest trace, a clearly recognizable but almost undefinable something, which gives him the power of improvement—which makes him the progressive animal.

The beaver builds a dam, and the bird a nest, and the bee a cell; but while beavers' dams, and birds' nests, and bees' cells are always constructed on the same model, the house of the man passes from the rude hut of leaves and branches to the magnificent mansion replete with modern conveniences. The dog can to a certain extent connect cause and effect, and may be taught some tricks; but his capacity in these respects has not been a whit increased during all the ages he has been the associate of improving man, and the dog of civilization is not a whit more accomplished or intelligent than the dog of the wandering savage. We know of no animal that uses clothes, that cooks its food, that makes itself tools or weapons, that breeds other animals that it wishes to eat, or that has an articulate language. But men who do not do such things have never yet been found, or heard of, except in fable. That is to say, man, wherever we

know him, exhibits this power—of supplementing what nature has done for him by what he does for himself; and, in fact, so inferior is the physical endowment of man, that there is no part of the world, save perhaps some of the small islands of the Pacific, where without this faculty he could maintain an existence.

Man everywhere and at all times exhibits this faculty—everywhere and at all times of which we have knowledge he has made some use of it. But the degree in which this has been done greatly varies. Between the rude canoe and the steamship; between the boomerang and the repeating rifle; between the roughly carved wooden idol and the breathing marble of Grecian art; between savage knowledge and modern science; between the wild Indian and the white settler; between the Hottentot woman and the belle of polished society, there is an enormous difference.

The varying degrees in which this faculty is used cannot be ascribed to differences in original capacity—the most highly improved peoples of the present day were savages within historic times, and we meet with the widest differences between peoples of the same stock. Nor can they be wholly ascribed to differences in physical environment—the cradles of learning and the arts are now in many cases tenanted by barbarians, and within a few years great cities rise on the hunting grounds of wild tribes. All these differences are evidently connected with social development. Beyond perhaps the veriest rudiments, it becomes possible for man to improve only as he lives with his fellows. All these improvements, therefore, in man's powers and condition we summarize in the term civilization. Men improve as they become civilized, or learn to co-operate in society.

What is the law of this improvement? By what common principle can we explain the different stages of civilization at which different communities have arrived? In

what consists essentially the progress of civilization, so that we may say of varying social adjustments, this favors it, and that does not; or explain why an institution or condition which may at one time advance it may at another time retard it?

The prevailing belief now is, that the progress of civilization is a development or evolution, in the course of which men's powers are increased and his qualities improved by the operation of causes similar to those which are relied upon as explaining the genesis of species—viz., the survival of the fittest and the hereditary transmission of acquired qualities.

That civilization is an evolution—that it is, in the language of Herbert Spencer, a progress from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite, coherent heterogeneity—there is no doubt; but to say this is not to explain or identify the causes which forward or retard it. How far the sweeping generalizations of Spencer, which seek to account for all phenomena under terms of matter and force, may, properly understood, include all these causes, I am unable to say; but, as scientifically expounded, the development philosophy has either not yet definitely met this question, or has given birth, or rather coherency, to an opinion which does not accord with the facts.

The vulgar explanation of progress is, I think, very much like the view naturally taken by the money maker of the causes of the unequal distribution of wealth. His theory, if he has one, usually is, that there is plenty of money to be made by those who have will and ability, and that it is ignorance, or idleness, or extravagance, that makes the difference between the rich and the poor. And so the common explanation of differences of civilization is of differences in capacity. The civilized races are the superior races, and advance in civilization is according to this superiority—just as English victories were, in

common English opinion, due to the natural superiority of Englishmen to frog-eating Frenchmen; and popular government, active invention, and greater average comfort are, or were until lately, in common American opinion, due to the greater "smartness of the Yankee Nation."

Now, just as the politico-economic doctrines which in the beginning of this inquiry we met and disproved, harmonize with the common opinion of men who see capitalists paying wages and competition reducing wages; just as the Malthusian theory harmonized with existing prejudices both of the rich and the poor; so does the explanation of progress as a gradual race improvement harmonize with the vulgar opinion which accounts by race differences for differences in civilization. It has given coherence and a scientific formula to opinions which already prevailed. Its wonderful spread since the time Darwin first startled the world with his "Origin of Species" has not been so much a conquest as an assimilation.

The view which now dominates the world of thought is this: That the struggle for existence, just in proportion as it becomes intense, impels men to new efforts and inventions. That this improvement and capacity for improvement is fixed by hereditary transmission, and extended by the tendency of the best adapted individual, or most improved individual, to survive and propagate among individuals, and of the best adapted, or most improved tribe, nation, or race to survive in the struggle between social aggregates. On this theory the differences between man and the animals, and differences in the relative progress of men, are now explained as confidently, and all but as generally, as a little while ago they were explained upon the theory of special creation and divine interposition.

The practical outcome of this theory is in a sort of

hopeful fatalism, of which current literature is full.\* In this view, progress is the result of forces which work slowly, steadily and remorselessly, for the elevation of man. War, slavery, tyranny, superstition, famine, and pestilence, the want and misery which fester in modern civilization, are the impelling causes which drive man on, by eliminating poorer types and extending the higher; and hereditary transmission is the power by which advances are fixed, and past advances made the footing for new advances. The individual is the result of changes thus impressed upon and perpetuated through a long series of past individuals, and the social organization takes its form from the individuals of which it is composed. Thus, while this theory is, as Herbert Spencer says†—“radical to a degree beyond anything which current radicalism conceives;” inasmuch as it looks for changes in the very nature of man; it is at the same time “conservative to a degree beyond anything conceived by current conservatism,” inasmuch as it holds that no change can avail save these slow changes in men’s natures. Philosophers may teach that this does not lessen the duty of endeavoring to reform abuses, just as the theologians who taught predestinarianism insisted on the

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\* In semi-scientific or popularized form this may perhaps be seen in best, because frankest, expression in “The Martyrdom of Man,” by Winwood Reade, a writer of singular vividness and power. This book is in reality a history of progress, or, rather, a monograph upon its causes and methods, and will well repay perusal for its vivid pictures, whatever may be thought of the capacity of the author for philosophic generalization. The connection between subject and title may be seen by the conclusion: “I give to universal history a strange but true title—*The Martyrdom of Man*. In each generation the human race has been tortured that their children might profit by their woes. Our own prosperity is founded on the agonies of the past. Is it therefore unjust that we also should suffer for the benefit of those who are to come?”

† “The Study of Sociology”—Conclusion.

duty of all to struggle for salvation; but, as generally apprehended, the result is fatalism—"do what we may, the mills of the gods grind on regardless either of our aid or our hindrance." I allude to this only to illustrate what I take to be the opinion now rapidly spreading and permeating common thought; not that in the search for truth any regard for its effects should be permitted to bias the mind. But this I take to be the current view of civilization: That it is the result of forces, operating in the way indicated, which slowly change the character, and improve and elevate the powers of man; that the difference between civilized man and savage is of a long race education, which has become permanently fixed in mental organization; and that this improvement tends to go on increasingly, to a higher and higher civilization. We have reached such a point that progress seems to be natural with us, and we look forward confidently to the greater achievements of the coming race—some even holding that the progress of science will finally give men immortality and enable them to make bodily the tour not only of the planets, but of the fixed stars, and at length to manufacture suns and systems for themselves.\*

But without soaring to the stars, the moment that this theory of progression, which seems so natural to us amid an advancing civilization, looks around the world, it comes against an enormous fact—the fixed, petrified civilizations. The majority of the human race to-day have no idea of progress; the majority of the human race to-day look (as until a few generations ago our own ancestors looked) upon the past as the time of human perfection. The difference between the savage and the civilized man may be explained on the theory that the former is as yet so imperfectly developed that his progress is hardly apparent; but how, upon the theory that human progress is the result of general and continuous

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\* Winwood Reade, "The Martyrdom of Man."

causes, shall we account for the civilizations that have progressed so far and then stopped? It cannot be said of the Hindoo and of the Chinaman, as it may be said of the savage, that our superiority is the result of a longer education; that we are, as it were, the grown men of nature, while they are the children. The Hindoos and the Chinese were civilized when we were savages. They had great cities, highly organized and powerful governments, literatures, philosophies, polished manners, considerable division of labor, large commerce, and elaborate arts, when our ancestors were wandering barbarians, living in huts and skin tents, not a whit further advanced than the American Indians. While we have progressed from this savage state to Nineteenth Century civilization, they have stood still. If progress be the result of fixed laws, inevitable and eternal, which impel men forward, how shall we account for this?

One of the best popular exponents of the development philosophy, Walter Bagehot ("Physics and Politics"), admits the force of this objection, and endeavors in this way to explain it: That the first thing necessary to civilize man is to tame him; to induce him to live in association with his fellows in subordination to law; and hence a body or "cake" of laws and customs grows up, being intensified and extended by natural selection, the tribe or nation thus bound together having an advantage over those who are not. That this cake of custom and law finally becomes too thick and hard to permit further progress, which can go on only as circumstances occur which introduce discussion, and thus permit the freedom and mobility necessary to improvement.

This explanation, which Mr. Bagehot offers, as he says, with some misgivings, is I think at the expense of the general theory. But it is not worth while speaking of that, for it, manifestly, does not explain the facts.

The hardening tendency of which Mr. Bagehot speaks



would show itself at a very early period of development, and his illustrations of it are nearly all drawn from savage or semi-savage life. Whereas, these arrested civilizations had gone a long distance before they stopped. There must have been a time when they were very far advanced as compared with the savage state, and were yet plastic, free, and advancing. These arrested civilizations stopped at a point which was hardly in anything inferior and in many respects superior to European civilization of, say, the sixteenth or at any rate the fifteenth century. Up to that point then there must have been discussion, the hailing of what was new, and mental activity of all sorts. They had architects who carried the art of building, necessarily by a series of innovations or improvements, up to a very high point; ship-builders who in the same way, by innovation after innovation, finally produced as good a vessel as the war ships of Henry VIII.; inventors who stopped only on the verge of our most important improvements, and from some of whom we can yet learn; engineers who constructed great irrigation works and navigable canals; rival schools of philosophy and conflicting ideas of religion. One great religion, in many respects resembling Christianity, rose in India, displaced the old religion, passed into China, sweeping over that country, and was displaced again in its old seats, just as Christianity was displaced in its first seats. There was life, and active life, and the innovation that begets improvement, long after men had learned to live together. And, moreover, both India and China have received the infusion of new life in conquering races, with different customs and modes of thought.

The most fixed and petrified of all civilizations of which we know anything was that of Egypt, where even art finally assumed a conventional and inflexible form. But we know that behind this must have been a time of life

and vigor—a freshly developing and expanding civilization, such as ours is now—or the arts and sciences could never have been carried to such a pitch. And recent excavations have brought to light from beneath what we before knew of Egypt an earlier Egypt still—in statues and carvings which, instead of a hard and formal type, beam with life and expression, which show art struggling, ardent, natural, and free, the sure indication of an active and expanding life. So it must have been once with all now unprogressive civilizations.

But it is not merely these arrested civilizations that the current theory of development fails to account for. It is not merely that men have gone so far on the path of progress and then stopped; it is that men have gone far on the path of progress and then gone back. It is not merely an isolated case that thus confronts the theory—*it is the universal rule*. Every civilization that the world has yet seen has had its period of vigorous growth, of arrest and stagnation; its decline and fall. Of all the civilizations that have arisen and flourished, there remain to-day but those that have been arrested, and our own, which is not yet as old as were the pyramids when Abraham looked upon them—while behind the pyramids were twenty centuries of recorded history.

That our own civilization has a broader base, is of a more advanced type, moves quicker and soars higher than any preceding civilization is undoubtedly true; but in these respects it is hardly more in advance of the Greco-Roman civilization than that was in advance of Asiatic civilization; and if it were, that would prove nothing as to its permanence and future advance, unless it be shown that it is superior in those things which caused the ultimate failure of its predecessors. The current theory does not assume this.

In truth, nothing could be further from explaining the facts of universal history than this theory that civiliza-

tion is the result of a course of natural selection which operates to improve and elevate the powers of man. That civilization has arisen at different times in different places and has progressed at different rates, is not inconsistent with this theory; for that might result from the unequal balancing of impelling and resisting forces; but that progress everywhere commencing, for even among the lowest tribes it is held that there has been some progress, has nowhere been continuous, but has everywhere been brought to a stand or retrogression, is absolutely inconsistent. For if progress operated to fix an improvement in man's nature and thus to produce further progress, though there might be occasional interruption, yet the general rule would be that progress would be continuous—that advance would lead to advance, and civilization develop into higher civilization.

Not merely the general rule, but *the universal rule*, is the reverse of this. The earth is the tomb of the dead empires, no less than of dead men. Instead of progress fitting men for greater progress, every civilization that was in its own time as vigorous and advancing as ours is now, has of itself come to a stop. Over and over again, art has declined, learning sunk, power waned, population become sparse, until the people who had built great temples and mighty cities, turned rivers and pierced mountains, cultivated the earth like a garden and introduced the utmost refinement into the minute affairs of life, remained but in a remnant of squalid barbarians, who had lost even the memory of what their ancestors had done, and regarded the surviving fragments of their grandeur as the work of genii, or of the mighty race before the flood. So true is this, that when we think of the past, it seems like the inexorable law, from which we can no more hope to be exempt than the young man who "feels his life in every limb" can hope to be exempt from the dissolution which is the common fate of all.

“Even this, O Rome, must one day be thy fate!” wept Scipio over the ruins of Carthage, and Macaulay’s picture of the New Zealander musing upon the broken arch of London Bridge appeals to the imagination of even those who see cities rising in the wilderness and help to lay the foundations of new empire. And so, when we erect a public building we make a hollow in the largest corner stone and carefully seal within it some mementos of our day, looking forward to the time when our works shall be ruins and ourselves forgot.

Nor whether this alternate rise and fall of civilization, this retrogression that always follows progression, be, or be not, the rhythmic movement of an ascending line (and I think, though I will not open the question, that it would be much more difficult to prove the affirmative than is generally supposed) makes no difference; for the current theory is in either case disproved. Civilizations have died and made no sign, and hard-won progress has been lost to the race forever, but, even if it be admitted that each wave of progress has made possible a higher wave and each civilization passed the torch to a greater civilization, the theory that civilization advances by changes wrought in the nature of man fails to explain the facts; for in every case it is not the race that has been educated and hereditarily modified by the old civilization that begins the new, but a fresh race coming from a lower level. It is the barbarians of the one epoch who have been the civilized men of the next; to be in their turn succeeded by fresh barbarians. For it has been heretofore always the case that men under the influences of civilization, though at first improving, afterward degenerate. The civilized man of to-day is vastly the superior of the uncivilized; but so in the time of its vigor was the civilized man of every dead civilization. But there are such things as the vices, the corruptions, the enervations of civilization, which past a certain point

have always heretofore shown themselves. Every civilization that has been overwhelmed by barbarians has really perished from internal decay.

This universal fact, the moment that it is recognized, disposes of the theory that progress is by hereditary transmission. Looking over the history of the world, the line of greatest advance does not coincide for any length of time with any line of heredity. On any particular line of heredity, retrogression seems always to follow advance.

Shall we therefore say that there is a national or race life, as there is an individual life—that every social aggregate has, as it were, a certain amount of energy, the expenditure of which necessitates decay? This is an old and widespread idea, that is yet largely held, and that may be constantly seen cropping out incongruously in the writings of the expounders of the development philosophy. Indeed, I do not see why it may not be stated in terms of matter and of motion so as to bring it clearly within the generalizations of evolution. For considering its individuals as atoms, the growth of society is “an integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion; during which the matter passes from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite, coherent heterogeneity, and during which the retained motion undergoes a parallel transformation.”\* And thus an analogy may be drawn between the life of a society and the life of a solar system upon the nebular hypothesis. As the heat and light of the sun are produced by the aggregation of atoms evolving motion, which finally ceases when the atoms at length come to a state of equilibrium or rest, and a state of immobility succeeds, which can be broken in again only by the impact of ex-

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\* Herbert Spencer's definition of Evolution, “First Principles,” p. 396.

ternal forces, which reverse the process of evolution, integrating motion and dissipating matter in the form of gas, again to evolve motion by its condensation; so, it may be said, does the aggregation of individuals in a community evolve a force which produces the light and warmth of civilization, but when this process ceases and the individual components are brought into a state of equilibrium, assuming their fixed places, petrification ensues, and the breaking up and diffusion caused by an incursion of barbarians is necessary to the recommencement of the process and a new growth of civilization.

But analogies are the most dangerous modes of thought. They may connect resemblances and yet disguise or cover up the truth. And all such analogies are superficial. While its members are constantly reproduced in all the fresh vigor of childhood, a community cannot grow old, as does a man, by the decay of its powers. While its aggregate force must be the sum of the forces of its individual components, a community cannot lose vital power unless the vital powers of its components are lessened.

Yet in both the common analogy which likens the life power of a nation to that of an individual, and in the one I have supposed, lurks the recognition of an obvious truth—the truth that the obstacles which finally bring progress to a halt are raised by the course of progress; that what has destroyed all previous civilizations has been the conditions produced by the growth of civilization itself.

This is a truth which in the current philosophy is ignored; but it is a truth most pregnant. Any valid theory of human progress must account for it.

## CHAPTER II.

### DIFFERENCES IN CIVILIZATION—TO WHAT DUE.

In attempting to discover the law of human progress, the first step must be to determine the essential nature of those differences which we describe as differences in civilization.

That the current philosophy, which attributes social progress to changes wrought in the nature of man, does not accord with historical facts, we have already seen. And we may also see, if we consider them, that the differences between communities in different stages of civilization cannot be ascribed to innate differences in the individuals who compose these communities. That there are natural differences is true, and that there is such a thing as hereditary transmission of peculiarities is undoubtedly true; but the great differences between men in different states of society cannot be explained in this way. The influence of heredity, which it is now the fashion to rate so highly, is as nothing compared with the influences which mold the man after he comes into the world. What is more ingrained in habit than language, which becomes not merely an automatic trick of the muscles, but the medium of thought? What persists longer, or will quicker show nationality? Yet we are not born with a predisposition to any language. Our mother tongue is our mother tongue only because we learned it in infancy. Although his ancestors have thought and spoken in one language for countless generations, a child who hears from the first nothing else, will learn with equal facility any other tongue. And so

of other national or local or class peculiarities. They seem to be matters of education and habit, not of transmission. Cases of white children captured by Indians in infancy and brought up in the wigwam show this. They become thorough Indians. And so, I believe, with children brought up by Gypsies.

That this is not so true of the children of Indians or other distinctly marked races brought up by whites is, I think, due to the fact that they are never treated precisely as white children. A gentleman who had taught a colored school once told me that he thought the colored children, up to the age of ten or twelve, were really brighter and learned more readily than white children, but that after that age they seemed to get dull and careless. He thought this proof of innate race inferiority, and so did I at the time. But I afterward heard a highly intelligent negro gentleman (Bishop Hillery) incidentally make a remark which to my mind seems a sufficient explanation. He said: "Our children, when they are young, are fully as bright as white children, and learn as readily. But as soon as they get old enough to appreciate their status—to realize that they are looked upon as belonging to an inferior race, and can never hope to be anything more than cooks, waiters, or something of that sort, they lose their ambition and cease to keep up." And to this he might have added, that being the children of poor, uncultivated and unambitious parents, home influences told against them. For, I believe it is a matter of common observation that in the primary part of education the children of ignorant parents are quite as receptive as the children of intelligent parents, but by and by the latter, as a general rule, pull ahead and make the most intelligent men and women. The reason is plain. As to the first simple things which they learn only at school, they are on a par, but as their studies become more complex, the child who



at home is accustomed to good English, hears intelligent conversation, has access to books, can get questions answered, etc., has an advantage which tells.

The same thing may be seen later in life. Take a man who has raised himself from the ranks of common labor, and just as he is brought into contact with men of culture and men of affairs, will he become more intelligent and polished. Take two brothers, the sons of poor parents, brought up in the same home and in the same way. One is put to a rude trade, and never gets beyond the necessity of making a living by hard daily labor; the other, commencing as an errand boy, gets a start in another direction, and becomes finally a successful lawyer, merchant, or politician. At forty or fifty the contrast between them will be striking, and the unreflecting will credit it to the greater natural ability which has enabled the one to push himself ahead. But just as striking a difference in manners and intelligence will be manifested between two sisters, one of whom, married to a man who has remained poor, has her life fretted with petty cares and devoid of opportunities, and the other of whom has married a man whose subsequent position brings her into cultured society and opens to her opportunities which refine taste and expand intelligence. And so deteriorations may be seen. That "evil communications corrupt good manners" is but an expression of the general law that human character is profoundly modified by its conditions and surroundings.

I remember once seeing, in a Brazilian seaport, a negro man dressed in what was an evident attempt at the height of fashion, but without shoes and stockings. One of the sailors with whom I was in company, and who had made some runs in the slave trade, had a theory that a negro was not a man, but a sort of monkey, and pointed to this as evidence in proof, contending that it was not natural for a negro to wear shoes, and that in his wild

state he would wear no clothes at all. I afterward learned that it was not considered "the thing" there for slaves to wear shoes, just as in England it is not considered the thing for a faultlessly attired butler to wear jewelry, though for that matter I have since seen white men at liberty to dress as they pleased get themselves up as incongruously as the Brazilian slave. But a great many of the facts adduced as showing hereditary transmission have really no more bearing than this of our fore-castle Darwinian.

That, for instance, a large number of criminals and recipients of public relief in New York have been shown to have descended from a pauper three or four generations back is extensively cited as showing hereditary transmission. But it shows nothing of the kind, inasmuch as an adequate explanation of the facts is nearer. Paupers will raise paupers, even if the children be not their own, just as familiar contact with criminals will make criminals of the children of virtuous parents. To learn to rely on charity is necessarily to lose the self-respect and independence necessary for self-reliance when the struggle is hard. So true is this that, as is well known, charity has the effect of increasing the demand for charity, and it is an open question whether public relief and private alms do not in this way do far more harm than good. And so of the disposition of children to show the same feelings, tastes, prejudices, or talents as their parents. They imbibe these dispositions just as they imbibe from their habitual associates. And the exceptions prove the rule, as dislikes or revulsions may be excited.

And there is, I think, a subtler influence which often accounts for what are looked upon as atavisms of character—the same influence that makes the boy who reads dime novels want to be a pirate. I once knew a gentleman in whose veins ran the blood of Indian chiefs. He

used to tell me traditions learned from his grandfather, which illustrated what is difficult for a white man to comprehend—the Indian habit of thought, the intense but patient blood thirst of the trail, and the fortitude of the stake. From the way in which he dwelt on these, I have no doubt that under certain circumstances, highly educated, civilized man that he was, he would have shown traits which would have been looked on as due to his Indian blood; but which in reality would have been sufficiently explained by the broodings of his imagination upon the deeds of his ancestors.\*

In any large community we may see, as between different classes and groups, differences of the same kind as those which exist between communities which we speak of as differing in civilization—differences of knowledge, belief, customs, tastes, and speech, which in their extremes show among people of the same race, living in the same country, differences almost as great as those between civilized and savage communities. As all stages of social development, from the stone age up, are yet to be found in contemporaneously existing communities, so in the same country and in the same city are to be found, side by side, groups which show similar diversities. In such countries as England and Germany, children of the same race, born and reared in the same place, will grow up, speaking the language differently, holding different beliefs, following different customs, and showing different tastes; and even in such a country as the United States differences of the same kind, though

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\* Wordsworth, in his "Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle," has in highly poetical form alluded to this influence:

Armor'rusting in his halls  
On the blood of Clifford calls;  
"Quell the Scot," exclaims the lance;  
"Bear me to the heart of France,"  
Is the longing of the shield.

not of the same degree, may be seen between different circles or groups.

But these differences are certainly not innate. No baby is born a Methodist or Catholic, to drop its h's or to sound them. All these differences which distinguish different groups or circles are derived from association in these circles.

The Janissaries were made up of youths torn from Christian parents at an early age, but they were none the less fanatical Moslems and none the less exhibited all the Turkish traits; the Jesuits and other orders show distinct character, but it is certainly not perpetuated by hereditary transmissions; and even such associations as schools or regiments, where the components remain but a short time and are constantly changing, exhibit general characteristics, which are the result of mental impressions perpetuated by association.

Now, it is this body of traditions, beliefs, customs, laws, habits, and associations, which arise in every community and which surround every individual—this “super-organic environment,” as Herbert Spencer calls it, that, as I take it, is the great element in determining national character. It is this, rather than hereditary transmission, which makes the Englishman differ from the Frenchman, the German from the Italian, the American from the Chinaman, and the civilized man from the savage man. It is in this way that national traits are preserved, extended, or altered.

Within certain limits, or, if you choose, without limits in itself, hereditary transmission may develop or alter qualities, but this is much more true of the physical than of the mental part of a man, and much more true of animals than it is even of the physical part of man. Deductions from the breeding of pigeons or cattle will not apply to man, and the reason is clear. The life of man, even in his rudest state, is infinitely more complex. He is constantly

acted on by an infinitely greater number of influences, amid which the relative influence of heredity becomes less and less. A race of men with no greater mental activity than the animals—men who only ate, drank, slept, and propagated—might, I doubt not, by careful treatment and selection in breeding, be made, in course of time, to exhibit as great diversities in bodily shape and character as similar means have produced in the domestic animals. But there are no such men; and in men as they are, mental influences, acting through the mind upon the body, would constantly interrupt the process. You cannot fatten a man whose mind is on the strain by cooping him up and feeding him as you would fatten a pig. In all probability men have been upon the earth longer than many species of animals. They have been separated from each other under differences of climate that produce the most marked differences in animals, and yet the physical differences between the different races of men are hardly greater than the difference between white horses and black horses—they are certainly nothing like as great as between dogs of the same sub-species, as, for instance, the different varieties of the terrier or spaniel. And even these physical differences between races of men, it is held by those who account for them by natural selection and hereditary transmission, were brought out when man was much nearer the animal—that is to say, when he had less mind.

And if this be true of the physical constitution of man, in how much higher degree is it true of his mental constitution? All our physical parts we bring with us into the world; but the mind develops afterward.

There is a stage in the growth of every organism in which it cannot be told, except by the environment, whether the animal that is to be will be fish or reptile, monkey or man. And so with the new-born infant; whether the mind that is yet to awake to consciousness

and power is to be English or German, American or Chinese—the mind of a civilized man or the mind of a savage—depends entirely on the social environment in which it is placed.

Take a number of infants born of the most highly civilized parents and transport them to an uninhabited country. Suppose them in some miraculous way to be sustained until they come of age to take care of themselves, and what would you have? More helpelss savages than any we know of. They would have fire to discover; the rudest tools and weapons to invent; language to construct. They would, in short, have to stumble their way to the simplest knowledge which the lowest races now possess, just as a child learns to walk. That they would in time do all these things I have not the slightest doubt, for all these possibilities are latent in the human mind just as the power of walking is latent in the human frame, but I do not believe they would do them any better or worse, any slower or quicker, than the children of barbarian parents placed in the same conditions. Given the very highest mental powers that exceptional individuals have ever displayed, and what could mankind be if one generation were separated from the next by an interval of time, as are the seventeen-year locusts? One such interval would reduce mankind, not to savagery, but to a condition compared with which savagery, as we know it, would seem civilization.

And, reversely, suppose a number of savage infants could, unknown to the mothers, for even this would be necessary to make the experiment a fair one, be substituted for as many children of civilization, can we suppose that growing up they would show any difference? I think no one who has mixed much with different peoples and classes will think so. The great lesson that is thus learned is that “human nature is human nature all the world over.” And this lesson, too, may be learned

in the library. I speak not so much of the accounts of travelers, for the accounts given of savages by the civilized men who write books are very often just such accounts as savages would give of us did they make flying visits and then write books; but of those mementos of the life and thoughts of other times and other peoples, which, translated into our language of to-day, are like glimpses of our own lives and gleams of our own thought. The feeling they inspire is that of the essential similarity of men. "This," says Emanuel Deutsch—"this is the end of all investigation into history or art. *They were even as we are.*"

There is a people to be found in all parts of the world who well illustrate what peculiarities are due to hereditary transmission and what to transmission by association. The Jews have maintained the purity of their blood more scrupulously and for a far longer time than any of the European races, yet I am inclined to think that the only characteristic that can be attributed to this is that of physiognomy, and this is in reality far less marked than is conventionally supposed, as any one who will take the trouble may see on observation. Although they have constantly married among themselves, the Jews have everywhere been modified by their surroundings—the English, Russian, Polish, German, and Oriental Jews differing from each other in many respects as much as do the other people of those countries. Yet they have much in common, and have everywhere preserved their individuality. The reason is clear. It is the Hebrew religion—and certainly religion is not transmitted by generation, but by association—which has everywhere preserved the distinctiveness of the Hebrew race. This religion, which children derive, not as they derive their physical characteristics, but by precept and association, is not merely exclusive in its teachings, but has, by engendering suspicion and dislike, produced a

powerful outside pressure which, even more than its precepts, has everywhere constituted of the Jews a community within a community. Thus has been built up and maintained a certain peculiar environment which gives a distinctive character. Jewish intermarriage has been the effect, not the cause of this. What persecution which stopped short of taking Jewish children from their parents and bringing them up outside of this peculiar environment could not accomplish, will be accomplished by the lessening intensity of religious belief, as is already evident in the United States, where the distinction between Jew and Gentile is fast disappearing.

And it seems to me that the influence of this social net or environment will explain what is so often taken as proof of race differences—the difficulty which less civilized races show in receiving higher civilization, and the manner in which some of them melt away before it. Just as one social environment persists, so does it render it difficult or impossible for those subject to it to accept another.

The Chinese character is fixed if that of any people is. Yet the Chinese in California acquire American modes of working, trading, the use of machinery, etc., with such facility as to prove that they have no lack of flexibility, or natural capacity. That they do not change in other respects is due to the Chinese environment that still persists and still surrounds them. Coming from China, they look forward to return to China, and live while here in a little China of their own, just as the Englishmen in India maintain a little England. It is not merely that we naturally seek association with those who share our peculiarities, and that thus language, religion and custom tend to persist where individuals are not absolutely isolated; but that these differences provoke an external pressure, which compels such association.



These obvious principles fully account for all the phenomena which are seen in the meeting of one stage or body of culture with another, without resort to the theory of ingrained differences. For instance, as comparative philology has shown, the Hindoo is of the same race as his English conqueror, and individual instances have abundantly shown that if he could be placed completely and exclusively in the English environment (which, as before stated, could be thoroughly done only by placing infants in English families in such a way that neither they, as they grow up, nor those around them, would be conscious of any distinction) one generation would be all required to thoroughly implant European civilization. But the progress of English ideas and habits in India must be necessarily very slow, because they meet there the web of ideas and habits constantly perpetuated through an immense population, and interlaced with every act of life.

Mr. Bagehot ("Physics and Politics") endeavors to explain the reason why barbarians waste away before our civilization, while they did not before that of the ancients, by assuming that the progress of civilization has given us tougher physical constitutions. After alluding to the fact that there is no lament in any classical writer for the barbarians, but that everywhere the barbarian endured the contact with the Roman and the Roman allied himself to the barbarian, he says (pp. 47-8):

"Savages in the first year of the Christian era were pretty much what they were in the eighteen hundredth; and if they stood the contact of ancient civilized men and cannot stand ours, it follows that our race is presumably tougher than the ancient; for we have to bear, and do bear, the seeds of greater diseases than the ancients carried with them. We may use, perhaps, the unvarying savage as a meter to gauge the vigor of the constitution to whose contact he is exposed."

Mr. Bagehot does not attempt to explain how it is that

eighteen hundred years ago civilization did not give the like relative advantage over barbarism that it does now. But there is no use of talking about that, or of the lack of proof that the human constitution has been a whit improved. To any one who has seen how the contact of our civilization affects the inferior races, a much readier though less flattering explanation will occur.

It is not because our constitutions are naturally tougher than those of the savage, that diseases which are comparatively innocuous to us are certain death to him. It is that we know and have the means of treating those diseases, while he is destitute both of knowledge and means. The same diseases with which the scum of civilization that floats in its advance inoculates the savage would prove as destructive to civilized men, if they knew no better than to let them run, as he in his ignorance has to let them run; and as a matter of fact they were as destructive, until we found out how to treat them. And not merely this, but the effect of the impingement of civilization upon barbarism is to weaken the power of the savage without bringing him into the conditions that give power to the civilized man. While his habits and customs still tend to persist, and do persist as far as they can, the conditions to which they were adapted are forcibly changed. He is a hunter in a land stripped of game; a warrior deprived of his arms and called on to plead in legal technicalities. He is not merely placed between cultures, but, as Mr. Bagehot says of the European half-breeds in India, he is placed between moralities, and learns the vices of civilization without its virtues. He loses his accustomed means of subsistence, he loses self-respect, he loses morality; he deteriorates and dies away. The miserable creatures who may be seen hanging around frontier towns or railroad stations, ready to beg, or steal, or solicit a viler commerce, are not fair representatives of the Indian before the white man had en-

croached upon his hunting grounds. They have lost the strength and virtues of their former state, without gaining those of a higher. In fact, civilization, as it pushes the red man, shows no virtues. To the Anglo-Saxon of the frontier, as a rule, the aborigine has no rights which the white man is bound to respect. He is impoverished, misunderstood, cheated, and abused. He dies out, as, under similar conditions, we should die out. He disappears before civilization as the Romanized Britons disappeared before Saxon barbarism.

The true reason why there is no lament in any classic writer for the barbarian, but that the Roman civilization assimilated instead of destroying, is, I take it, to be found not only in the fact that the ancient civilization was much nearer akin to the barbarians which it met, but in the more important fact that it was not extended as ours has been. It was carried forward, not by an advancing line of colonists, but by conquest which merely reduced the new province to general subjection, leaving the social, and generally the political organization of the people to a great degree unimpaired, so that, without shattering or deterioration, the process of assimilation went on. In a somewhat similar way the civilization of Japan seems to be now assimilating itself to European civilization.

In America the Anglo-Saxon has exterminated, instead of civilizing, the Indian, simply because he has not brought the Indian into his environment, nor yet has the contact been in such a way as to induce or permit the Indian web of habitual thought and custom to be changed rapidly enough to meet the new conditions into which he has been brought by the proximity of new and powerful neighbors. That there is no innate impediment to the reception of our civilization by these uncivilized races has been shown over and over again in individual cases. And it has likewise been shown, so far

as the experiments have been permitted to go, by the Jesuits in Paraguay, the Franciscans in California, and the Protestant missionaries on some of the Pacific islands.

The assumption of physical improvement in the race within any time of which we have knowledge is utterly without warrant, and within the time of which Mr. Bagehot speaks, it is absolutely disproved. We know from classic statues, from the burdens carried and the marches made by ancient soldiers, from the records of runners and the feats of gymnasts, that neither in proportions nor strength has the race improved within two thousand years. But the assumption of mental improvement, which is even more confidently and generally made, is still more preposterous. As poets, artists, architects, philosophers, rhetoricians, statesmen, or soldiers, can modern civilization show individuals of greater mental power than can the ancient? There is no use in recalling names—every schoolboy knows them. For our models and personifications of mental power we go back to the ancients, and if we can for a moment imagine the possibility of what is held by that oldest and most widespread of all beliefs—that belief which Lessing declared on this account the most probably true, though he accepted it on metaphysical grounds—and suppose Homer or Virgil, Demosthenes or Cicero, Alexander, Hannibal or Cæsar, Plato or Lucretius, Euclid or Aristotle, as re-entering this life again in the Nineteenth Century, can we suppose that they would show any inferiority to the men of to-day? Or if we take any period since the classic age, even the darkest, or any previous period of which we know anything, shall we not find men who in the conditions and degree of knowledge of their times showed mental power of as high an order as men show now? And among the less advanced races do we not to-day, whenever our attention is called to them, find men who in their conditions exhibit mental qualities

as great as civilization can show? Did the invention of the railroad, coming when it did, prove any greater inventive power than did the invention of the wheelbarrow when wheelbarrows were not? We of modern civilization are raised far above those who have preceded us and those of the less advanced races who are our contemporaries. But it is because we stand on a pyramid, not that we are taller. What the centuries have done for us is not to increase our stature, but to build up a structure on which we may plant our feet.

Let me repeat: I do not mean to say that all men possess the same capacities, or are mentally alike, any more than I mean to say that they are physically alike. Among all the countless millions who have come and gone on this earth, there were probably never two who either physically or mentally were exact counterparts. Nor yet do I mean to say that there are not as clearly marked race differences in mind as there are clearly marked race differences in body. I do not deny the influence of heredity in transmitting peculiarities of mind in the same way, and possibly to the same degree, as bodily peculiarities are transmitted. But nevertheless, there is, it seems to me, a common standard and natural symmetry of mind, as there is of body, toward which all deviations tend to return. The conditions under which we fall may produce such distortions as the Flatheads produce by compressing the heads of their infants or the Chinese by binding their daughters' feet. But as Flathead babies continue to be born with naturally shaped heads and Chinese babies with naturally shaped feet, so does nature seem to revert to the normal mental type. A child no more inherits his father's knowledge than he inherits his father's glass eye or artificial leg; the child of the most ignorant parents may become a pioneer of science or a leader of thought.

But this is the great fact with which we are concerned:

That the differences between the people of communities in different places and at different times, which we call differences of civilization, are not differences which inhere in the individuals, but differences which inhere in the society; that they are not, as Herbert Spencer holds, differences resulting from differences in the units; but that they are differences resulting from the conditions under which these units are brought in the society. In short, I take the explanation of the differences which distinguish communities to be this: That each society, small or great, necessarily weaves for itself a web of knowledge, beliefs, customs, language, tastes, institutions, and laws. Into this web, woven by each society, or rather, into these webs, for each community above the simplest is made up of minor societies, which overlap and interlace each other, the individual is received at birth and continues until his death. This is the matrix in which mind unfolds and from which it takes its stamp. This is the way in which customs, and religions, and prejudices, and tastes, and languages, grow up and are perpetuated. This is the way that skill is transmitted and knowledge is stored up, and the discoveries of one time made the common stock and stepping stone of the next. Though it is this that often offers the most serious obstacles to progress, it is this that makes progress possible. It is this that enables any schoolboy in our time to learn in a few hours more of the universe than Ptolemy knew; that places the most humdrum scientist far above the level reached by the giant mind of Aristotle. This is to the race what memory is to the individual. Our wonderful arts, our far-reaching science, our marvelous inventions—they have come through this.

Human progress goes on as the advances made by one generation are in this way secured as the common property of the next, and made the starting point for new advances.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE LAW OF HUMAN PROGRESS.

What, then, is the law of human progress—the law under which civilization advances?

It must explain clearly and definitely, and not by vague generalities or superficial analogies, why, though mankind started presumably with the same capacities and at the same time, there now exist such wide differences in social development. It must account for the arrested civilizations and for the decayed and destroyed civilizations; for the general facts as to the rise of civilization, and for the petrifying or enervating force which the progress of civilization has heretofore always evolved. It must account for retrogression as well as for progression; for the differences in general character between Asiatic and European civilizations; for the difference between classical and modern civilizations; for the different rates at which progress goes on; and for those bursts, and starts, and halts of progress which are so marked as minor phenomena. And, thus, it must show us what are the essential conditions of progress, and what social adjustments advance and what retard it.

It is not difficult to discover such a law. We have but to look and we may see it. I do not pretend to give it scientific precision, but merely to point it out.

The incentives to progress are the desires inherent in human nature—the desire to gratify the wants of the animal nature, the wants of the intellectual nature, and the wants of the sympathetic nature; the desire to be, to

know, and to do—desires that short of infinity can never be satisfied, as they grow by what they feed on.

Mind is the instrument by which man advances, and by which each advance is secured and made the vantage ground for new advances. Though he may not by taking thought add a cubit to his stature, man may by taking thought extend his knowledge of the universe and his power over it, in what, so far as we can see, is an infinite degree. The narrow span of human life allows the individual to go but a short distance, but though each generation may do but little, yet generations, succeeding to the gain of their predecessors, may gradually elevate the status of mankind, as coral polyps, building one generation upon the work of the other, gradually elevate themselves from the bottom of the sea.

Mental power is, therefore, the motor of progress, and men tend to advance in proportion to the mental power expended in progression—the mental power which is devoted to the extension of knowledge, the improvement of methods, and the betterment of social conditions.

Now mental power is a fixed quantity—that is to say, there is a limit to the work a man can do with his mind, as there is to the work he can do with his body; therefore, the mental power which can be devoted to progress is only what is left after what is required for non-progressive purposes.

These non-progressive purposes in which mental power is consumed may be classified as maintenance and conflict. By maintenance I mean, not only the support of existence, but the keeping up of the social condition and the holding of advances already gained. By conflict I mean not merely warfare and preparation for warfare, but all expenditure of mental power in seeking the gratification of desire at the expense of others, and in resistance to such aggression.

To compare society to a boat. Her progress through



the water will not depend upon the exertion of her crew, but upon the exertion devoted to propelling her. This will be lessened by any expenditure of force required for bailing, or any expenditure of force in fighting among themselves, or in pulling in different directions.

Now, as in a separated state the whole powers of man are required to maintain existence, and mental power is set free for higher uses only by the association of men in communities, which permits the division of labor and all the economies which come with the co-operation of increased numbers, association is the first essential of progress. Improvement becomes possible as men come together in peaceful association, and the wider and closer the association, the greater the possibilities of improvement. And as the wasteful expenditure of mental power in conflict becomes greater or less as the moral law which accords to each an equality of rights is ignored or is recognized, equality (or justice) is the second essential of progress.

Thus association in equality is the law of progress. Association frees mental power for expenditure in improvement, and equality, or justice, or freedom—for the terms here signify the same thing, the recognition of the moral law—prevents the dissipation of this power in fruitless struggles.

Here is the law of progress, which will explain all diversities, all advances, all halts, and retrogressions. Men tend to progress just as they come closer together, and by co-operation with each other increase the mental power that may be devoted to improvement, but just as conflict is provoked, or association develops inequality of condition and power, this tendency to progression is lessened, checked, and finally reversed.

Given the same innate capacity, and it is evident that social development will go on faster or slower, will stop or turn back, according to the resistances it meets. In

a general way these obstacles to improvement may, in relation to the society itself, be classed as external and internal—the first operating with greater force in the earlier stages of civilization, the latter becoming more important in the later stages.

Man is social in his nature. He does not require to be caught and tamed in order to induce him to live with his fellows. The utter helplessness with which he enters the world, and the long period required for the maturity of his powers, necessitate the family relation; which, as we may observe, is wider, and in its extensions stronger, among the ruder than among the more cultivated peoples. The first societies are families, expanding into tribes, still holding a mutual blood relationship, and even when they have become great nations claiming a common descent.

Given beings of this kind, placed on a globe of such diversified surface and climate as this, and it is evident that, even with equal capacity, and an equal start, social development must be very different. The first limit or resistance to association will come from the conditions of physical nature, and as these greatly vary with locality, corresponding differences in social progress must show themselves. The net rapidity of increase, and the closeness with which men, as they increase, can keep together, will, in the rude state of knowledge in which reliance for subsistence must be principally upon the spontaneous offerings of nature, very largely depend upon climate, soil, and physical conformation. Where much animal food and warm clothing are required; where the earth seems poor and niggard; where the exuberant life of tropical forests mocks barbarous man's puny efforts to control; where mountains, deserts, or arms of the sea separate and isolate men; association, and the power of improvement which it evolves, can at first go but a little way. But on the rich plains of warm climates, where

human existence can be maintained with a smaller expenditure of force, and from a much smaller area, men can keep closer together, and the mental power which can at first be devoted to improvement is much greater. Hence civilization naturally first arises in the great valleys and table lands where we find its earliest monuments.

But these diversities in natural conditions, not merely thus directly produce diversities in social development, but, by producing diversities in social development, bring out in man himself an obstacle, or rather an active counterforce, to improvement. As families and tribes are separated from each other, the social feeling ceases to operate between them, and differences arise in language, custom, tradition, religion—in short, in the whole social web which each community, however small or large, constantly spins. With these differences, prejudices grow, animosities spring up, contact easily produces quarrels, aggression begets aggression, and wrong kindles revenge.\* And so between these separate social aggregates arises the feeling of Ishmael and the spirit of Cain, warfare becomes the chronic and seemingly natural relation of societies to each other, and the powers of men are expended in attack or defense, in mutual slaughter and

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\* How easy it is for ignorance to pass into contempt and dislike; how natural it is for us to consider any difference in manners, customs, religion, etc., as proof of the inferiority of those who differ from us, any one who has emancipated himself in any degree from prejudice, and who mixes with different classes, may see in civilized society. In religion, for instance, the spirit of the hymn—

“I’d rather be a Baptist, and wear a shining face,  
Than for to be a Methodist and always fall from grace,”

is observable in all denominations. As the English Bishop said, “Orthodoxy is my doxy, and heterodoxy is any other doxy,” while the universal tendency is to classify all outside of the orthodoxies and heterodoxies of the prevailing religion as heathens or atheists. And the like tendency is observable as to all other differences.

mutual destruction of wealth, or in warlike preparations. How long this hostility persists, the protective tariffs and the standing armies of the civilized world to-day bear witness; how difficult it is to get over the idea that it is not theft to steal from a foreigner, the difficulty in procuring an international copyright act will show. Can we wonder at the perpetual hostilities of tribes and clans? Can we wonder that when each community was isolated from the others—when each, uninfluenced by the others, was spinning its separate web of social environment, which no individual can escape, that war should have been the rule and peace the exception? "They were even as we are."

Now, warfare is the negation of association. The separation of men into diverse tribes, by increasing warfare, thus checks improvement; while in the localities where a large increase in numbers is possible without much separation, civilization gains the advantage of exemption from tribal war, even when the community as a whole is carrying on warfare beyond its borders. Thus, where the resistance of nature to the close association of men is slightest, the counterforce of warfare is likely at first to be least felt; and in the rich plains where civilization first begins, it may rise to a great height while scattered tribes are yet barbarous. And thus, when small, separated communities exist in a state of chronic warfare which forbids advance, the first step to their civilization is the advent of some conquering tribe or nation that unites these smaller communities into a larger one, in which internal peace is preserved. Where this power of peaceable association is broken up, either by external assaults or internal dissensions, the advance ceases and retrogression begins.

But it is not conquest alone that has operated to promote association, and, by liberating mental power from the necessities of warfare, to promote civilization. If

the diversities of climate, soil, and configuration of the earth's surface operate at first to separate mankind, they also operate to encourage exchange. And commerce, which is in itself a form of association or co-operation, operates to promote civilization, not only directly, but by building up interests which are opposed to warfare, and dispelling the ignorance which is the fertile mother of prejudices and animosities.

And so of religion. Though the forms it has assumed and the animosities it has aroused have often sundered men and produced warfare, yet it has at other times been the means of promoting association. A common worship has often, as among the Greeks, mitigated war and furnished the basis of union, while it is from the triumph of Christianity over the barbarians of Europe that modern civilization springs. Had not the Christian Church existed when the Roman Empire went to pieces, Europe, destitute of any bond of association, might have fallen to a condition not much above that of the North American Indians or only received civilization with an Asiatic impress from the conquering scimiters of the invading hordes which had been welded into a mighty power by a religion which, springing up in the deserts of Arabia, had united tribes separated from time immemorial, and, thence issuing, brought into the association of a common faith a great part of the human race.

Looking over what we know of the history of the world, we thus see civilization everywhere springing up where men are brought into association, and everywhere disappearing as this association is broken up. Thus the Roman civilization, spread over Europe by the conquests which insured internal peace, was overwhelmed by the incursions of the northern nations that broke society again into disconnected fragments; and the progress that now goes on in our modern civilization began as the feudal system again began to associate men in larger

communities, and the spiritual supremacy of Rome to bring these communities into a common relation, as her legions had done before. As the feudal bonds grew into national autonomies, and Christianity worked the amelioration of manners, brought forth the knowledge that during the dark days she had hidden, bound the threads of peaceful union in her all-pervading organization, and taught association in her religious orders, a greater progress became possible, which, as men have been brought into closer and closer association and co-operation, has gone on with greater and greater force.

But we shall never understand the course of civilization, and the varied phenomena which its history presents, without a consideration of what I may term the internal resistances, or counter forces, which arise in the heart of advancing society, and which can alone explain how a civilization once fairly started should either come of itself to a halt or be destroyed by barbarians.

The mental power, which is the motor of social progress, is set free by association, which is, what, perhaps, it may be more properly called, an integration. Society in this process becomes more complex; its individuals more dependent upon each other. Occupations and functions are specialized. Instead of wandering, population becomes fixed. Instead of each man attempting to supply all of his wants, the various trades and industries are separated—one man acquires skill in one thing, and another in another thing. So, too, of knowledge, the body of which constantly tends to become vaster than one man can grasp, and is separated into different parts, which different individuals acquire and pursue. So, too, the performance of religious ceremonies tends to pass into the hands of a body of men specially devoted to that purpose, and the preservation of order, the administration of justice, the assignment of public duties and the distribution of awards, the conduct of war, etc., to be

made the special functions of an organized government. In short, to use the language in which Herbert Spencer has defined evolution, the development of society is, in relation to its component individuals, the passing from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite, coherent heterogeneity. The lower the stage of social development, the more society resembles one of those lowest of animal organisms which are without organs or limbs, and from which a part may be cut and yet live. The higher the stage of social development, the more society resembles those higher organisms in which functions and powers are specialized, and each member is vitally dependent on the others.

Now, this process of integration, of the specialization of functions and powers, as it goes on in society, is, by virtue of what is probably one of the deepest laws of human nature, accompanied by a constant liability to inequality. I do not mean that inequality is the necessary result of social growth, but that it is the constant tendency of social growth if unaccompanied by changes in social adjustments, which, in the new conditions that growth produces, will secure equality. I mean, so to speak, that the garment of laws, customs, and political institutions, which each society weaves for itself, is constantly tending to become too tight as the society develops. I mean, so to speak, that man, as he advances, threads a labyrinth, in which, if he keeps straight ahead, he will infallibly lose his way, and through which reason and justice can alone keep him continuously in an ascending path.

For, while the integration which accompanies growth tends in itself to set free mental power to work improvement, there is, both with increase of numbers and with increase in complexity of the social organization, a counter tendency set up to the production of a state of inequality, which wastes mental power, and, as it increases, brings improvement to a halt.

To trace to its highest expression the law which thus operates to evolve with progress the force which stops progress, would be, it seems to me, to go far to the solution of a problem deeper than that of the genesis of the material universe—the problem of the genesis of evil. Let me content myself with pointing out the manner in which, as society develops, there arise tendencies which check development.

There are two qualities of human nature which it will be well, however, to first call to mind. The one is the power of habit—the tendency to continue to do things in the same way; the other is the possibility of mental and moral deterioration. The effect of the first in social development is to continue habits, customs, laws and methods, long after they have lost their original usefulness, and the effect of the other is to permit the growth of institutions and modes of thought from which the normal perceptions of men instinctively revolt.

Now the growth and development of society not merely tend to make each more and more dependent upon all, and to lessen the influence of individuals, even over their own conditions, as compared with the influence of society; but the effect of association or integration is to give rise to a collective power which is distinguishable from the sum of individual powers. Analogies, or, perhaps, rather illustrations of the same law, may be found in all directions. As animal organisms increase in complexity, there arise, above the life and power of the parts, a life and power of the integrated whole; above the capability of involuntary movements, the capability of voluntary movements. The actions and impulses of bodies of men are, as has often been observed, different from those which, under the same circumstances, would be called forth in individuals. The fighting qualities of a regiment may be very different from those of the individual soldiers. But there is no need of illustrations.



In our inquiries into the nature and rise of rent, we traced the very thing to which I allude. Where population is sparse, land has no value; just as men congregate together, the value of land appears and rises—a clearly distinguishable thing from the values produced by individual effort; a value which springs from association, which increases as association grows greater, and disappears as association is broken up. And the same thing is true of power in other forms than those generally expressed in terms of wealth.

Now, as society grows, the disposition to continue previous social adjustments tends to lodge this collective power, as it arises, in the hands of a portion of the community; and this unequal distribution of the wealth and power gained as society advances tends to produce greater inequality, since aggression grows by what it feeds on, and the idea of justice is blurred by the habitual toleration of injustice.

In this way the patriarchal organization of society can easily grow into hereditary monarchy, in which the king is as a god on earth, and the masses of the people mere slaves of his caprice. It is natural that the father should be the directing head of the family, and that at his death the eldest son, as the oldest and most experienced member of the little community, should succeed to the headship. But to continue this arrangement as the family expands, is to lodge power in a particular line, and the power thus lodged necessarily continues to increase, as the common stock becomes larger and larger, and the power of the community grows. The head of the family passes into the hereditary king, who comes to look upon himself and to be looked upon by others as a being of superior rights. With the growth of the collective power as compared with the power of the individual, his power to reward and to punish increases, and so increase the inducements to flatter and to fear him; until

finally, if the process be not disturbed, a nation grovels at the foot of a throne, and a hundred thousand men toil for fifty years to prepare a tomb for one of their own mortal kind.

So the war-chief of a little band of savages is but one of their number, whom they follow as their bravest and most wary. But when large bodies come to act together, personal selection becomes more difficult, a blinder obedience becomes necessary and can be enforced, and from the very necessities of warfare when conducted on a large scale absolute power arises.

And so of the specialization of function. There is a manifest gain in productive power when social growth has gone so far that instead of every producer being summoned from his work for fighting purposes, a regular military force can be specialized; but this inevitably tends to the concentration of power in the hands of the military class or their chiefs. The preservation of internal order, the administration of justice, the construction and care of public works, and, notably, the observances of religion, all tend in similar manner to pass into the hands of special classes, whose disposition it is to magnify their function and extend their power.

But the great cause of inequality is in the natural monopoly which is given by the possession of land. The first perceptions of men seem always to be that land is common property; but the rude devices by which this is at first recognized—such as annual partitions or cultivation in common—are consistent with only a low stage of development. The idea of property, which naturally arises with reference to things of human production, is easily transferred to land, and an institution which when population is sparse merely secures to the improver and user the due reward of his labor, finally, as population becomes dense and rent arises, operates to strip the producer of his wages. Not merely this, but the appropria-

tion of rent for public purposes, which is the only way in which, with anything like a high development, land can be readily retained as common property, becomes, when political and religious power passes into the hands of a class, the ownership of the land by that class, and the rest of the community become merely tenants. And wars and conquests, which tend to the concentration of political power and to the institution of slavery, naturally result, where social growth has given land a value, in the appropriation of the soil. A dominant class, who concentrate power in their hands, will likewise soon concentrate ownership of the land. To them will fall large partitions of conquered land, which the former inhabitants will till as tenants or serfs, and the public domain, or common lands, which in the natural course of social growth are left for awhile in every country, and in which state the primitive system of village culture leaves pasture and woodland, are readily acquired, as we see by modern instances. And inequality once established, the ownership of land tends to concentrate as development goes on.

I am merely attempting to set forth the general fact that as a social development goes on, inequality tends to establish itself, and not to point out the particular sequence, which must necessarily vary with different conditions. But this main fact makes intelligible all the phenomena of petrification and retrogression. The unequal distribution of the power and wealth gained by the integration of men in society tends to check, and finally to counterbalance, the force by which improvements are made and society advances. On the one side, the masses of the community are compelled to expend their mental powers in merely maintaining existence. On the other side, mental power is expended in keeping up and intensifying the system of inequality, in ostentation, luxury, and warfare. A community divided into a class that

rules and a class that is ruled—into the very rich and the very poor, may “build like giants and finish like jewelers;” but it will be monuments of ruthless pride and barren vanity, or of a religion turned from its office of elevating man into an instrument for keeping him down. Invention may for awhile to some degree go on; but it will be the invention of refinements in luxury, not the inventions that relieve toil and increase power. In the arcana of temples or in the chambers of court physicians knowledge may still be sought; but it will be hidden as a secret thing, or if it dares come out to elevate common thought or brighten common life, it will be trodden down as a dangerous innovator. For as it tends to lessen the mental power devoted to improvement, so does inequality tend to render men adverse to improvement. How strong is the disposition to adhere to old methods among the classes who are kept in ignorance by being compelled to toil for a mere existence, is too well known to require illustration, and on the other hand the conservatism of the classes to whom the existing social adjustment gives special advantages is equally apparent. This tendency to resist innovation, even though it be improvement, is observable in every special organization—in religion, in law, in medicine, in science, in trade guilds; and it becomes intense just as the organization is close. A close corporation has always an instinctive dislike of innovation and innovators, which is but the expression of an instinctive fear that change may tend to throw down the barriers which hedge it in from the common herd, and so rob it of importance and power; and it is always disposed to guard carefully its special knowledge or skill.

It is in this way that petrification succeeds progress. The advance of inequality necessarily brings improvement to a halt, and as it still persists or provokes unavailing reactions, draws even upon the mental power necessary for maintenance, and retrogression begins.

These principles make intelligible the history of civilization.

In the localities where climate, soil, and physical conformation tended least to separate men as they increased, and where, accordingly, the first civilizations grew up, the internal resistances to progress would naturally develop in a more regular and thorough manner than where smaller communities, which in their separation had developed diversities, were afterward brought together into a closer association. It is this, it seems to me, which accounts for the general characteristics of the earlier civilizations as compared with the later civilizations of Europe. Such homogeneous communities, developing from the first without the jar of conflict between different customs, laws, religions, etc., would show a much greater uniformity. The concentrating and conservative forces would all, so to speak, pull together. Rival chieftains would not counterbalance each other, nor diversities of belief hold the growth of priestly influence in check. Political and religious power, wealth and knowledge, would thus tend to concentrate in the same centers. The same causes which tended to produce the hereditary king and hereditary priest would tend to produce the hereditary artisan and laborer, and to separate society into castes. The power which association sets free for progress would thus be wasted, and barriers to further progress be gradually raised. The surplus energies of the masses would be devoted to the construction of temples, palaces, and pyramids; to ministering to the pride and pampering the luxury of their rulers; and should any disposition to improvement arise among the classes of leisure it would at once be checked by the dread of innovation. Society developing in this way must at length stop in a conservatism which permits no further progress.

How long such a state of complete petrification, when

once reached, will continue, seems to depend upon external causes, for the iron bonds of the social environment which grows up repress disintegrating forces as well as improvement. Such a community can be most easily conquered, for the masses of the people are trained to a passive acquiescence in a life of hopeless labor. If the conquerors merely take the place of the ruling class, as the Hyksos did in Egypt and the Tartars in China, everything will go on as before. If they ravage and destroy, the glory of palaces and temple remains but in ruins, population becomes sparse, and knowledge and art are lost.

European civilization differs in character from civilizations of the Egyptian type because it springs not from the association of a homogeneous people developing from the beginning, or at least for a long time, under the same conditions, but from the association of peoples who in separation had acquired distinctive social characteristics, and whose smaller organizations longer prevented the concentration of power and wealth in one center. The physical conformation of the Grecian peninsula is such as to separate the people at first into a number of small communities. As those petty republics and nominal kingdoms ceased to waste their energies in warfare, and the peaceable co-operation of commerce extended, the light of civilization blazed up. But the principle of association was never strong enough to save Greece from inter-tribal war, and when this was put an end to by conquest, the tendency to inequality, which had been combated with various devices by Grecian sages and statesmen, worked its result, and Grecian valor, art, and literature became things of the past. And so in the rise and extension, the decline and fall, of Roman civilization, may be seen the working of these two principles of association and equality, from the combination of which springs progress.

Springing from the association of the independent husbandmen and free citizens of Italy, and gaining fresh strength from conquests which brought hostile nations into common relations, the Roman power hushed the world in peace. But the tendency to inequality, checking real progress from the first, increased as the Roman civilization extended. The Roman civilization did not petrify as did the homogeneous civilizations where the strong bonds of custom and superstition that held the people in subjection probably also protected them, or at any rate kept the peace between rulers and ruled; it rotted, declined and fell. Long before Goth or Vandal had broken through the cordon of the legions, even while her frontiers were advancing, Rome was dead at the heart. Great estates had ruined Italy. Inequality had dried up the strength and destroyed the vigor of the Roman world. Government became despotism, which even assassination could not temper; patriotism became servility; vices the most foul flouted themselves in public; literature sank to puerilities; learning was forgotten; fertile districts became waste without the ravages of war—everywhere inequality produced decay, political, mental, moral, and material. The barbarism which overwhelmed Rome came not from without, but from within. It was the necessary product of the system which had substituted slaves and *colonii* for the independent husbandmen of Italy, and carved the provinces into estates of senatorial families.

Modern civilization owes its superiority to the growth of equality with the growth of association. Two great causes contributed to this—the splitting up of concentrated power into innumerable little centers by the influx of the Northern nations, and the influence of Christianity. Without the first there would have been the petrification and slow decay of the Eastern Empire, where church and state were closely married and loss of exter-

nal power brought no relief of internal tyranny. And but for the other there would have been barbarism, without principle of association or amelioration. The petty chiefs and allodial lords who everywhere grasped local sovereignty held each other in check. Italian cities recovered their ancient liberty, free towns were founded, village communities took root, and serfs acquired rights in the soil they tilled. The leaven of Teutonic ideas of equality worked through the disorganized and disjointed fabric of society. And although society was split up into an innumerable number of separated fragments, yet the idea of closer association was always present—it existed in the recollections of a universal empire; it existed in the claims of a universal church.

Though Christianity became distorted and alloyed in percolating through a rotting civilization; though pagan gods were taken into her pantheon, and pagan forms into her ritual, and pagan ideas into her creed; yet her essential idea of the equality of men was never wholly destroyed. And two things happened of the utmost moment to incipient civilization—the establishment of the papacy and the celibacy of the clergy. The first prevented the spiritual power from concentrating in the same lines as the temporal power; and the latter prevented the establishment of a priestly caste, during a time when all power tended to hereditary form.

In her efforts for the abolition of slavery; in her Truce of God; in her monastic orders; in her councils which united nations, and her edicts which ran without regard to political boundaries; in the low-born hands in which she placed a sign before which the proudest knelt; in her bishops who by consecration became the peers of the greatest nobles; in her “*Servant of Servants*,” for so his official title ran, who, by virtue of the ring of a simple fisherman, claimed the right to arbitrate between nations, and whose stirrup was held by kings; the Church, in



spite of everything, was yet a promoter of association, a witness for the natural equality of men; and by the Church herself was nurtured a spirit that, when her early work of association and emancipation was well-nigh done—when the ties she had knit had become strong, and the learning she had preserved had been given to the world—broke the chains with which she would have fettered the human mind, and in a great part of Europe rent her organization.

The rise and growth of European civilization is too vast and complex a subject to be thrown into proper perspective and relation in a few paragraphs; but in all its details, as in its main features, it illustrates the truth that progress goes on just as society tends toward closer association and greater equality. Civilization is cooperation. Union and liberty are its factors. The great extension of association—not alone in the growth of larger and denser communities, but in the increase of commerce and the manifold exchanges which knit each community together and link them with other though widely separated communities; the growth of international and municipal law; the advances in security of property and of person, in individual liberty, and towards democratic government—advances, in short, towards the recognition of the equal rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—it is these that make our modern civilization so much greater, so much higher, than any that has gone before. It is these that have set free the mental power which has rolled back the veil of ignorance which hid all but a small portion of the globe from men's knowledge; which has measured the orbits of the circling spheres and bids us see moving, pulsing life in a drop of water; which has opened to us the antechamber of nature's mysteries and read the secrets of a long-buried past; which has harnessed in our service physical forces beside which man's efforts are puny; and increased productive power by a thousand great inventions.

In that spirit of fatalism to which I have alluded as pervading current literature, it is the fashion to speak even of war and slavery as means of human progress. But war, which is the opposite of association, can aid progress only when it prevents further war or breaks down anti-social barriers which are themselves passive war.

As for slavery, I cannot see how it could ever have aided in establishing freedom, and freedom, the synonym of equality, is, from the very rudest state in which man can be imagined, the stimulus and condition of progress. Auguste Comte's idea that the institution of slavery destroyed cannibalism is as fanciful as Elia's humorous notion of the way mankind acquired a taste for roast pig. It assumes that a propensity that has never been found developed in man save as the result of the most unnatural conditions—the direst want or the most brutalizing superstitions\*—is an original impulse, and that he, even in his lowest state the highest of all animals, has natural appetites which the nobler brutes do not show. And so of the idea that slavery began civilization by giving slave owners leisure for improvement.

Slavery never did and never could aid improvement. Whether the community consist of a single master and a single slave, or of thousands of masters and millions of slaves, slavery necessarily involves a waste of human power; for not only is slave labor less productive than free labor, but the power of masters is likewise wasted in holding and watching their slaves, and is called away from directions in which real improvement lies. From first to last, slavery, like every other denial of the natural

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\*The Sandwich Islanders did honor to their good chiefs by eating their bodies. Their bad and tyrannical chiefs they would not touch. The New Zealanders had a notion that by eating their enemies they acquired their strength and valor. And this seems to be the general origin of eating prisoners of war.

equality of men, has hampered and prevented progress. Just in proportion as slavery plays an important part in the social organization does improvement cease. That in the classical world slavery was so universal, is undoubtedly the reason why the mental activity which so polished literature and refined art never hit on any of the great discoveries and inventions which distinguish modern civilization. No slave-holding people ever were an inventive people. In a slave-holding community the upper classes may become luxurious and polished; but never inventive. Whatever degrades the laborer and robs him of the fruits of his toil stifles the spirit of invention and forbids the utilization of inventions and discoveries even when made. To freedom alone is given the spell of power which summons the genii in whose keeping are the treasures of earth and the viewless forces of the air.

The law of human progress, what is it but the moral law? Just as social adjustments promote justice, just as they acknowledge the equality of right between man and man, just as they insure to each the perfect liberty which is bounded only by the equal liberty of every other, must civilization advance. Just as they fail in this, must advancing civilization come to a halt and recede. Political economy and social science cannot teach any lessons that are not embraced in the simple truths that were taught to poor fishermen and Jewish peasants by One who eighteen hundred years ago was crucified—the simple truths which, beneath the warpings of selfishness and the distortions of superstition, seem to underlie every religion that has ever striven to formulate the spiritual yearnings of man.

## CHAPTER IV.

### HOW MODERN CIVILIZATION MAY DECLINE.

The conclusion we have thus reached harmonizes completely with our previous conclusions.

This consideration of the law of human progress not only brings the politico-economic laws, which in this inquiry we have worked out, within the scope of a higher law—perhaps the very highest law our minds can grasp—but it proves that the making of land common property in the way I have proposed would give an enormous impetus to civilization, while the refusal to do so must entail retrogression. A civilization like ours must either advance or go back; it cannot stand still. It is not like those homogeneous civilizations, such as that of the Nile Valley, which molded men for their places and put them in it like bricks into a pyramid. It much more resembles that civilization whose rise and fall is within historic times, and from which it sprung.

There is just now a disposition to scoff at any implication that we are not in all respects progressing, and the spirit of our times is that of the edict which the flattering premier proposed to the Chinese Emperor who burned the ancient books—"that all who may dare to speak together about the She and the Shoo be put to death; that those who make mention of the past so as to blame the present be put to death along with their relatives."

Yet it is evident that there have been times of decline, just as there have been times of advance; and it is further evident that these epochs of decline could not at first have been generally recognized.

He would have been a rash man who, when Augustus was changing the Rome of brick to the Rome of marble, when wealth was augmenting and magnificence increasing, when victorious legions were extending the frontier, when manners were becoming more refined, language more polished, and literature rising to higher splendors—he would have been a rash man who then would have said that Rome was entering her decline. Yet such was the case.

And whoever will look may see that though our civilization is apparently advancing with greater rapidity than ever, the same cause which turned Roman progress into retrogression is operating now.

What has destroyed every previous civilization has been the tendency to the unequal distribution of wealth and power. This same tendency, operating with increasing force, is observable in our civilization to-day, showing itself in every progressive community, and with greater intensity the more progressive the community. Wages and interest tend constantly to fall, rent to rise, the rich to become very much richer, the poor to become more helpless and hopeless, and the middle class to be swept away.

I have traced this tendency to its cause. I have shown by what simple means this cause may be removed. I now wish to point out *how*, if this is not done, progress must turn to decadence, and modern civilization decline to barbarism, as have all previous civilizations. It is worth while to point out *how* this may occur, as many people, being unable to see how progress may pass into retrogression, conceive such a thing impossible. Gibbon, for instance, thought that modern civilization could never be destroyed because there remained no barbarians to overrun it, and it is a common idea that the invention of printing by so multiplying books has prevented the possibility of knowledge ever again being lost.

The conditions of social progress, as we have traced the law, are association and equality. The general tendency of modern development, since the time when we can first discern the gleams of civilization in the darkness which followed the fall of the Western Empire, has been toward political and legal equality—to the abolition of slavery; to the abrogation of status; to the sweeping away of hereditary privileges; to the substitution of parliamentary for arbitrary government; to the right of private judgment in matters of religion; to the more equal security in person and property of high and low, weak and strong; to the greater freedom of movement and occupation, of speech and of the press. The history of modern civilization is the history of advances in this direction—of the struggles and triumphs of personal, political, and religious freedom. And the general law is shown by the fact that just as this tendency has asserted itself civilization has advanced, while just as it has been repressed or forced back civilization has been checked.

This tendency has reached its full expression in the American Republic, where political and legal rights are absolutely equal, and, owing to the system of rotation in office, even the growth of a bureaucracy is prevented; where every religious belief or non-belief stands on the same footing; where every boy may hope to be President, every man has an equal voice in public affairs, and every official is mediately or immediately dependent for the short lease of his place upon a popular vote. This tendency has yet some triumphs to win in England, in extending the suffrage, and sweeping away the vestiges of monarchy, aristocracy, and prelacy; while in such countries as Germany and Russia, where divine right is yet a good deal more than a legal fiction, it has a considerable distance to go. But it is the prevailing tendency, and how soon Europe will be completely republican is only a mat-

ter of time, or rather of accident. The United States are therefore, in this respect, the most advanced of all the great nations, in a direction in which all are advancing, and in the United States we see just how much this tendency to personal and political freedom can of itself accomplish.

Now, the first effect of the tendency to political equality was to the more equal distribution of wealth and power; for, while population is comparatively sparse, inequality in the distribution of wealth is principally due to the inequality of personal rights, and it is only as material progress goes on that the tendency to inequality involved in the reduction of land to private ownership strongly appears. But it is now manifest that absolute political equality does not in itself prevent the tendency to inequality involved in the private ownership of land, and it is further evident that political equality, co-existing with an increasing tendency to the unequal distribution of wealth, must ultimately beget either the despotism of organized tyranny or the worse despotism of anarchy.

To turn a republican government into a despotism the basest and most brutal, it is not necessary formally to change its constitution or abandon popular elections. It was centuries after Cæsar before the absolute master of the Roman world pretended to rule other than by authority of a Senate that trembled before him.

But forms are nothing when substance has gone, and the forms of popular government are those from which the substance of freedom may most easily go. Extremes meet, and a government of universal suffrage and theoretical equality may, under conditions which impel the change, most readily become a despotism. For there despotism advances in the name and with the might of the people. The single source of power once secured, everything is secured. There is no unfranchised class to whom appeal may be made, no privileged orders who

in defending their own rights may defend those of all. No bulwark remains to stay the flood, no eminence to rise above it. They were belted barons led by a mitred archbishop who curbed the Plantagenet with Magna Charta; it was the middle classes who broke the pride of the Stuarts; but a mere aristocracy of wealth will never struggle while it can hope to bribe a tyrant.

And when the disparity of condition increases, so does universal suffrage make it easy to seize the source of power, for the greater is the proportion of power in the hands of those who feel no direct interest in the conduct of government; who, tortured by want and embruted by poverty, are ready to sell their votes to the highest bidder or follow the lead of the most blatant demagogue; or who, made bitter by hardships, may even look upon profigate and tyrannous government with the satisfaction we may imagine the proletarians and slaves of Rome to have felt, as they saw a Caligula or Nero raging among the rich patricians. Given a community with republican institutions, in which one class is too rich to be shorn of its luxuries, no matter how public affairs are administered, and another so poor that a few dollars on election day will seem more than any abstract consideration; in which the few roll in wealth and the many seethe with discontent at a condition of things they know not how to remedy, and power must pass into the hands of jobbers who will buy and sell it as the Prætorians sold the Roman purple, or into the hands of demagogues who will seize and wield it for a time, only to be displaced by worse demagogues.

Where there is anything like an equal distribution of wealth—that is to say, where there is general patriotism, virtue, and intelligence—the more democratic the government the better it will be; but where there is gross inequality in the distribution of wealth, the more democratic the government the worse it will be; for, while



rotten democracy may not in itself be worse than rotten autoocracy, its effects upon national character will be worse. To give the suffrage to tramps, to paupers, to men to whom the chance to labor is a boon, to men who must beg, or steal, or starve, is to invoke destruction. To put political power in the hands of men embittered and degraded by poverty is to tie firebrands to foxes and turn them loose amid the standing corn; it is to put out the eyes of a Samson and to twine his arms around the pillars of national life.

Even the accidents of hereditary succession or of selection by lot, the plan of some of the ancient republics, may sometimes place the wise and just in power; but in a corrupt democracy the tendency is always to give power to the worst. Honesty and patriotism are weighted, and unscrupulousness commands success. The best gravitate to the bottom, the worst float to the top, and the vile will only be ousted by the viler. While as national character must gradually assimilate to the qualities that win power, and consequently respect, that demoralization of opinion goes on which in the long panorama of history we may see over and over again transmuting races of freemen into races of slaves.

As in England in the last century, when Parliament was but a close corporation of the aristocracy, a corrupt oligarchy clearly fenced off from the masses may exist without much effect on national character, because in that case power is associated in the popular mind with other things than corruption. But where there are no hereditary distinctions, and men are habitually seen to raise themselves by corrupt qualities from the lowest places to wealth and power, tolerance of these qualities finally becomes admiration. A corrupt democratic government must finally corrupt the people, and when a people become corrupt there is no resurrection. The life is gone, only the carcass remains; and it is left but for the plowshares of fate to bury it out of sight.

Now this transformation of popular government into despotism of the vilest and most degrading kind, which must inevitably result from the unequal distribution of wealth, is not a thing of the far future. It has already begun in the United States, and is rapidly going on under our eyes. That our legislative bodies are steadily deteriorating in standard; that men of the highest ability and character are compelled to eschew politics, and the arts of the jobber count for more than the reputation of the statesman; that voting is done more recklessly and the power of money is increasing; that it is harder to arouse the people to the necessity of reforms and more difficult to carry them out; that political differences are ceasing to be differences of principle, and abstract ideas are losing their power; that parties are passing into the control of what in general government would be oligarchies and dictatorships; are all evidences of political decline.

The type of modern growth is the great city. Here are to be found the greatest wealth and the deepest poverty. And it is here that popular government has most clearly broken down. In all the great American cities there is to-day as clearly defined a ruling class as in the most aristocratic countries of the world. Its members carry wads in their pockets, make up the slates for nominating conventions, distribute offices as they bargain together, and—though they toil not, neither do they spin—wear the best of raiment and spend money lavishly. They are men of power, whose favor the ambitious must court and whose vengeance he must avoid. Who are these men? The wise, the good, the learned—men who have earned the confidence of their fellow-citizens by the purity of their lives, the splendor of their talents, their probity in public trusts, their deep study of the problems of government? No; they are gamblers, saloon keepers, pugilists, or worse, who have made a

trade of controlling votes and of buying and selling offices and official acts. They stand to the government of these cities as the Prætorian Guards did to that of declining Rome. He who would wear the purple, fill the curule chair, or have the fasces carried before him, must go or send his messengers to their camps, give them donatives and make them promises. It is through these men that the rich corporations and powerful pecuniary interests can pack the Senate and the bench with their creatures. It is these men who make School Directors, Supervisors, Assessors, members of the Legislature, Congressmen. Why, there are many election districts in the United States in which a George Washington, a Benjamin Franklin or a Thomas Jefferson could no more go to the lower house of a State Legislature than under the Ancient Régime a base-born peasant could become a Marshal of France. Their very character would be an insuperable disqualification.

In theory we are intense democrats. The proposal to sacrifice swine in the temple would hardly have excited greater horror and indignation in Jerusalem of old than would among us that of conferring a distinction of rank upon our most eminent citizen. But is there not growing up among us a class who have all the power without any of the virtues of aristocracy? We have simple citizens who control thousands of miles of railroad, millions of acres of land, the means of livelihood of great numbers of men; who name the Governors of sovereign States as they name their clerks, choose Senators as they choose attorneys, and whose will is as supreme with Legislatures as that of a French King sitting in bed of justice. The undercurrents of the times seem to sweep us back again to the old conditions from which we dreamed we had escaped. The development of the artisan and commercial classes gradually broke down feudalism after it had become so complete that men thought of heaven as

organized on a feudal basis, and ranked the first and second persons of the Trinity as suzerain and tenant-in-chief. But now the development of manufactures and exchange, acting in a social organization in which land is made private property, threatens to compel every worker to seek a master, as the insecurity which followed the final break-up of the Roman Empire compelled every freeman to seek a lord. Nothing seems exempt from this tendency. Industry everywhere tends to assume a form in which one is master and many serve. And when one is master and the others serve, the one will control the others, even in such matters as votes. Just as the English landlord votes his tenants, so does the New England mill owner vote his operatives.

There is no mistaking it—the very foundations of society are being sapped before our eyes, while we ask, *how* is it possible that such a civilization as this, with its railroads, and daily newspapers, and electric telegraphs, should ever be destroyed? While literature breathes but the belief that we have been, are, and for the future must be, leaving the savage state further and further behind us, there are indications that we are actually turning back again toward barbarism. Let me illustrate: One of the characteristics of barbarism is the low regard for the rights of person and of property. That the laws of our Anglo-Saxon ancestors imposed as penalty for murder a fine proportioned to the rank of the victim, while our law knows no distinction of rank, and protects the lowest from the highest, the poorest from the richest, by the uniform penalty of death, is looked upon as evidence of their barbarism and our civilization. And so, that piracy, and robbery, and slave-trading, and black-mailing, were once regarded as legitimate occupations, is conclusive proof of the rude state of development from which we have so far progressed.

But it is a matter of fact that, in spite of our laws, any

one who has money enough and wants to kill another may go into any one of our great centers of population and business, and gratify his desire, and then surrender himself to justice, with the chances as a hundred to one that he will suffer no greater penalty than a temporary imprisonment and the loss of a sum proportioned partly to his own wealth and partly to the wealth and standing of the man he kills. His money will be paid, not to the family of the murdered man, who have lost their protector; not to the state, which has lost a citizen; but to lawyers who understand how to secure delays, to find witnesses, and get juries to disagree.

And so, if a man steal enough, he may be sure that his punishment will practically amount but to the loss of a part of the proceeds of his theft; and if he steal enough to get off with a fortune, he will be greeted by his acquaintances as a viking might have been greeted after a successful cruise. Even though he robbed those who trusted him; even though he robbed the widow and the fatherless; he has only to get enough, and he may safely flaunt his wealth in the eyes of day.

Now, the tendency in this direction is an increasing one. It is shown in greatest force where the inequalities in the distribution of wealth are greatest, and it shows itself as they increase. If it be not a return to barbarism, what is it? The failures of justice to which I have alluded are only illustrative of the increasing debility of our legal machinery in every department. It is becoming common to hear men say that it would be better to revert to first principles and abolish law, for then in self-defense the people would form Vigilance Committees and take justice into their own hands. Is this indicative of advance or retrogression?

All this is matter of common observation. Though we may not speak it openly, the general faith in republican institutions is, where they have reached their fullest

development, narrowing and weakening. It is no longer that confident belief in republicanism as the source of national blessings that it once was. Thoughtful men are beginning to see its dangers, without seeing how to escape them; are beginning to accept the view of Macaulay and distrust that of Jefferson.\* And the people at large are becoming used to the growing corruption. The most ominous political sign in the United States to-day is the growth of a sentiment which either doubts the existence of an honest man in public office or looks on him as a fool for not seizing his opportunities. That is to say, the people themselves are becoming corrupted. Thus in the United States to-day is republican government running the course it must inevitably follow under conditions which cause the unequal distribution of wealth.

Where that course leads is clear to whoever will think. As corruption becomes chronic; as public spirit is lost; as traditions of honor, virtue, and patriotism are weakened; as law is brought into contempt and reforms become hopeless; then in the festering mass will be generated volcanic forces, which shatter and rend when seeming accident gives them vent. Strong, unscrupulous men, rising up upon occasion, will become the exponents of blind popular desires or fierce popular passions, and dash aside forms that have lost their vitality. The sword will again be mightier than the pen, and in carnivals of destruction brute force and wild frenzy will alternate with the lethargy of a declining civilization.

I speak of the United States only because the United States is the most advanced of all the great nations. What shall we say of Europe, where dams of ancient law and custom pen up the swelling waters and standing armies weigh down the safety valves, though year by

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\* See Macaulay's letter to Randall, the biographer of Jefferson.

year the fires grow hotter underneath? Europe tends to republicanism under conditions that will not admit of true republicanism—under conditions that substitute for the calm and august figure of Liberty the petroleuse and the guillotine!

Whence shall come the new barbarians? Go through the squalid quarters of great cities, and you may see, even now, their gathering hordes! How shall learning perish? Men will cease to read, and books will kindle fires and be turned into cartridges!

It is startling to think how slight the traces that would be left of our civilization did it pass through the throes which have accompanied the decline of every previous civilization. Paper will not last like parchment, nor are our most massive buildings and monuments to be compared in solidity with the rock-hewn temples and titanic edifices of the old civilizations.\* And invention has given us, not merely the steam engine and the printing press, but petroleum, nitro-glycerine, and dynamite.

Yet to hint, to-day, that our civilization may possibly be tending to decline, seems like the wildness of pessimism. The special tendencies to which I have alluded are obvious to thinking men, but with the majority of thinking men, as with the great masses, the belief in substantial progress is yet deep and strong—a fundamental belief which admits not the shadow of a doubt.

But any one who will think over the matter will see that this must necessarily be the case where advance gradually passes into retrogression. For in social development, as in everything else, motion tends to persist in straight lines, and therefore, where there has been a

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\* It is also, it seems to me, instructive to note how inadequate and utterly misleading would be the idea of our civilization which could be gained from the religious and funereal monuments of our time, which are all we have from which to gain our ideas of the buried civilizations.

previous advance, it is extremely difficult to recognize decline, even when it has fully commenced; there is an almost irresistible tendency to believe that the forward movement which has been advance, and is still going on, is still advance. The web of beliefs, customs, laws, institutions, and habits of thought, which each community is constantly spinning, and which produces in the individual environed by it all the differences of national character, is never unraveled. That is to say, in the decline of civilization, communities do not go down by the same paths that they came up. For instance, the decline of civilization as manifested in government would not take us back from republicanism to constitutional monarchy, and thence to the feudal system; it would take us to imperialism and anarchy. As manifested in religion, it would not take us back into the faiths of our forefathers, into Protestantism or Catholicity, but into new forms of superstition, of which possibly Mormonism and other even grosser "isms" may give some vague idea. As manifested in knowledge, it would not take us toward Bacon, but toward the literati of China.

And how the retrogression of civilization, following a period of advance, may be so gradual as to attract no attention at the time; nay, how that decline must necessarily, by the great majority of men, be mistaken for advance, is easily seen. For instance, there is an enormous difference between Grecian art of the classic period and that of the lower empire; yet the change was accompanied, or rather caused, by a change of taste. The artists who most quickly followed this change of taste were in their day regarded as the superior artists. And so of literature. As it became more vapid, puerile, and stilted, it would be in obedience to an altered taste, which would regard its increasing weakness as increasing strength and beauty. The really good writer would not find readers; he would be regarded as rude, dry, or dull.



And so would the drama decline; not because there was a lack of good plays, but because the prevailing taste became more and more that of a less cultured class, who, of course, regard that which they most admire as the best of its kind. And so, too, of religion; the superstitions which a superstitious people will add to it will be regarded by them as improvements. While, as the decline goes on, the return to barbarism, where it is not in itself regarded as an advance, will seem necessary to meet the exigencies of the times.

For instance, flogging, as a punishment for certain offenses, has been recently restored to the penal code of England, and has been strongly advocated on this side of the Atlantic. I express no opinion as to whether this is or is not a better punishment for crime than imprisonment. I only point to the fact as illustrating how an increasing amount of crime and an increasing embarrassment as to the maintenance of prisoners, both obvious tendencies at present, might lead to a fuller return to the physical cruelty of barbarous codes. The use of torture in judicial investigations, which steadily grew with the decline of Roman civilization, it is thus easy to see, might, as manners brutalized and crime increased, be demanded as a necessary improvement of the criminal law.

Whether in the present drifts of opinion and taste there are as yet any indications of retrogression, it is not necessary to inquire; but there are many things about which there can be no dispute, which go to show that our civilization has reached a critical period, and that unless a new start is made in the direction of social equality, the nineteenth century may to the future mark its climax. These industrial depressions, which cause as much waste and suffering as famines or wars, are like the twinges and shocks which precede paralysis. Everywhere is it evident that the tendency to inequality, which

is the necessary result of material progress where land is monopolized, cannot go much further without carrying our civilization into that downward path which is so easy to enter and so hard to abandon. Everywhere the increasing intensity of the struggle to live, the increasing necessity for straining every nerve to prevent being thrown down and trodden under foot in the scramble for wealth, is draining the forces which gain and maintain improvements. In every civilized country pauperism, crime, insanity, and suicides are increasing. In every civilized country the diseases are increasing which come from overstrained nerves, from insufficient nourishment, from squalid lodgings, from unwholesome and monotonous occupations, from premature labor of children, from the tasks and crimes which poverty imposes upon women. In every highly civilized country the expectation of life, which gradually rose for several centuries, and which seems to have culminated about the first quarter of this century, appears to be now diminishing.\*

It is not an advancing civilization that such figures show. It is a civilization which in its undercurrents has already begun to recede. When the tide turns in bay or river from flood to ebb, it is not all at once; but here it still runs on, though there it has begun to recede. When the sun passes the meridian, it can be told only by the way the short shadows fall; for the heat of the day yet increases. But as sure as the turning tide must soon run full ebb; as sure as the declining sun must bring darkness, so sure is it, that though knowledge yet increases and invention marches on, and new states are being settled, and cities still expand, yet civilization has begun to

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\* Statistics which show these things are collected in convenient form in a volume entitled "Deterioration and Race Education," by Samuel Royce, which has been largely distributed by the venerable Peter Cooper of New York. Strangely enough, the only remedy proposed by Mr. Royce is the establishment of Kindergarten schools.

wane when, in proportion to population, we must build more and more prisons, more and more almshouses, more and more insane asylums. It is not from top to bottom that societies die; it is from bottom to top.

But there are evidences far more palpable than any that can be given by statistics, of tendencies to the ebb of civilization. There is a vague but general feeling of disappointment; an increased bitterness among the working classes; a widespread feeling of unrest and brooding revolution. If this were accompanied by a definite idea of how relief is to be obtained, it would be a hopeful sign; but it is not. Though the schoolmaster has been abroad some time, the general power of tracing effect to cause does not seem a whit improved. The reaction toward protectionism, as the reaction toward other exploded fallacies of government, shows this.\* And even the philosophic free-thinker cannot look upon that vast change in religious ideas that is now sweeping over the civilized world without feeling that this tremendous fact may have most momentous relations, which only the future can develop. For what is going on is not a change in the form of religion, but the negation and destruction of the ideas from which religion springs. Christianity is not simply clearing itself of superstitions, but in the popular mind it is dying at the root, as the old paganisms were dying when Christianity entered the world. And nothing arises to take its place. The fundamental ideas of an intelligent Creator and of a future life are in the general mind rapidly weakening. Now, whether this may or may not be in itself an advance, the importance of the part which religion has played in the

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\* In point of constructive statesmanship—the recognition of fundamental principles and the adaptation of means to ends, the Constitution of the United States, adopted a century ago, is greatly superior to the latest State Constitutions, the most recent of which is that of California—a piece of utter botchwork.

world's history shows the importance of the change that is now going on. Unless human nature has suddenly altered in what the universal history of the race shows to be its deepest characteristics, the mightiest actions and reactions are thus preparing. Such stages of thought have heretofore always marked periods of transition. On a smaller scale and to a less depth (for I think any one who will notice the drift of our literature, and talk upon such subjects with the men he meets, will see that it is sub-soil and not surface plowing that materialistic ideas are now doing), such a state of thought preceded the French revolution. But the closest parallel to the wreck of religious ideas now going on is to be found in that period in which ancient civilization began to pass from splendor to decline. What change may come, no mortal man can tell, but that some great change *must* come, thoughtful men begin to feel. The civilized world is trembling on the verge of a great movement. Either it must be a leap upward, which will open the way to advances yet undreamed of, or it must be a plunge downward, which will carry us back toward barbarism.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE CENTRAL TRUTH.

In the short space to which this latter part of our inquiry is necessarily confined, I have been obliged to omit much that I would like to say, and to touch briefly where an exhaustive consideration would not be out of place.

Nevertheless, this, at least, is evident, that the truth to which we were led in the politico-economic branch of our inquiry is as clearly apparent in the rise and fall of nations and the growth and decay of civilizations, and that it accords with those deep-seated recognitions of relation and sequence that we denominate moral perceptions. Thus have been given to our conclusions the greatest certitude and highest sanction.

This truth involves both a menace and a promise. It shows that the evils arising from the unjust and unequal distribution of wealth, which are becoming more and more apparent as modern civilization goes on, are not incidents of progress, but tendencies which must bring progress to a halt; that they will not cure themselves, but, on the contrary, must, unless their cause is removed, grow greater and greater, until they sweep us back into barbarism by the road every previous civilization has trod. But it also shows that these evils are not imposed by natural laws; that they spring solely from social mal-adjustments which ignore natural laws, and that in removing their cause we shall be giving an enormous impetus to progress.

The poverty which in the midst of abundance pinches

and imbrutes men, and all the manifold evils which flow from it, spring from a denial of justice. In permitting the monopolization of the opportunities which nature freely offers to all, we have ignored the fundamental law of justice—for, so far as we can see, when we view things upon a large scale, 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; tame the ruthless passions of greed; dry up the springs of vice and misery; light in dark places the lamp of knowledge; give new vigor to invention and a fresh impulse to discovery; substitute political strength for political weakness; and make tyranny and anarchy impossible.

The reform I have proposed accords with all that is politically, socially, or morally desirable. It has the qualities of a true reform, for it will make all other reforms easier. What is it but the carrying out in letter and spirit of the truth enunciated in the Declaration of Independence—the “self-evident” truth that is the heart and soul of the Declaration—“*That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness!*”

These rights are denied when the equal right to land—on which and by which men alone can live—is denied. Equality of political rights will not compensate for the denial of the equal right to the bounty of nature. Political liberty, when the equal right to land is denied, becomes, as population increases and invention goes on, merely the liberty to compete for employment at starvation wages. This is the truth that we have ignored. And so there come beggars in our streets and tramps on

our roads; and poverty enslaves men whom we boast are political sovereigns; and want breeds ignorance that our schools cannot enlighten; and citizens vote as their masters dictate; and the demagogue usurps the part of the statesman; and gold weighs in the scales of justice; and in high places sit those who do not pay to civic virtue even the compliment of hypocrisy; and the pillars of the republic that we thought so strong already bend under an increasing strain.

We honor Liberty in name and in form. We set up her statues and sound her praises. But we have not fully trusted her. And with our growth so grow her demands. She will have no half service!

Liberty! it is a word to conjure with, not to vex the ear in empty boastings. For Liberty means Justice, and Justice is the natural law—the law of health and symmetry and strength, of fraternity and co-operation.

They who look upon Liberty as having accomplished her mission when she has abolished hereditary privileges and given men the ballot, who think of her as having no further relations to the everyday affairs of life, have not seen her real grandeur—to them the poets who have sung of her must seem rhapsodists, and her martyrs fools! As the sun is the lord of life, as well as of light; as his beams not merely pierce the clouds, but support all growth, supply all motion, and call forth from what would otherwise be a cold and inert mass all the infinite diversities of being and beauty, so is liberty to mankind. It is not for an abstraction that men have toiled and died; that in every age the witnesses of Liberty have stood forth, and the martyrs of Liberty have suffered.

We speak of Liberty as one thing, and of virtue, wealth, knowledge, invention, national strength and national independence as other things. But, of all these, Liberty is the source, the mother, the necessary condition. She is to virtue what light is to color; to wealth what sun-

shine is to grain; to knowledge what eyes are to sight. She is the genius of invention, the brawn of national strength, the spirit of national independence. Where Liberty rises, there virtue grows, wealth increases, knowledge expands, invention multiplies human powers, and in strength and spirit the freer nation rises among her neighbors as Saul amid his brethren—taller and fairer. Where Liberty sinks, there virtue fades, wealth diminishes, knowledge is forgotten, invention ceases, and empires once mighty in arms and arts become a helpless prey to freer barbarians!

Only in broken gleams and partial light has the sun of Liberty yet beamed among men, but all progress hath she called forth.

Liberty came to a race of slaves crouching under Egyptian whips, and led them forth from the House of Bondage. She hardened them in the desert and made of them a race of conquerors. The free spirit of the Mosaic law took their thinkers up to heights where they beheld the unity of God, and inspired their poets with strains that yet phrase the highest exaltations of thought. Liberty dawned on the Phœnician coast, and ships passed the Pillars of Hercules to plow the unknown sea. She shed a partial light on Greece, and marble grew to shapes of ideal beauty, words became the instruments of subtlest thought, and against the scanty militia of free cities the countless hosts of the Great King broke like surges against a rock. She cast her beams on the four-acre farms of Italian husbandmen, and born of her strength a power came forth that conquered the world. They glinted from shields of German warriors, and Augustus wept his legions. Out of the night that followed her eclipse, her slanting rays fell again on free cities, and a lost learning revived, modern civilization began, a new world was unveiled; and as Liberty grew, so grew art, wealth, power, knowledge, and refinement. In the his-



tory of every nation we may read the same truth. It was the strength born of Magna Charta that won Crecy and Agincourt. It was the revival of Liberty from the despotism of the Tudors that glorified the Elizabethan age. It was the spirit that brought a crowned tyrant to the block that planted here the seed of a mighty tree. It was the energy of ancient freedom that, the moment it had gained unity, made Spain the mightiest power of the world, only to fall to the lowest depth of weakness when tyranny succeeded liberty. See, in France, all intellectual vigor dying under the tyranny of the Seventeenth Century to revive in splendor as Liberty awoke in the Eighteenth, and on the enfranchisement of French peasants in the Great Revolution, basing the wonderful strength that has in our time defied defeat.

Shall we not trust her?

In our time, as in times before, creep on the insidious forces that, producing inequality, destroy Liberty. On the horizon the clouds begin to lower. Liberty calls to us again. We must follow her further; we must trust her fully. Either we must wholly accept her or she will not stay. It is not enough that men should vote; it is not enough that they should be theoretically equal before the law. They must have liberty to avail themselves of the opportunities and means of life; they must stand on equal terms with reference to the bounty of nature. Either this, or Liberty withdraws her light! Either this, or darkness comes on, and the very forces that progress has evolved turn to powers that work destruction. This is the universal law. This is the lesson of the centuries. Unless its foundations be laid in justice the social structure cannot stand.

Our primary social adjustment is a denial of justice. In allowing one man to own the land on which and from which other men must live, we have made them his bondsmen in a degree which increases as material prog-

ress goes on. This is the subtle alchemy that in ways they do not realize is extracting from the masses in every civilized country the fruits of their weary toil; that is instituting a harder and more hopeless slavery in place of that which has been destroyed; that is bringing political despotism out of political freedom, and must soon transmute democratic institutions into anarchy.

It is this that turns the blessings of material progress into a curse. It is this that crowds human beings into noisome cellars and squalid tenement houses; that fills prisons and brothels; that goads men with want and consumes them with greed; that robs women of the grace and beauty of perfect womanhood; that takes from little children the joy and innocence of life's morning.

Civilization so based cannot continue. The eternal laws of the universe forbid it. Ruins of dead empires testify, and the witness that is in every soul answers, that it cannot be. It is something grander than Benevolence, something more august than Charity—it is Justice herself that demands of us to right this wrong. Justice that will not be denied; that cannot be put off—Justice that with the scales carries the sword. Shall we ward the stroke with liturgies and prayers? Shall we avert the decrees of immutable law by raising churches when hungry infants moan and weary mothers weep?

Though it may take the language of prayer, it is blasphemy that attributes to the inscrutable decrees of Providence the suffering and brutishness that come of poverty; that turns with folded hands to the All-Father and lays on Him the responsibility for the want and crime of our great cities. We degrade the Everlasting. We slander the Just One. A merciful man would have better ordered the world; a just man would crush with his foot such an ulcerous anthill! It is not the Almighty, but we who are responsible for the vice and misery that fester amid our civilization. The Creator showers upon us his gifts

—more than enough for all. But like swine scrambling for food, we tread them in the mire—tread them in the mire, while we tear and rend each other!

In the very centers of our civilization to-day are want and suffering enough to make sick at heart whoever does not close his eyes and steel his nerves. Dare we turn to the Creator and ask Him to relieve it? Supposing the prayer were heard, and at the behest with which the universe sprang into being there should glow in the sun a greater power; new virtue fill the air; fresh vigor the soil; that for every blade of grass that now grows two should spring up, and the seed that now increases fifty-fold should increase a hundred-fold! Would poverty be abated or want relieved? Manifestly no! Whatever benefit would accrue would be but temporary. The new powers streaming through the material universe could be utilized only through land. And land, being private property, the classes that now monopolize the bounty of the Creator would monopolize all the new bounty. Land owners would alone be benefited. Rents would increase, but wages would still tend to the starvation point!

This is not merely a deduction of political economy; it is a fact of experience. We know it because we have seen it. Within our own times, under our very eyes, that Power which is above all, and in all, and through all; that Power of which the whole universe is but the manifestation; that Power which maketh all things, and without which is not anything made that is made, has increased the bounty which men may enjoy, as truly as though the fertility of nature had been increased. Into the mind of one came the thought that harnessed steam for the service of mankind. To the inner ear of another was whispered the secret that compels the lightning to bear a message round the globe. In every direction have the laws of matter been revealed; in every department of industry have arisen arms of iron and fingers of steel,

whose effect upon the production of wealth has been precisely the same as an increase in the fertility of nature. What has been the result? Simply that land owners get all the gain. The wonderful discoveries and inventions of our century have neither increased wages nor lightened toil. The effect has simply been to make the few richer; the many more helpless!

Can it be that the gifts of the Creator may be thus misappropriated with impunity? Is it a light thing that labor should be robbed of its earnings while greed rolls in wealth—that the many should want while the few are surfeited? Turn to history, and on every page may be read the lesson that such wrong never goes unpunished; that the Nemesis that follows injustice never falters nor sleeps! Look around to-day. Can this state of things continue? May we even say, “After us the deluge!” Nay; the pillars of the state are trembling even now, and the very foundations of society begin to quiver with pent-up forces that glow underneath. The struggle that must either revivify, or convulse in ruin, is near at hand, if it be not already begun.

The fiat has gone forth! With steam and electricity, and the new powers born of progress, forces have entered the world that will either compel us to a higher plane or overwhelm us, as nation after nation, as civilization after civilization, have been overwhelmed before. It is the delusion which precedes destruction that sees in the popular unrest with which the civilized world is feverishly pulsing only the passing effect of ephemeral causes. Between democratic ideas and the aristocratic adjustments of society there is an irreconcilable conflict. Here in the United States, as there in Europe, it may be seen arising. We cannot go on permitting men to vote and forcing them to tramp. We cannot go on educating boys and girls in our public schools and then refusing them the right to earn an honest living. We cannot go on

prating\* of the inalienable rights of man and then denying the inalienable right to the bounty of the Creator. Even now, in old bottles the new wine begins to ferment, and elemental forces gather for the strife!

But if, while there is yet time, we turn to Justice and obey her, if we trust Liberty and follow her, the dangers that now threaten must disappear, the forces that now menace will turn to agencies of elevation. Think of the powers now wasted; of the infinite fields of knowledge yet to be explored; of the possibilities of which the wondrous inventions of this century give us but a hint. With want destroyed; with greed changed to noble passions; with the fraternity that is born of equality taking the place of the jealousy and fear that now array men against each other; with mental power loosed by conditions that give to the humblest comfort and leisure; and who shall measure the heights to which our civilization may soar? Words fail the thought! It is the Golden Age of which poets have sung and high-raised seers have told in metaphor! It is the glorious vision which has always haunted man with gleams of fitful splendor. It is what he saw whose eyes at Patmos were closed in a trance. It is the culmination of Christianity—the City of God on earth, with its walls of jasper and its gates of pearl! It is the reign of the Prince of Peace!



# CONCLUSION.

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THE PROBLEM OF INDIVIDUAL LIFE.

The days of the nations bear no trace  
Of all the sunshine so far foretold;  
The cannon speaks in the teacher's place—  
The age is weary with work and gold,  
And high hopes wither, and memories wane;  
On hearths and altars the fires are dead;  
But that brave faith hath not lived in vain—  
And this is all that our watcher said.

—*Frances Brown*



## CONCLUSION.

### THE PROBLEM OF INDIVIDUAL LIFE.

My task is done.

Yet the thought still mounts. The problems we have been considering lead into a problem higher and deeper still. Behind the problems of social life lies the problem of individual life. I have found it impossible to think of the one without thinking of the other, and so, I imagine, will it be with those who, reading this book, go with me in thought. For, as says Guizot, "when the history of civilization is completed, when there is nothing more to say as to our present existence, man inevitably asks himself whether all is exhausted, whether he has reached the end of all things?"

This problem I cannot now discuss. I speak of it only because the thought which, while writing this book, has come with inexpressible cheer to me, may also be of cheer to some who read it; for, whatever be its fate, it will be read by some who in their heart of hearts have taken the cross of a new crusade. This thought will come to them without my suggestion; but we are surer that we see a star when we know that others also see it.

The truth that I have tried to make clear will not find easy acceptance. If that could be, it would have been accepted long ago. If that could be, it would never have been obscured. But it will find friends—those who will toil for it; suffer for it; if need be, die for it. This is the power of Truth.

Will it at length prevail? Ultimately, yes. But in

our own times, or in times of which any memory of us remains, who shall say?

For the man who, seeing the want and misery, the ignorance and brutishness caused by unjust social institutions, sets himself, in so far as he has strength, to right them, there is disappointment and bitterness. So it has been of old time. So is it even now. But the bitterest thought—and it sometimes comes to the best and bravest—is that of the hopelessness of the effort, the futility of the sacrifice. To how few of those who sow the seed is it given to see it grow, or even with certainty to know that it will grow.

Let us not disguise it. Over and over again has the standard of Truth and Justice been raised in this world. Over and over again has it been trampled down—oftentimes in blood. If they are weak forces that are opposed to Truth, how should Error so long prevail? If Justice has but to raise her head to have Injustice flee before her, how should the wail of the oppressed so long go up?

But for those who see Truth and would follow her; for those who recognize Justice and would stand for her, success is not the only thing. Success! Why, Falsehood has often that to give; and Injustice often has that to give. Must not Truth and Justice have something to give that is their own by proper right—theirs in essence, and not by accident?

That they have, and that here and now, every one who has felt their exaltation knows. But sometimes the clouds sweep down. It is sad, sad reading, the lives of the men who would have done something for their fellows. To Socrates they gave the hemlock; Gracchus they killed with sticks and stones; and One, greatest and purest of all, they crucified. These seem but types. To-day Russian prisons are full, and in long processions, men and women, who, but for high-minded patriotism, might have lived in ease and luxury, move in chains

toward the death-in-life of Siberia. And in penury and want, in neglect and contempt, destitute even of the sympathy that would have been so sweet, how many in every country have closed their eyes? This we see.

*But do we see it all?*

In writing I have picked up a newspaper. In it is a short account, evidently translated from a semi-official report, of the execution of three Nihilists at Kieff—the Prussian subject Brandtner, the unknown man calling himself Antonoff, and the nobleman Ossinsky. At the foot of the gallows they were permitted to kiss one another. “Then the hangman cut the rope, the surgeons pronounced the victims dead, the bodies were buried at the foot of the scaffold, and the Nihilists were given up to eternal oblivion.” Thus says the account. I do not believe it. No; not to oblivion!

I have in this inquiry followed the course of my own thought. When, in mind, I set out on it I had no theory to support, no conclusions to prove. Only, when I first realized the squalid misery of a great city, it appalled and tormented me, and would not let me rest, for thinking of what caused it and how it could be cured.

But out of this inquiry has come to me something I did not think to find, and a faith that was dead revives.

The yearning for a further life is natural and deep. It grows with intellectual growth, and perhaps none really feel it more than those who have begun to see how great is the universe and how infinite are the vistas which every advance in knowledge opens before us—vistas which would require nothing short of eternity to explore. But in the mental atmosphere of our times, to the great majority of men on whom mere creeds have lost their hold, it seems impossible to look on this yearning save as a vain and childish hope, arising from man's egotism, and for which there is not the slightest ground or war-

rant, but which, on the contrary, seems inconsistent with positive knowledge.

Now, when we come to analyze and trace up the ideas that thus destroy the hope of a future life, we shall find them, I think, to have their source, not in any revelations of physical science, but in certain teachings of political and social science which have deeply permeated thought in all directions. They have their root in the doctrines, that there is a tendency to the production of more human beings than can be provided for; that vice and misery are the result of natural laws, and the means by which advance goes on; and that human progress is by a slow race development. These doctrines, which have been generally accepted as approved truth, do what, except as scientific interpretations have been colored by them, the extensions of physical science do not do—they reduce the individual to insignificance; they destroy the idea that there can be in the ordering of the universe any regard for his existence, or any recognition of what we call moral qualities.

It is difficult to reconcile the idea of human immortality with the idea that nature wastes men by constantly bringing them into being where there is no room for them. It is impossible to reconcile the idea of an intelligent and beneficent Creator with the belief that the wretchedness and degradation which are the lot of such a large proportion of human kind result from his enactments; while the idea that man mentally and physically is the result of slow modifications perpetuated by heredity, irresistibly suggests the idea that it is the race life, not the individual life, which is the object of human existence. Thus has vanished with many of us, and is still vanishing with more of us, that belief which in the battles and ills of life affords the strongest support and deepest consolation.

Now, in the inquiry through which we have passed,

we have met these doctrines and seen their fallacy. We have seen that population does not tend to outrun subsistence; we have seen that the waste of human powers and the prodigality of human suffering do not spring from natural laws, but from the ignorance and selfishness of men in refusing to conform to natural laws. We have seen that human progress is not by altering the nature of men; but that, on the contrary, the nature of men seems, generally speaking, always the same.

Thus the nightmare which is banishing from the modern world the belief in a future life is destroyed. Not that all difficulties are removed—for turn which way we may, we come to what we cannot comprehend; but that difficulties are removed which seem conclusive and insuperable. And, thus, hope springs up.

But this is not all.

Political Economy has been called the dismal science, and as currently taught, *is* hopeless and despairing. But this, as we have seen, is solely because she has been degraded and shackled; her truths dislocated; her harmonies ignored; the word she would utter gagged in her mouth, and her protest against wrong turned into an indorsement of injustice. Freed, as I have tried to free her—in her own proper symmetry, Political Economy is radiant with hope.

For properly understood, the laws which govern the production and distribution of wealth show that the want and injustice of the present social state are not necessary; but that, on the contrary, a social state is possible in which poverty would be unknown, and all the better qualities and higher powers of human nature would have opportunity for full development.

And, further than this, when we see that social development is governed neither by a Special Providence nor by a merciless fate, but by law, at once unchangeable

and beneficent; when we see that human will is the great factor, and that taking men in the aggregate, their condition is as they make it; when we see that economic law and moral law are essentially one, and that the truth which the intellect grasps after toilsome effort is but that which the moral sense reaches by a quick intuition, a flood of light breaks in upon the problem of individual life. These countless millions like ourselves, who on this earth of ours have passed and still are passing, with their joys and sorrows, their toil and their striving, their aspirations and their fears, their strong perceptions of things deeper than sense, their common feelings which form the basis even of the most divergent creeds—their little lives do not seem so much like meaningless waste.

The great fact which Science in all her branches shows is the universality of law. Wherever he can trace it, whether in the fall of an apple or in the revolution of binary suns, the astronomer sees the working of the same law, which operates in the minutest divisions in which we may distinguish space, as it does in the immeasurable distances with which his science deals. Out of that which lies beyond his telescope comes a moving body and again it disappears. So far as he can trace its course the law is ignored. Does he say that this is an exception? On the contrary, he says that this is merely a part of its orbit that he has seen; that beyond the reach of his telescope the law holds good. He makes his calculations, and after centuries they are proved.

Now, if we trace out the laws which govern human life in society, we find that in the largest as in the smallest community, they are the same. We find that what seem at first sight like divergences and exceptions are but manifestations of the same principles. And we find that everywhere we can trace it, the social law runs into and conforms with the moral law; that in the life of a community, justice infallibly brings its reward and in-

justice its punishment. But this we cannot see in individual life. If we look merely at individual life we cannot see that the laws of the universe have the slightest relation to good or bad, to right or wrong, to just or unjust.\* Shall we then say that the law which is manifest in social life is not true of individual life? It is not scientific to say so. We would not say so in reference to anything else. Shall we not rather say this simply proves that we do not see the whole of individual life?

The laws which Political Economy discovers, like the facts and relations of physical nature, harmonize with what seems to be the law of mental development—not a necessary and involuntary progress, but a progress in which the human will is an initiatory force. But in life, as we are cognizant of it, mental development can go but a little way. The mind hardly begins to awake ere the bodily powers decline—it but becomes dimly conscious of the vast fields before it, but begins to learn and use its strength, to recognize relations and extend its sympathies, when, with the death of the body, it passes away. Unless there is something more, there seems here a break, a failure. Whether it be a Humboldt or a Herschel, a Moses who looks from Pisgah, a Joshua who leads the host, or one of those sweet and patient souls who in narrow circles live radiant lives, there seems, if

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\* Let us not delude our children. If for no other reason than for that which Plato gives, that when they come to discard that which we told them as pious fable they will also discard that which we told them as truth. The virtues which relate to self do generally bring their reward. Either a merchant or a thief will be more successful if he be sober, prudent, and faithful to his promises; but as to the virtues which do not relate to self—

“It seems a story from the world of spirits,  
When any one obtains that which he merits,  
Or any merits that which he obtains.”

mind and character here developed can go no further, a purposelessness inconsistent with what we can see of the linked sequence of the universe.

By a fundamental law of our minds—the law, in fact, upon which Political Economy relies in all her deductions—we cannot conceive of a means without an end; a contrivance without an object. Now, to all nature, so far as we come in contact with it in this world, the support and employment of the intelligence that is in man furnishes such an end and object. But unless man himself may rise to or bring forth something higher, his existence is unintelligible. So strong is this metaphysical necessity that those who deny to the individual anything more than this life are compelled to transfer the idea of perfectibility to the race. But as we have seen, and the argument could have been made much more complete, there is nothing whatever to show any essential race improvement. Human progress is not the improvement of human nature. The advances in which civilization consists are not secured in the constitution of man, but in the constitution of society. They are thus not fixed and permanent, but may at any time be lost—nay, are constantly tending to be lost. And further than this, if human life does not continue beyond what we see of it here, then we are confronted, with regard to the race, with the same difficulty as with the individual! For it is as certain that the race must die as it is that the individual must die. We know that there have been geologic conditions under which human life was impossible on this earth. We know that they must return again. Even now, as the earth circles on her appointed orbit, the northern ice cap slowly thickens, and the time gradually approaches, when its glaciers will flow again. and austral seas, sweeping northward, bury the seats of present civilization under ocean wastes, as it may be they now bury what was once as high a civilization as our own,



And beyond these periods, science discerns a dead earth, an exhausted sun—a time when, clashing together, the solar system shall resolve itself into a gaseous form, again to begin immeasurable mutations.

What then is the meaning of life—of life absolutely and inevitably bounded by death? To me it seems intelligible only as the avenue and vestibule to another life. And its facts seem explainable only upon a theory which cannot be expressed but in myth and symbol, and which, everywhere and at all times, the myths and symbols in which men have tried to portray their deepest perceptions do in some form express.

The scriptures of the men who have been and gone—the Bibles, the Zend Avestas, the Vedas, the Dhammapadas, and the Korans; the esoteric doctrines of old philosophies, the inner meaning of grotesque religions, the dogmatic constitutions of Ecumenical Councils, the preachings of Foxes, and Wesleys, and Savonarolas, the traditions of red Indians, and beliefs of black savages, have a heart and core in which they agree—a something which seems like the variously distorted apprehensions of a primary truth. And out of the chain of thought we have been following there seems vaguely to rise a glimpse of what they vaguely saw—a shadowy gleam of ultimate relations, the endeavor to express which inevitably falls into type and allegory. A garden in which are set the trees of good and evil. A vineyard in which there is the Master's work to do. A passage—from life behind to life beyond. A trial and a struggle, of which we cannot see the end.

Look around to-day.

Lo! here, now, in our civilized society, the old allegories yet have a meaning, the old myths are still true. Into the Valley of the Shadow of Death yet often leads the path of duty, through the streets of Vanity Fair

walk Christian and Faithful, and on Greatheart's armor ring the clanging blows. Ormuzd still fights with Ahri-man—the Prince of Light with the Powers of Darkness. He who will hear, to him the clarions of the battle call.

How they call, and call, and call, till the heart swells that hears them! Strong soul and high endeavor, the world needs them now. Beauty still lies imprisoned, and iron wheels go over the good and true and beautiful that might spring from human lives.

And they who fight with Ormuzd, though they may not know each other—somewhere, sometime, will the muster roll be called.

Though Truth and Right seem often overborne, we may not see it all. How can we see it all? All that is passing, even here, we cannot tell. The vibrations of matter which give the sensations of light and color become to us indistinguishable when they pass a certain point. It is only within a like range that we have cognizance of sounds. Even animals have senses which we have not. And, here? Compared with the solar system our earth is but an indistinguishable speck; and the solar system itself shrivels into nothingness when gauged with the star depths. Shall we say that what passes from *our* sight passes into oblivion? No; not into oblivion. Far, far beyond our ken the eternal laws must hold their sway.

The hope that rises is the heart of all religions! The poets have sung it, the seers have told it, and in its deepest pulses the heart of man throbs responsive to its truth. This, that Plutarch said, is what in all times and in all tongues has been said by the pure hearted and strong sighted, who, standing as it were, on the mountain tops of thought and looking over the shadowy ocean, have beheld the loom of land:

*“Men's souls, encompassed here with bodies and pas-*

sions, have no communication with God, except what they can reach to in conception only, by means of philosophy, as by a kind of an obscure dream. But when they are loosed from the body, and removed into the unseen, invisible, impassable, and pure region, this God is then their leader and king; they there, as it were, hanging on him wholly, and beholding without weariness and passionately affecting that beauty which cannot be expressed or uttered by men."



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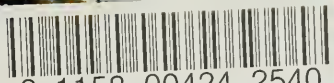
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