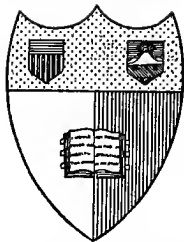


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HIS LIFE-WORK  
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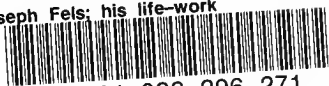
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Joseph Fels - 1912







**JOSEPH FELS  
HIS LIFE-WORK**

**MARY FELS**

**NEW YORK  
B. W. HUEBSCH  
1916**

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## JOSEPH FELS

Engine and wheel and chain that clank and groan  
    In ceaseless factory-din thundering apace,  
    Ear-stunning clamor of the market-place,  
And yet, amid it all, he heard the moan.  
When Riches made its golden bribe his own,  
    And Power trumpet-called him from the throng,  
    And soft, luxurious Ease, with drowsy song,  
He was as one not hearing — save the moan.  
Half the vast world he traversed in his quests,  
    As Galahad for the Grail, heedless of self,  
    Unresting, squandering time and strength and  
    pelf,  
Followed and sought and fought — and now he rests.

— FRANK STEPHENS.



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# JOSEPH FELS HIS LIFE-WORK

## I

### The Making of a Business Man

**T**HE parents of Joseph Fels were German Jews who emigrated to America in the troublous days of 1848. The father had not been concerned with the revolution of that year, but he was uprooted by the conditions of the time, and felt urged to remove his family from the disturbed atmosphere; the future seemed to promise more in the new world than in the old.

Lazarus Fels, the father, was an energetic man of good judgment and a fair measure of business ability. Although alert, he did not possess the rapid foresight which later distinguished his son. His general background of ideas was that of the time, and his conservative instincts militated against any habit of examining fundamental beliefs, which was to

be the quality most characteristic of his son. His active industry commanded the respect of his neighbors, and he possessed a very noticeable power of making friends. When many years later a son visited Yanceyville, the old clerk of the court remembered Lazarus Fels, and spoke of him in terms of high esteem.

Susanna Fels, the mother, was typical of the Jewish woman whose domestic genius commended her to the writer of Proverbs. An admirably efficient housewife, she rendered her husband yeoman service in the difficult days of their early sojourn in the United States. She showed a quiet courage and a determination to make possible her husband's success for which the ordinary words of praise are inadequate. For it must be remembered that she came to America young, with three little children, a stranger in language, race and religion. Her husband was forced to leave her alone in Philadelphia for nearly a year, while he traveled South in search of business. It was no easy burden she had to carry. More than forty years after her death there still remains with her children the vivid recollec-

tion of her gentleness, her refinement, and her quiet, yet resolute determination. Joseph Fels used to say in after years that it was through women such as his mother that the Jewish race had been able to endure.

After the first year in America, the family settled in Halifax County, Virginia, and it was there, five years after their departure from Germany, that Joseph was born. He was the fifth-born and fourth-surviving child. While he was still an infant, the family moved to Yanceyville, North Carolina, where they remained until Joseph was twelve. Living in a German Jewish family the boy still found most of his associates among Gentiles. A large part of the population was colored and Joseph always retained a tender place in his heart for the Negro race. These varied human elements in the North Carolina village where the boy lived during his impressionable years must have helped to shape that cosmopolitanism which was so marked a characteristic of the man in later years.

In Yanceyville and later in Richmond and Baltimore, Joseph went to school, but it may

be said that the boy profited little from his schooling. He was a mischievous boy and there are tales of frequent conflicts with pedagogical authority; tales, too, that he did not suffer without retort the weight of pedagogical disapproval. We hear of his readiness to stand up for his rights, of his determination that neither boy nor teacher should do him injustice.

Even in these early days he seems to have been endowed with an acute business sense. At fourteen he had established with the aid of a younger brother a cellar in which a kite business flourished. Joseph was the managing director and seems to have displayed considerable ability in securing profitable trade. His stock was always ready at the right season and repairs were efficiently carried out. That small business was already a foretaste of his commercial tendency.

By fifteen, Joseph was thoroughly tired of school. He rebelled against the constant discipline and the monotonous routine. Like so many Jews, at fifteen he was already a man. He felt the need of more intimate contact with

life, and desired urgently the realization of its color and its excitement.

In 1866, the family moved to Baltimore where Joseph continued in school until he was fifteen, when he was allowed to leave and enter his father's business. The latter was then engaged in the manufacture of toilet-soap, and doubtless a boy so energetic and masterful as Joe was of no small service to him. At the end of the first year he had found that there was not enough for him to do. The business was measurably prosperous and maintained the family in comfort; but in 1870 through causes for which he was not responsible the father lost the business and found it necessary to make a new beginning.

It was a serious misfortune, but new plans were soon on foot. Joseph entered the employment of a commission agency in coffees and was fairly successful. Within a year he and his father had accepted a position as representatives in Baltimore of a Philadelphia soap house and a definite district was assigned to them for their business operations. The connection lasted a few years and provided them a

fair living. But its prospects were too limited, and in 1873 father and son felt justified in moving to Philadelphia where they took out a commission with a larger house under more favorable terms.

Still, work such as this required some subordination, and to a nature like that of Joseph Fels nothing was more galling than a sense of restraint or authority. From the very beginning it was his ambition to be master of his own career. Consequently in the autumn of 1875 he went into partnership with a Philadelphia manufacturer. The business was small although it had long been established, but he felt that he could work better as master than as agent. By the end of 1876 he was in a position to buy out the partner and take over the business. In view of the dimensions of his fortune later, it is interesting that the purchase price was four thousand dollars, and that this check was the largest he had ever drawn.

So was established Fels and Company, and now that he was master of his own actions he threw himself heart and soul into the work.

His one idea and his one hope was to make it a success and it was rarely indeed in these years that he allowed his mind to deviate from this single endeavor. He traveled everywhere in its interest, his easy, confident manner, and his incessant good humor making him an excellent salesman. It is safe to say that in the fifteen years from 1875 the business was never out of his mind. At home and in his office, day and night, he schemed and planned and organized. The business, despite keen and able competition, prospered continuously and from the year of its establishment never showed any decline.

About the time of the formation of the new firm of Fels & Co. his brother Samuel entered the business and in 1881 was made a partner. But by 1890 it seemed to them that so keen a competition asked too much. It was not only that in the manufacture of toilet soap the competition is incessant; the salesman has also to study every shift and current of popular whim. He must have many varieties in quality, color, perfume; he must choose pleasing wrappers, the right boxes, the right

advertisements. His goods must not become stereotyped, while at the same time they must always retain a sufficient identity to be borne in mind. It will be clear how great a strain all this imposes on the manufacturer. The fear of waste is continually before his eyes; he knows that a new variety may be unsuccessful, that the wrapper may be wrong, the box insufficiently attractive, the price too high or too low. He must also be able to convince the middle man that he and he only has the varieties that the former requires. In no other field of industry, in fact, is the margin on the market so narrow and insecure. The young manufacturer had been long aware of these difficulties and had perceived the wisdom of specializing, if possible, on some one variety that would render unnecessary the constant attention to such a multitude of petty details.

It was in this search that he came across the soap that is associated with the name of Fels. A Philadelphia company had for some time been applying the naphtha process to a laundry soap; but the business was badly managed, both on the side of manufacturing and



in salesmanship, and serious losses had been incurred. A study of the problem convinced the firm that the process was an excellent one and that it needed only patience and ability to make it a commercial success. Once so convinced, they did not hesitate. In 1893, they bought an interest in the company and a year later bought out the old directors completely, amalgamating the business with Fels and Company. Meantime his brother Maurice, although pursuing independent interests, was closely connected with the business.

At first the manufacture of the new soap was carried on coincidentally with that of toilet soap. It naturally took some time for the "Fels Naptha" to become known and still longer for it to become established. But in two or three years, the success of the new experiment was certain. It had come to stay. So large was the demand for the new product that the partners felt justified in discontinuing the manufacture of toilet soaps, and in concentrating the entire attention of the firm on the new article. A large manufacturing plant grew up in Philadelphia, admirably equipped

and organized. From this time Joseph Fels' financial success was assured.

So told, the story seems simple enough. Tireless effort and a wise patience allied to ability proved successful as always. He seized existing opportunities and made new ones. He was compelled in the early stages of his business career to rely upon himself; he had also to make others rely upon him, and his confidence brought him through to remarkable success. In spite of the fact that when the occasion demanded, he could hold his own in the most hard driven bargain, he was able to humanize all his business relations.

No one who would understand the life of Joseph Fels can afford to neglect what he gained from his experience in business. His shrewd practicality was everywhere evident in what he later undertook in political affairs. He was anxious to prevent misdirected energy. He was angered at the waste of things, acutely conscious that this more than anything else lies at the bottom of human misery. He was always talking of the things lying idle that might be used; this was the keynote of his

public activity. He believed that exactly the same kind of talent which was applied to the direction of private enterprise could be successfully applied to the conduct of national business.

He knew that the success of a great business depends upon making it appeal to the imagination of the crowd. That was how Fels Naptha had built up its own fortune; an eloquent claim had been skilfully and picturesquely made for it. People had been interested in the claim; they had bought it and been satisfied in the testing. Not otherwise did he conceive that great political movements should be engineered. He wanted to capture the popular imagination. "All great movements," he would have said with Disraeli, "spring from the passions." It is the stimulated prejudice, a judgment before thought, that sets the minds of men to work in common. This point of view is equally valuable to a man who wishes to sell a commodity and to a reformer who wishes to change social conditions.

Joseph Fels' instincts were all profoundly democratic, but there can be no doubt that his

constant association with working people, through his factory and through his business relations, served to strengthen and perfect his belief in human equality. With his own working people, he lived on the frankest terms of good fellowship. Their lives were their own and he always looked with suspicion upon attempts to regulate the social life of working people. It was his duty and it was also, as he frequently explained, to his advantage, to provide for their physical comfort and to pay them the best wage the business could afford. He had no sympathy with the policy of drive; he did not believe in making the worker the accessory of the machine. He treated him as an equal, but insisted upon his responsibility, and he won his reward. His men felt it was worth while to work for a firm which was no corporate fiction but a living group of men with regard for the bodies and souls of those with whom they came in contact.

Such is the way in which Joseph Fels made himself a successful business man. But in achieving financial success he also shaped his own life to larger issues. Courage brought

success and success brought more courage. The mastery of petty difficulties strengthened an optimism which always expected the best. An open mind and daily association with men enabled him to see the evils of our present social organization. The constant attempt to make men live to their best as employees or business associates showed him how to use suggestion and how to develop leadership. The facing of new problems as they arose in the building of a great business trained him in foresight and gave him confidence in his ability to judge plans not yet tried. But, meantime, Joseph Fels, the business man, was also being shaped by varied personal experiences.

## II

### Social and Personal Life

**T**HE life of Joseph Fels as a boy was largely confined to the well-regulated activities of a conservative Jewish family, tempered by the influences characteristic of a small southern town of blacks and whites during the Civil War and the period of reconstruction. Yanceyville lay aside from the track of the war and consequently the events which devastated the South and strained the resources of the North to the breaking point, did not directly affect the fortunes of the Fels family. From the age of fifteen, the life of Joseph, as already described, was increasingly absorbed in business.

The year that he was twenty an event occurred which was destined to have profound influence on all his after life. He fell in love with a girl who was still a child, and vowed himself to her service, a vow which held with

growing power for the forty succeeding years of his life. To understand this event one must realize the essential romanticism of the man. With all his intense practicality his nature was that of a dreamer. His imagination always anticipated events. His intuitions quickly became convictions and he stood ready to gamble all he had on their validity. He could never endure the oppression of suspended judgment but decided at once and backed his decision with action.

One day in the year 1873, Joseph Fels then at the age of twenty, while pursuing his work as traveling salesman, found himself in the little town of Keokuk, Iowa. During casual conversation with one of his customers, mention was made of the fact that there was in the same town another family of the name of Fels. As Joseph had thought that he had no relatives in America beyond his immediate family, the circumstance struck him as so unusual that he felt interested to seek them out and make their acquaintance. This acquaintanceship was renewed on each succeeding visit to the town.

Upon his approach to the house at his very first call, his attention was attracted by a little girl of nine standing in the doorway, who confidently ushered this stranger into the home of her parents.

Mr. Fels loved in after years to tell how at that moment he felt this child was destined for him and that no sacrifice would be too great to win her and make her his wife. This resolve grew into a devotion which continued unabated for the next nine years.

In his attitude as elder brother and in his solicitude to assist in her development, there lay a dormant romanticism which ripened into a love and companionship of rare tenderness and mutual inspiration. They were married in the year 1881.

In July of 1884 a son was born to Mr. and Mrs. Fels, but in December of the same year the baby fell ill and died. It was naturally a serious blow as Mr. Fels had a passion for children, but this misfortune was a significant turning point in the lives of both. To fill the gap caused by the loss of the child, Mrs. Fels occupied herself with social activities and in-



tellectual pursuits. In this way the home which had hitherto been consecrated to domestic ideals and business interests became a center of intelligence and progressive ideas. In this atmosphere of critical discussion, Mr. Fels' inherent radicalism began to take more definite shape. The hospitable home attracted artists, business men, dreamers, poets, socialists and reformers of every kind. Many of these found in Mr. Fels quick understanding and generous sympathy. From them he came in turn to feel the irresistible charm of thinking new thoughts, dreaming new dreams and working toward their realization.

It is difficult to trace with any exactness Mr. Fels' social ideas in these years. It was a period in which he was content to mitigate rather than to construct. He helped people constantly. There seemed in him a generous emotion of philanthropy—in the original sense of that word. He gave freely even when his own income was small and needed in the business; and even while, underneath the satisfaction he felt in affording relief, there was an unshaped but imperative desire to destroy

the need for giving. His mind was like an intricate mass of loose threads that needed a plan to weave them into a definite design. This plan had its beginning in his extreme individualism, his desire that each man should stand on his own feet and make the most of his manhood. The business travels were to him a kind of education. Men were always his books; and on the road he met variety enough even for so persistent an enquirer. He is all the time probing his fellow travelers on social problems. He adopts little in these years but there are few men so alert to examine.

The conservative temperament was entirely alien to Mr. Fels in young manhood as in later years. There was little in the social order that commanded his reverence. Those who spoke of tradition and the ancient ways made no appeal to him. The men who awakened his interest were those who seemed to herald a change. It was not that he had any special point of contact with their social philosophy. He had simply a general sympathy with their vague flavor of modernity. "They were try-

ing," as he once said, "to understand themselves, without any of the damned nonsense of trying to understand their grandfathers."

Mr. Fels had never been strongly drawn to the service of the synagogue. He respected it as a conservator of a magnificent tradition but it seemed to him a force for the maintenance of dogma. What he wanted, and what his nature needed, was a religion of humanity, one that stood apart from race and class, from creed and time, and asserted the brotherhood of man. For a time he was a member of the Ethical Society but his religion was not a matter of institutions, and throughout life his friends were chosen regardless of creed or race. He was a man, and in every other man he saw a brother.

By 1895 Mr. Fels' business career had achieved a solution of its most pressing problems and had opened the road to undoubted success. The varied associations of road and home, the close contact with men and sharp clash with their opinions had accomplished the work of shaping and maturing his character. That year may therefore be regarded as the

point at which the formative elements in his life gathered themselves into an instrumentality which could be consciously used towards the constructive work of the world. This new period quickly asserted itself in a definite product.

One of the circumstances most commonly attendant upon the private exploitation of land values is the existence in every town and city of vacant spaces not intended for use, but held in anticipation of increased prices. These plots, usually acquired with old buildings, show in most cases the results of house wrecking activities, and the public often tolerates an unsightly rubbish heap or unspeakable hoardings on main thoroughfares, and side by side with the best results of public improvement. Though economically and æsthetically undesirable, the speculator may hold them as long as he likes, safely protected by the rule that private property is inviolable. It is many years since Governor Pingree of Michigan, seeing the multitude of unsightly vacant spaces in the city of Detroit originated the plan of securing their temporary use for

gardening purposes. The potatoes produced by the poor of Detroit on vacant building lands became famous, and Mr. Fels was struck by the applicability of the plan to his own city of Philadelphia.

The undertaking began in the most modest way with a meeting of a few business men and social workers in the city, an exposition of a plan, and a committee to start the experiment. A few land owners were found willing to lend their sites to be cultivated by working men with a taste for gardening. The plan was advertised; and applicants from the first were more numerous than was anticipated. Once started, this society has never looked back and has grown steadily in strength and usefulness. Mr. Samuel Fels became president in 1907. Chicago, Cleveland, and New York established similar organizations for the cultivation of vacant lots.

Even in its tenth year, with an income of only thirteen hundred dollars, the Philadelphia society was able to provide gardens for eight hundred families, representing approximately four thousand men, women and children who

produced vegetables to the value of \$10,400. That is to say, every dollar subscribed produced an eight-fold return in foodstuffs. Many of the workers employed on these vacant lots were able, after providing themselves and their families with vegetables for their own consumption, to sell the surplus and thus earn a little ready money. Work was found for the unemployed in preparing land for allotment holders; and later many of the unemployed themselves took up allotments. As soon as the funds of the society permitted, the workers were instructed and guided by an experienced superintendent.

These results, it must be remembered, were obtained not from rich soil, but from old, unused building sites locally regarded as eyesores and dumping grounds. The workers, too, were for the most part people without previous agricultural or gardening knowledge, who were recruited at random from the working class population of Philadelphia. To the material benefit which the cultivation of these vacant lots brought to the people who worked them, must be added the blessing of improved

health, together with restored manhood and new possibilities of life. "How many men," Mr. Fels once said in a meeting of the society, "have we lost simply through lack of the medicine nature prescribes, fresh air and vigorous exercise?" The educational value of this work was seen in the establishment of school gardens, which, with Mr. Fels' eager encouragement, were early made a feature of the scheme.

This experiment meant much in Mr. Fels' life. It gave point and direction to certain ideas which had for some years been uppermost in his mind. He had always been impressed by the possibilities inherent in the cultivation of the land. He had before this helped men, broken by the struggle of life in the city, to establish themselves as farmers. The experiment with the city lots had shown that there was a real hunger for the land; the society from the start had always more applicants than it could supply. Meantime there was no dearth of land. There was no scarcity even of unused land. There was almost a plethora of land deliberately with-

held from cultivation or from other improvements, merely for purposes of speculation. At that time only the problem existed for him. He had probably no kind of solution to suggest for it; but the experience must undoubtedly have exercised no small influence on his mind.



### III

## The Situation in England

**I**N 1901 it became desirable for Mr. Fels to go to England to work up a distributing branch of the business in that country. England—the fact is from another standpoint significant—was a free trade country and it was thus possible to compete there on equal terms with domestic productions. For two or three years after his arrival in England Mr. Fels, with his close co-worker, Walter Coates, devoted his energies to the establishment of this branch of the business. Owing to the keenest competition and the general difficulty of securing custom, this work was for a time very arduous and required close and exclusive attention. In the course of a few years, however, the business became plainer sailing and Mr. Fels gradually relinquished the direction to Mr. Coates. During the last ten years of

his life he gave only very occasional supervision to the conduct of business affairs.

Constituted as he was with ready sympathy for the oppressed and needy, combined with completely democratic conceptions, he was inevitably drawn into participation in social affairs and the kind of work that is generally described as social reform.

To understand clearly the direction of his interest and activities, it is necessary to review briefly the chief features of the situation in England during the opening years of the century. The conclusion of the Boer War left the British public with some serious practical problems and many kinds of discontent. The national conscience was already beginning to react after its somewhat extreme commitment to ideals of imperialistic enterprise. The war and the years immediately following disclosed to England many ugly conditions within her. She began to feel it necessary to be for a time, at any rate, a "little England" and put in order some of the pressing affairs of her own household. With the trade depression that immediately supervened, the problem of unemploy-

ment, acute from the time when the armies returned from South Africa, began to assume portentous dimensions. From 1905 to 1908, the country was faced with a condition in its labor market that was truly appalling. Administrators seemed to have a dearth of means, and a greater dearth of ideas for dealing with the situation. Local resources were wholly inadequate, whether for relief or the provision of temporary relief works.

It appeared as if the country could not expand its trade to the point of absorbing the enormous labor surplus, or shoulder the terrible burden that began to fall upon its machinery of relief. Bands of the hungry were for a time almost daily upon the streets demanding work. The nation was, in short, having to pay the penalty of industrial efficiency, the possession of millions of factory-trained and habituated workmen, kept always sufficiently numerous to ensure low wages in the best of times, and doomed, with the cyclical recurrence of depression, to unemployment and privation.

Added to this state of affairs, was the more

than disquieting realization of national deterioration. The small percentage of recruits found acceptable for service abroad came as a shock to those who had previously taken for granted the superior quality of the nation's physique. Overcrowded and unhealthy urban districts where the workers have their homes, the cramped and mechanical nature of their occupations, the general disregard for life and health accorded the wage-earning population, had been found to have reached their natural consequence in a proletariat rapidly deteriorating in fitness as well as in the means of subsistence. Nothing short of a national crisis ever makes the Englishman clearly recognize a defect in the national life, but it came home with striking force in the years following the war. Every student of economic and social affairs, every reformer, and even every politician found his attention absorbed by these crying questions of employment and health. On the whole much has been done legislatively to improve the sanitary conditions of the worker. With increasingly efficient inspection of factory and of home, with workmen's

compensation, and latterly, sickness insurance, it may be said that Britain is on her way to establishing for the laboring population a set of tolerable conditions of life.

For the problem of unemployment, however, little has been achieved. Old-age pensions and labor exchanges count for little as against the burden of unemployment which came into view a decade ago, and which will inevitably recur when the present war is over. To put the matter briefly, the problem of the social reformer ten years ago was to ameliorate the condition of a huge population of industrial workers, with precarious and scanty means of subsistence, and rapidly becoming degenerate, through the evil effects of factory and city slum.

The remedy adopted for unemployment was naturally conditioned by the circumstances of the time, great urgency for which no previous foresight had provided, the hasty endeavor to provide public works which would absorb a proportion of the surplus labor. Local efforts were aided by grants made by the government and administered in London

by the Central Unemployed Body, which came into existence in 1904. Certain general works were carried on by the committee and vacancies allotted to the different boroughs. In addition, a rudimentary kind of labor exchange activity was initiated to meet the needs of such employers as happened to require men. These palliatives effected only a small fraction of the relief demanded. An important principle, however, was established, namely, that the Government should, in times of trade depression, become an employer for the purpose of utilizing the labor surplus; a principle which has received application in the Development Act. The general establishment of labor exchanges operative throughout the country, to equalize the demand upon the labor market, is the further administrative contribution to the solution of the problem.

Knowledge was not lacking, during this decade in which unemployment mounted to the highest point of its curve and gradually descended to its normal, of the one great remedy which is adequate to cure the greatest of economic illnesses. Those whose prevision

reaches beyond the screen of great temporary prosperity have been well aware that the national life of Britain, as of other countries, can only conserve itself by an agriculture which grows concomitantly with, and balances industry. It has remained for Professor Ashley, himself one of the greatest of commercial experts, to show the vital necessity of this relation, and for a great war to bring home the fact that it is a serious matter for a great nation to neglect the tillage of the soil.

The "back to the land" cry, however, has made itself heard for nearly a generation. Social reformers in England have for many years contemplated with envy the rural development of Continental countries, the conservation of a strong and resourceful peasantry, the evolution of intensive culture with skilful and scientific methods of tillage, the spectacle of nations that in emergency would be self-supporting. Increasing alarm has been felt that the population of England should be dragged from its last few roots in the soil and placed in the urban and industrial atmosphere to wither and decay. The small

holders of Denmark, Belgium and France undoubtedly constitute an element of national strength that is lacking in England. Great wealth certainly belongs to an industrial nation with a world's trade, but is a doubtful compensation for the drain on human quality, when, in addition, this industrial system finds itself with a normal surplus of workers, which at recurring intervals increases to the point of being an alarming problem.

The difficulty was to find means. An industrial proletariat has seemingly become a part of the order of things. Consciously or unconsciously, the employers of labor always aid that conspiracy of circumstances which has made Britain urban and industrial. High profits naturally derive from low wages, and the scale of wages is determined by the labor market. With a surplus, the tendency is inevitably to that low limit which just prevents starvation. It is therefore to the interest of employers to depopulate the rural districts and herd the population in cities, to provide manual training for children and technical education for youth, to make it, if possible, less prof-



itable to cultivate the soil, and in addition, to secure possession for members of their own class of large sections of land for merely residential and sporting purposes. Every one knows now that back to the land is impossible in England, because there is no land available for use. But there was a long struggle to open the gate of the industrial prison.

The Small Holdings Act seemed the dawn of a new day for the people of England, but the light glimmered and went out when the attempt was made to apply its provisions. Even confiscation has no value when the confiscator is the person whose interest it is to abstain. The Garden City movement seemed to promise something, but whatever its benefits it has no effect upon the labor market; indeed this market is brought under closer control. The key to the whole problem is simply that the laborer, to have any advantageous position, must in the last resort be able to leave industry and secure a living by the pursuit of agriculture. It is as a great alternative occupation that agriculture can supplement and balance industry, and play its appropriate rôle

in the life of a nation. Allow the land to be available for use, give the children as much instruction in natural occupations as in the crafts, and the rights of workers would not be long in establishing themselves.

Ten years ago, however, it seemed that the Small Holdings Act constituted an avenue to rural re-population, and the problem of greatest difficulty seemed that of training members of a city-bred population for work on the soil. The best method seemed to be the establishment of colonies, which would serve as intermediate stations between town and country. The experiments of Dr. Paton and of General Booth had made the idea in some degree familiar. Their underlying intention was to provide healthful employment through which workers could earn a part of their maintenance. The purpose was philanthropic and largely in the interest of religion.

Modifications toward betterment in the British social economy are proverbially slow and at the same time so vague that their general bearing is indeterminate and unconscious. To clarify its meaning is to harm any tendency

because notice involves a disproportionate degree of suspicion and criticism, and consequent reaction. In England to label is to damn. The social region bounded on one side by the fixed doctrine of the economics of employment, supply and demand in the labor market, and on the other, by the equally hard and fast principle of the poor law—this region occupied by the unemployed, so long a field barren of ideas and accessible only to the sterile seeds of charity—this field Joseph Fels chose for his labors. Just as his efforts changed many a London rubbish heap into a garden full of living things for the further support of life, so he hoped to see the human rubbish heap flowering and producing.

The conditions seemed present for some successful work to be undertaken. There was the idea of returning to the land as an outlet for unemployed labor, and the idea of colonizing as the means of providing the necessary training, but no practical movement could be got under way. Authorities both national and local seemed land-locked either by convention or regulation, and charity was wholly in-

adequate to deal with the issue. Some sort of impetus was necessary and this was supplied by Mr. Fels. His simple practical directness set matters moving. If it was a good thing to put the unemployed upon the land, then get land. If it was a good thing to train in colonies for agricultural work, then form colonies. If it was a labor too great for philanthropy to accomplish and required administration by state and local authorities, then proceed to secure such administration. If some one was needed to take the initiative in all these matters, he was quite willing to offer himself.

It was clear to him that whatever was done should not be a matter of capricious charity but of public enterprise; that the foundations should be laid for a permanent rather than a temporary structure; that whatever existing machinery might be adapted to this new purpose should be utilized. It was not so much a lack of instrumentalities as the limitations placed upon their use that formed the chief obstacle. The administration of relief was bound to a narrow course by the principles and regulations of the Poor Law. The

Guardians of the Poor with the strict interpretation of their duties had to force all the needy into the groove of utterly destitute paupers, that is, to subject them to workhouse treatment.

The idea that relief could be administered in a way which might lead to the betterment of those relieved, either by providing healthful occupation or in training for a new sphere of activities was so contrary to the intention of the Poor Law that no Board of Guardians could see its way to broaden its activities by including a farm colony. Mr. Fels saw that it might be a different story if the use of a farm colony were offered to guardians to relieve the congestion in the workhouse, or the strain upon outdoor relief. It was at this point that he came in contact with Mr. George Lansbury and formed that partnership in social and political work which has left its enduring mark upon this generation.

## IV

### Farm Colonies: Laindon

**T**HE cause of labor in its struggle toward political expression and representation has had its martyrs and heroes, also its due proportion of the stupid and time serving. When it unexpectedly found its strength in 1906, with a relatively imposing representation in Parliament, and knew that henceforth it was a power in politics to be reckoned with, it faced the difficulty of reducing into a measurable program of action the multitudinous discontents of the labor world, and somehow discovering enough agreement to present a solid front to political opponents. It became as every one knows a party; its representatives were disciplined to the orders of a whip, and the expression of its opinions was arranged and officialized. Among those who made this possible two figures stand out, Keir Hardie and George Lansbury.

As the chief and for a long time the only

spokesman for labor in the House of Commons, Mr. Hardie displayed a devotion and a courage which will receive a greater appreciation in the future than even his colleagues are able at present to accord. Mr. Lansbury was not until recently within the precincts of the House. He entered politics because he felt that he had a special work to perform, but it is doubtful if the dull fetters of membership gave him as wide or useful a scope as he had enjoyed as a private citizen of the East End of London. He is one of the most expert Poor Law administrators in the country, having served a long period on the Poplar Board of Guardians. As one of the Commissioners on the reform of the Poor Law, he gave his knowledge and experience to the framing of the Minority Report. He is one of the men, rare enough in or out of public life, who may be trusted to know the right intuitively and pursue it unflinchingly, whatever theoretical opinions they may express or be credited with. When party loyalty came in conflict with his convictions, he sacrificed his seat to his principles.

With such a man then, Mr. Fels became associated and the connection covered an uninterrupted period of eleven years. Mr. Lansbury, as a member of the Board of Guardians for Poplar, was already in 1904 endeavoring to extend the scope of relief in a way to alter materially the limitations of the old Poor Law. Mr. Fels was at the time busy with the formation of his Vacant Lands Cultivation Society. During his first visit to Mr. Lansbury at his home in Bow, the conversation turned upon the utilization of land as a mode of solving the problem of unemployment. Mr. Lansbury was impressed by the business-like energy of his new friend and the desire to do rather than to talk. For the next four months hardly a day passed without their meeting. Mr. Lansbury's greatest concern was that in Poplar, one of the poorest of East End districts, the problem of unemployment had reached an acute point. The workhouse was inadequate for the accommodation of those who wished to enter, and great distress was being experienced by many others in the district who were not applying to the Guardians for



relief. Mr. Fels was asked to advance money for a vigorous agitation and this he did. A deputation of a thousand women was organized and sent from Mile End to Westminster. From among these, the first deputation of working class women went to the House of Commons. It was interesting that this was the first deputation of its kind to enter the House, and probably gave to the Suffragists their idea of petitioning in the same manner. On this occasion only working class women waited upon Mr. Balfour and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. Some scores of members were interviewed the same afternoon. Nothing, however, was done that session.

But Mr. Fels was not content to wait. He proceeded to worry the Local Government Board, and persuaded Mr. Walter Long to sanction the use of some land he was ready to buy and lend to the Poplar Board of Guardians. This move was, of course, supported by Mr. Lansbury's vigorous agitation outside. One hundred acres were bought at Laindon and the first farm colony for the unemployed was established. It is noteworthy that in con-

nection with this purchase some one of the Guardians let out the fact that the farm in question was to be secured, and in consequence the price was increased more than five hundred pounds. The arrangement was that the farm should be let to the Poplar Guardians for a term of three years at the rent of one peppercorn, and that the Guardians should have the option of purchase for the price paid at any time during their tenancy. Possession was taken in March, 1904, and one hundred able-bodied paupers were set to work. Temporary structures for dormitories, kitchen, laundry and lavatory were added, and a reservoir for water supply was immediately built.

Many newspaper correspondents visited the farm and the experiment became widely known. The superintendent announced that forty of the hundred would be acceptable as laborers anywhere if he were the employer. Over a dozen were old soldiers of at least ten years' service and all but one had stripes or medals; no one had a pension. In contrast with the degenerative restrictions of the work-

house, the men were given great freedom. Papers, books and games were provided, and Mr. Fels sent down a piano. The success of the colony was immediately manifest to all except those who believe that the workhouse test is a foundation of the British Empire. As an example of what was considered enlightened procedure, the following may be quoted from a letter in the *Times* by a Paddington Guardian:

May I draw attention to the methods pursued by the Paddington Guardians for the last thirty years in connection with the unemployed? . . .

A married man on applying for relief is offered work in the labor yard where firewood is made. The work is renewed week by week if necessary, and if the man's conduct is reported well of by the labor master. . . . For his further help, the labor yard is constantly visited by an officer of the Church Army, and the labor master gives him opportunity to seek work. Many years' experience has shown the success of this method. . . . In Paddington there are some thirty thousand people who in Mr. Charles Booth's words "have a struggle to obtain the necessaries of life and make both ends meet," yet year after year men in Paddington, who by experience know what winter suffering is, persistently refrain from seeking means by which they and their wives and families may be fed and warmed.

This shows how far the Laindon experiment had gone beyond what was commonly accepted as enlightened practice in the administration of relief. An illustrated booklet was issued, and visitors from all parts of the country came to see the experiment.

The policy accepted and made effective by the Poplar Board of Guardians seemed to Mr. Fels to offer that combination of public authority and private enterprise which would solve his problem. He therefore proceeded with the acquisition of farm properties and at the same time approached the various metropolitan Boards of Guardians and extended his offer generally to all parts of the Kingdom. At first these bodies seemed eager and many of them invited Mr. Fels to attend and explain the terms of his offer. Public bodies are as acquisitive as individuals, and the glory of their administrative achievement is measured inversely on the scale of expense. No amelioration of the lot of the poor is creditable if it increases the rate. Public feeling shudders at starvation but does not in the least mind permanent destitution.

The Board of Guardians and the administration of relief stand historically and actually apart from the general system of local government. It has no responsibility to or connection with the county or borough council. It maintains a separate election, a separate rate and a separate connection with the Local Government Board. Members are unpaid and seek election for the sake of local prestige. The board's functions are the maintenance of a workhouse and the administration of outdoor relief. The principle which animates all its activities is that of the old Poor Law which provided that the state of any person seeking relief must be calculatedly kept lower than that of the lowest paid laborer. It has always been supposed that an automatic test of destitution was provided by making the conditions of relief unattractive. The boards are, therefore, not guardians of the poor but of the funds intended to relieve them. Naturally only those individuals are elected who are prepared to keep the rate down to that point which will just guard a locality from the accusation of permitting its poor to starve. The provisions

of the Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission, which involved the abolition of guardians and the assimilation of relief to the general administration of county and borough councils, with a change of the principle of saving from starvation to one of saving from destitution itself, have not commended themselves to the British public; they are socialistic.

The close and local responsibility of guardians to rate payers with its necessary consequence in the kind of personnel thus selected, explains the reception which Mr. Fels met in his efforts to help the poor to help themselves. There was also another characteristic. In Great Britain one understands charity, and one understands business, but no one has yet understood that the two could in any way be combined. The provision of land to form labor colonies seemed at first glance the act of the amiable philanthropist to be fully exploited and rewarded with the usual fatuous vote of thanks. The moment the conditions were disclosed, the whole transaction appeared to discerning guardians as a wolf in sheep's

clothing, business parading as philanthropy, and Mr. Fels a sharp business man, an American and a Jew, trying to extricate himself from bad land deals at the public expense, or else seizing the three years' improvement which the colony might give the land. Mr. Fels, of course, had no desire for the cheap glory of the philanthropist which comes of relieving others of work and responsibility, and his desire was to facilitate a new *modus operandi* in dealing with unemployment. He was willing to risk losses to achieve his object, but he saw as always that to be permanently beneficial a plan must stand on its own feet and not live on the passing bounty of any individual.

An example of the way in which Mr. Fels' offer was met may not be out of place. At a meeting of the Distress Committee of Stratford a discussion took place, the lines of which are indicated by the following extracts:

The Executive Subcommittee presented a report upon the farm colony proposals. They had received an offer from Mr. J. Fels of an estate at Wickford of some five hundred acres at a peppercorn rent for three years; the Committee then to have the right of purchase at the figure at which Mr. Fels acquired the

property. The Subcommittee secured the opinion of Mr. Kemsley, of Messrs. Kemsley and Co., who reported strongly against the use of the land for such purposes on the ground of its unworkable character during winter months at a time when in West Ham they would have the need for larger scope for a farm colony. Mr. Kemsley stated the reasons for such an opinion which were strongly supported by the Subcommittee who spent a day on the farm and went into the full details. . . . Mr. Fels said he did not agree with the opinions of the expert because they were not actual facts. . . . Two hundred men with spades could be put on the land, the arable land could be broken up and the pasture land could all be cultivated. They could grow fruit there. He had communicated with the Essex County Council asking them to put ditches in the main road to drain the ground. . . . The farm was as good as they could get anywhere within fifty miles of London. . . . Mr. Paul stated that on the farm Mr. Fels offered to the West Ham Board of Guardians he wanted to occupy the valuable frontage himself. Mr. Fels: "Who says that?" Mr. Paul: "That is what you told the Board of Guardians." Mr. Fels: "That is absolutely untrue." Mr. Paul: "Do you say that is untrue? Do you deny the truth of my statement?" . . . Mr. Fels said it was no use putting two hundred men on the land unless they placed some incentive before them. He was to retain 20 per cent. of the land, to provide plots on which were to be erected buildings to be let for small holdings. He did not hope to make any money out of it. He made money out of his business. He was not specu-



lating in property. He reserved the right to be believed until they proved him to be a liar. . . . Mr. George Hay remarked he had no wish to make any charge against Mr. Fels because he believed that gentleman meant well. He made a fair offer if the land was suitable . . . they had an eye upon their two thousand pounds and that impressed upon them the necessity of getting land. . . . Mr. Arnold Hills protested against the gross discourtesy with which Mr. Fels had been treated. There was such a thing as casting pearls before those who did not appreciate them. He had farmed Essex land for more than twenty years, and he could not accept Mr. Kemsley's report. Mr. Kemsley said they would do more harm than good there. Of course, they would never do so if they did the same way the Essex farmers did, but with spade digging it would grow almost any kind of crop. Mr. Kemsley said he felt he had a very thankless task as they had a gentleman who had offered them land on very favorable terms for a farm colony. All he could say was exactly opposite to what Mr. Fels had said . . . no business man would take this heavy land on as a speculation. . . . Counsellor Watts said the Subcommittee were more than anxious to get men on the ground but they did not wish to commit themselves to impracticable schemes. They were anxious to get the two thousand pounds but they were going to be honest to themselves and the general public. He was not going to be a party to any half measures. . . . On the motion of Mr. Mills a vote of thanks was also tendered to Mr. Masterman, Mr. Fels and Mr. Lansbury for their attendance.

## Hollesley Bay and Mayland

**A**S there seemed considerable prospect of local authorities taking advantage of Mr. Fels' offer, now broadly known through the press, he and Mr. Lansbury found themselves not long after the successful beginning of the Laindon experiment making visits throughout England, and inspecting land of all kinds. Through Mr. Goodchild, an expert from the London County Council who advised as to the development of Laindon, an estate at Hollesley Bay was discovered to be available. This was a property of thirteen hundred acres organized as an agricultural college for the sons of gentlemen, but it had fallen upon bad times and was now for sale. Mr. Fels and Mr. Lansbury went to the estate and interviewed the managing director, who treated them very much as interfering intruders, and seemed to

think that although the place was for sale it was very wicked for any one to think of buying it. For his consolation nothing was said about purchase or the use for which it was intended. The difficulty was that the price was something over thirty thousand pounds which seemed so much that there might be no public authority willing to take it over.

Meanwhile matters were becoming more acute, and the Government was being greatly worried partly owing to the agitation which had been set on foot. Mr. Walter Long called a conference of guardians and counselors and from it formed an organization known as the London Unemployed Fund composed of representatives from all authorities in London. Mr. Lansbury was a member of this body and although very ill at the time managed to attend the first meeting. A letter was read from Mr. Fels offering the body the loan of an estate of thirteen hundred acres for three years free of rent. Mr. Lansbury rose and quietly moved that this generous offer be accepted. It was seconded by Mr. Grinling of Woolwich, who was aware of the plan, and be-

fore the Board realized what it was doing the motion was carried. Mr. Fels then bought the estate and within a few weeks the place was occupied by five or six hundred of the unemployed. The question arose as to how the land should be worked, and after some months Mr. Thomas Smith, later Mr. Fels' manager at Mayland, was called in as expert. Among the men there were numbers who showed great adaptability and proved capable of doing much better work than under the conditions possible at the colony. The problem was therefore as to whether some of the men should not be permanently settled on the land. This raised the difficulty of cottages, and the degree to which development could be undertaken was determined by whether or not the estate would remain public property. Mr. Fels advanced more money with which was started a terrific agitation in London for the passing of the Unemployed Workmen Act. Again the women were brought out, some ten thousand chiefly from East and South London, and a great procession marched across London, while a deputation of twenty or thirty women and

some men representing the London Trades' Council waited upon Mr. Arthur Balfour. Very little encouragement was received from him but the movement persisted and finally the Bill, the fate of which had hung in the balance, was passed owing it was thought at that time to a speech by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. This was at the end of 1905. With the advent of the Central (Unemployed) Body set up under the Unemployed Workmen Act, the position was more secure, but there was a shortage of funds to carry on the work at Hollesley Bay. As a result of the appeal made to Mr. Balfour by the deputation, Queen Alexandra opened a fund, and for one winter this fund provided all the money necessary.

The Central Body which had taken the place of the London Unemployed Fund was persuaded to take over the estate at Hollesley, and Mr. Fels loaned two thousand pounds with which to build cottages. As soon as these cottages were completed they were occupied by the London men who had been trained on the colony. The attention of Mr. Fels and Mr. Lansbury was then given to ex-

tending the plan so as to deal with larger numbers of men. It was intended to purchase another estate and much territory was scoured to find a suitable one. It was found quite close to Hollesley Bay and the purchase was at the point of completion when another factor entered into and altered the whole situation.

With the change of government early in 1906, Mr. John Burns became president of the Local Government Board. It is difficult even now to estimate the harm done to the cause of progress by this one man. So long a follower and bearer of the flag of democracy, he entered the Cabinet as the representative of the people. It was thought that now the dumb masses had their spokesman in high places, that injustice and oppression could claim attention at the very fount of power, that the liberal cause had at last definitely joined hands with that of the working multitude. Instead of that, England has witnessed for nearly a decade the administration of a government department utterly oblivious of the tendency of the time, deaf to every suggestion of reform, blind to everything that might

disturb the established order, so filled with venomous reaction that it has become an odious thing to the minds of all who wanted to help the lot of the poor. Mr. John Burns forbade the Central Body to have anything to do with the purchase of a new estate and the whole plan was ruined. All the progressive action of those enlightened statesmen, Walter Long and Gerald Balfour, who had presided over the department, was reversed, and Hollesley Bay became merely a country annex to take the overflow from London workhouses.

It will have been discerned that Mr. Fels' main interest was to establish a permanent relation between the land and as many of the workers as could adapt themselves to its cultivation. Of each property offered the public authorities, he proposed to retain something like a quarter, to be developed into small holdings and receive men trained in the colony to serve, at any rate, as an example to the others. The whole work was an endeavor to remedy that topsyturvydom in which millions of acres lying uncultivated and tens of thousands of men wanting work and ready to cul-

tivate it, could not be brought together. Plans were made for utilizing a property at Wye as a colony for women, but once more Mr. John Burns blocked the way to success. It is worth recording that during the same administration of the Local Government Board, the Commission appointed for considering the reform of the Poor Law presented its report. The ends for which Mr. Lansbury had been working slowly but with success were embodied in the systematized provisions of the Minority Report; but Poor Law reform, whether along the lines of the majority or of the minority, had no chance so long as its destiny lay in the hands of Mr. John Burns.

Balked thus in endeavoring to contribute to the solution of the unemployed problem, Mr. Fels decided to test possibilities on his own account. He had acquired a property at Mayland near Althorn in Essex about forty miles from London, and now proceeded to use it for the purposes of his experiment. The remaining possibility seemed to him to lie along the line of small holdings. He therefore proceeded to establish upon the farm in question



something over twenty holdings of from five to ten acres, each equipped with dwelling and out-houses and partly planted with fruit. The larger portion of the estate was carried on as a farm under the management of Mr. Thomas Smith, an expert agriculturist and enlightened man, who was willing to give the small holders needful advice and supervise their work until they had learned to find their own way. For the purposes of instruction and also to give a demonstration of the possibilities of intensive culture, a French garden was established which was extended to cover two acres, equipped with frames and bell-glasses, sheds and watering facilities and a great range of hot-houses. A gardener was secured from near Paris and kept for two years to show the best methods that were being utilized in France. The experiment was a costly one, something like twenty-five thousand pounds being necessary to equip the estate.

It was Mr. Fels' desire on this occasion to reach a somewhat better type of industrial product than the unemployed examples he had been dealing with. The small holdings were

therefore allotted to individuals with families who possessed a certain minimum amount of capital. Needless to say there were many hundreds of applicants.

There was much hope, in the early days of liberal administration, of a great development in the direction of small holdings through the vigorous application of the Small Holdings Act which conferred considerable power upon county councils, but as everyone knows, the Act remained, and still remains, a dead letter. The Liberal Party is in the view of a foreigner a most interesting and curious political product. It maintains itself by lofty professions and magnificent promises combined with a minimum of achievement. The majority of its leaders are politicians, that is, individuals who are more concerned with talking to the public than with statesmanship. Its chief pride is that of proposing innumerable bills. The difference between it and the Conservative Party is that whereas the latter proposes little and does little, the former proposes much and does nothing. After nearly a decade of Liberal government, the worker may well ask himself

if his condition is better than it was ten years ago, apart from the usual trade cycle. There are, of course, Liberals who feel that they made the intervening period of prosperity. After all there is only one important matter, and that is to receive a just return for one's labor. To redress adventitious grievances is a small matter when wages do not rise, and their purchasing power is always declining. Prosperity, like most other things, appears to be a monopoly. But in those earlier days it was thought, and Mr. Fels shared the delusion, that the time was arriving when Britain might be an agricultural nation and again fasten in the soil the roots of its national life.

So far as concerns the Mayland experiment the results were in some small measure successful. One-third of the small holders have remained until the present and have no desire to return to industrial pursuits, but their labor has been very hard and they have no more than made a living.

They were nearly all townsmen without previous experience of farm life except such as might have been gained on allotments.

Several were from Woolwich, others from Poplar, Peckham, etc., and one or two from the provinces. As already noted, considerable expenditure was involved in preparing the holdings. Not only had the holdings to be laid out and provided with buildings, and the land prepared for cultivation, but new roads were necessary, and it soon became clear that market gardening would be faced with the serious if not fatal difficulty of a shortage of water. Mr. Fels endeavored to meet this by establishing underground tanks for rain water, and by sinking an artesian well, with tank and water mains. There was a borough supply to the neighborhood but this had always been inadequate and the public authority has made no effort to remedy the defect. Almost before the holdings were in working order and before profits from produce were in sight, there supervened the exceptionally bad season of 1907. This exhausted much of the holders' own capital and Mr. Fels gave further aid in the form of loans.

When returns began to come in, it was discovered that two factors in the situation

blocked the road to success. In the first place, all produce had to be marketed at Covent Garden, and in the second, it had to be sent over the Great Eastern Railway. Commission rates and high railway tariffs left only a small margin of profit. It is an interesting fact to be noted in passing that the whole transport and marketing organization is fatally discriminative against the British producer. In practice a position of preference is given to the foreign market gardener. The rents charged to the holders had to be altered from time to time because of the same reasons that had called for the additional expenditure. They were at first based on 4 per cent. of the capital outlay, equivalent to an average rent of thirty pounds for each holding. The tenure was in the first instance annual for a preliminary period of three years, at the end of which, if the landlord and tenant were mutually agreeable, a long lease was to be arranged. It was agreed to consider several of the items of expenditure as experimental and therefore chargeable to the owner. In consequence, rents were reduced to an average of twenty-four pounds

per holding. In 1908 the scale of rents was again revised. Rent for 1907 was wholly deferred. In 1908 half rent was to be paid and half deferred. In 1909 three-quarters were to be paid and one-quarter deferred. In 1910 the full rent was to be paid. The deferred rent was to be spread over the succeeding thirteen years and added to the normal rent. In 1910 there was another failure of crops, and the burden of debt owing by almost every holder, for money lent and rent due, was fast assuming proportions which made repayment almost hopeless. The holders were offered one of two alternatives. Anyone who had become hopeless of ultimate success and wished to give up his holding could have a clear receipt for all money borrowed and rent owing, and would receive as a gift half of the amount of his original capital; or, each holder who remained would live rent free up to and including Lady Day, 1911. Should he for four successive quarter days following that date have paid the rent due according to his agreement, he would be entitled to and freely given a full discharge of all moneys owing up to the time

of the offer. About half the holders chose the one alternative and half the other. Among those who left were two who had long contemplated emigration to Australia and had now found the opportunity.

From this costly experiment Mr. Fels learned a number of lessons. There was clearly manifest a desire on the part of the industrial laborer to enter agricultural life as shown in the twelve hundred or more applications for these few holdings, and a strong determination among most of those who had embarked, to continue the new mode of life in spite of all discouragement. It was clear again that some of the factors that could have turned failure into success lay outside his hands and were of the nature of public services and utilities. Most important of all, it became evident that for a number of reasons every small holder would lie in the hollow of the landlord's hand. Other impressive facts came to light. The rates paid in 1905, when the population was fourteen, amounted to thirty pounds twelve and threepence. In 1910, with one hundred and seventy-four persons, the rates

amounted to one hundred and fifty-six pounds nine and twopence. The land was originally purchased at about eight pounds three shillings per acre, but after the enterprise developed it was not possible to obtain adjoining land for less than fourteen pounds per acre. Thus their own industry, by increasing the land values for all the neighboring landlords, blocked the way to expansion. Mr. Fels had learned that the score of holdings which he had established and supported could do nothing towards the hundreds of thousands that would be necessary to solve the problem of poverty.



## VI

### Why Small Holdings Fail

**I**T was now necessary for Mr. Fels to reconsider the whole theory of small holdings. His conviction that a return to agriculture was essential to a healthy national life and a preventive of poverty was stronger than ever, but the existing modes of providing small holdings seemed fatally defective. It was important to inquire whether the conditions under which intensive agriculture was carried on in continental countries would throw light upon and assist to the solution of the problem. It seemed clear that the authorities even with powers of compulsory acquisition would do little toward providing land. The first impression of one visiting the gardening districts of Denmark, Holland and Belgium is likely to be misleading. That enormous quantities are produced and placed on the markets goes without saying, and there is the appearance of great

prosperity, but matters do not, on closer inspection, turn out to be so satisfactory. The small holders in all these countries receive small benefit of their labor, and live in a large proportion of cases on the borders of privation. Any satisfactory proposals looking to repopulation of the country must take these facts into account and give some explanation of their cause. The first fact that inquiry discloses is that there are many more would-be small holders than there are small holdings. In other words there is a perpetual competition, the tendency of which is to put the highest premium on merely obtaining land. One who is willing to sacrifice in the highest degree the benefits of his holding is the one who will obtain it. This keeps the rental value of land so high as to take from the small holder all except the merest livelihood. In some parts of Flanders the price of land before the war had risen to several hundred pounds per acre. In Denmark for many years land values have been rising by leaps and bounds. In the latter country, also, nearly all that the landlord leaves is taken in the form of taxes levied on buildings and equipment.

It is obvious then that communities of small holders, however much they may contribute to the prosperity of a country, participate in that prosperity in only a minimum degree, and so far from relieving the burden of poverty merely swell it. The conditions that militate against small holdings and are even fatal to their success are landlordism and the taxing of improvements. All labor put into a holding merely increases its rental value which the landlord promptly seizes, and its ratable value which the collector of taxes quite as promptly takes into account.

Statistics in Denmark show that the small holders produce in live stock alone double the quantity of horned cattle per acre that are produced in the country as a whole, over three times as many pigs and over twice as many fowls. The movement toward increasing small holdings has been so strong since the beginning of the century that more than half the increase in population is found in the country districts. In spite of this enormous benefit which the community derives from its peasant farmers both in quality of population and

quantity of output, it is a mistake to suppose that they lead anything but a life of poverty, and in too many cases the peasants are found in a state not far removed from starvation. In the long run, therefore, it is a doubtful benefit to any country to establish small holdings on a large scale, unless the workers can be guarded from injustice and assured some fair return for their labor. To mention Denmark is to produce the very best example. In Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Belgium the conditions have been much worse, and even in Denmark the peasant is doomed to frugal fare in order to export to England what he produces, to have the money to pay his taxes and the interest on his mortgage. The net income of the Danish small holder seldom exceeds fifty pounds a year. It is interesting, therefore, to discover why it is that intensive culture applied to ten acres produces less net profit than the ordinary tillage of thirty. Expenses are less, as there is not so much plowing or manuring or harvesting. Moreover, co-operation has made it possible to market with the greatest advantage, at any rate equal to that possessed

by the larger farmer. Why then, if the small holder produces two or three times as much per acre and the cost of production of any given quantity is consequently less, does he not receive a net income at least equivalent to that of his neighbor? It is obvious that there is something wrong if three times the gross revenue per acre that the large holder receives does not net sufficient to maintain the peasant farmer in a relative degree of comfort. Flanders before the war afforded an even more striking example. In this great garden country with all the advantages of co-operation, only a small percentage were proprietors of their holdings. The remainder paid an increasingly high rental and were only annual tenants liable to be dispossessed without compensation. Whatever is done to improve a holding at once increases the rent.

The price of land in these countries has been constantly mounting up, following the rental value which is its chief basis. In Denmark this tendency has been aided by the incidence of taxation. Under the old system there was a tax on land values levied along with

rates according to a very old valuation. There was, therefore, an inducement for the owner of land either to cultivate it himself or else to sell; consequently the price of land remained reasonable. But this tax was abolished by the Liberal Government early in the century and replaced by other taxes which fell largely on the products of labor. The price of land at once advanced to cover the capitalized value of the old taxes which amounted for the whole country to some forty million pounds. There was no longer an inducement to sell, and land gradually withdrew from the market. In two or three years the price increased 25 to 40 per cent. In order to buy a holding, therefore, it is necessary to sink a larger proportion of ready capital which might go into improvement, or else condemn a larger proportion of the labor product to pay interest on mortgage debt. If improvements are carried out, the new taxes fall upon them and the farmer's labor has to pay them as well as bear the mortgage burden. The large holder with many acres and few improvements escapes with a small tax per acre, while the small holder with many improve-

ments pays a tax per acre many times higher.

The foregoing considerations throw valuable light upon proposals for state aid in the establishment of small holdings. These are without exception, in one form or another, provisions for state purchase. They usually involve the method of advancing capital at a low rate of interest for the purchase of holdings, and require on the part of the would-be holder a certain proportion of the necessary capital. Invariably the land desired for the purpose mounts to a quite disproportionate price. In Denmark very often the land speculator is willing to advance to the purchaser the proportion of capital which he is required to provide, knowing that he will recoup himself when the purchase takes place. The whole plan is, therefore, a demand for land which forces up its value instead of increasing the supply and making it cheap and accessible. Government assistance means, therefore, that the peasant may obtain land, but that when obtained he will not be able to make his living upon it. In one of his terse phrases Mr. Fels put the whole matter thus: "Instead of men

demanding land, the land must be made to demand men."

How then can circumstances be so arranged that the population of a country can make use of that country's land? There are certain well-known facts which gave a point of departure to Mr. Fels' thinking. It is universally true that the conditions of labor are best in a new country where land is cheap and plentiful. Wages are invariably high. Instead of many men competing with each other to secure a piece of work, the work is compelled to look for a man and pay him what he earns. No one is compelled to continue as laborer either in industry or in agriculture, as it is easy to become land-owner and therefore independent. The simple effect upon the labor market, or the demand for men's services, of the existence of cheap and accessible land, contains the clue to the whole matter. The same is seen wherever there is any considerable amount of common land. A little while ago the Commission appointed to investigate the scarcity of labor and the consequent high wages in Uganda, came to the conclusion that this



was due to the existence of the reserves, large tracts pre-empted from occupation by the foreigner; and advocated the diminution of this territory in order to make the natives work. A European example was to be found in the Ardennes where there existed common lands with a sparse population and little industry, and wages were far higher than in thickly populated and highly cultivated Flanders. With accessible land the universal rule is that if industry fails to pay an adequate price for labor, the latter simply removes itself to the land where it is certain of its livelihood. It was not mere greed which led to the enclosure of English commons but the demand for cheap labor. To put the matter bluntly, men were shut away from their one great recourse in order to be compelled to accept the employer's own price for their services.

By 1908 it was very clear to Mr. Fels not only that the Small Holdings Act would not be applied but that if it should, it would be ineffective. He could see now that state purchase would defeat its own ends and that the small holder working with government aid

would have to carry a burden that he could not support. He wanted some method that would make land plentiful and accessible as in new countries. But unfortunately in Europe and especially in Britain, the land is preempted by a relatively small number of individuals. It was necessary to make them relinquish. Nationalization by purchase did not commend itself to him as it would only increase the difficulty which he was trying to avoid. For the state to enter the market means the highest possible prices, and even if the capital applied should bear only a low rate of interest, it would constitute an overwhelming burden for the peasant farmer. Land to be useful for small holders must be not only plentiful but cheap, or, put in other words, its value must be use value. In this way Mr. Fels came to see that the only effective method of dealing with the problem would be to place a tax upon the value of land apart from all improvements. He saw that if such a tax were gradually raised to the equivalence of rent, which is the ultimate basis of all capitalized land value, the prices would fall to a use basis. No one would care

to hold land for rent if this rent were to be immediately collected from him by the state, and no one could afford to hold land without using it to the fullest, if he had to hand over its annual rental value for the privilege of holding.

The plan had a further advantage in that improvements would be relieved of the taxation which is found to act so harmfully in Denmark, and every inducement would thus be given to the extension of equipment and enrichment of the soil so necessary to intensive cultivation. In addition there would be complete justice in the incidence of taxation. The land would become a series of sites for carrying on agricultural industry much in the manner of other industrial sites. Everyone is aware that the site value reflected in high or low rent depends upon situation and communication. The small holding near a market and with easy communication naturally fetches a higher rent than one farther removed, and this rental value would merely be transformed into tax value. In other words, the holder who is far from market and reaches it with difficulty is compensated by having to pay a lower

rental or, under the new plan, a lower tax. From now on, Mr. Fels devoted his energies to bringing about this great reform.

His exertions in the interest of land taxation cannot be described as merely the outcome of his acceptance of Henry George's principles. He was acquainted with them and was convinced that they were sound many years before he threw himself and his resources into their service. His early period of activity in England was inspired by other motives than his desire to establish land taxation, this seeming too remote and difficult of achievement for one who wished to see concrete results growing, however slowly, under his hand. It was that his problems, at first disconnected from land taxation, led him, chiefly through the failure of his efforts, to conclude that social reform is a hopeless struggle against conditions that hamper and balk and kill, and that these conditions grow out of and center in the private and privileged possession of land. In the early days, like most others, he saw land monopoly and its remedy as a thing apart, for Utopian contemplation rather than for every-

day work. But ten years' struggle to achieve other reforms taught him that the curse of privilege entrenched in the ownership of land had thrust its tentacles into every part of the social order, and was ever ready to strangle efforts toward a cleaner and juster civilization.

## VII

### Political Interests

**E**VERY man of wealth who desires to achieve something in the direction of social betterment finds his chief difficulty to be the practical one of making personal adjustments. There is the ever present army of sycophants; there is a multitude with ideas of greater or less value that make their appeal to be supported and set going; and there is the ever present spectacle of human suffering to be alleviated. The path of least resistance is undoubtedly to join the brigade of philanthropists. Charity provides a means of spending unlimited money without responsibility. Its activities are systematized. It is a certain road to respectability and a crown of glory. Some strength of character is needed to resist the personal insistence as well as the inherent temptation to sink one's self in the dissipation of giving. For Mr. Fels, palliation and tink-

ering were not enough. He conceived it to be a fundamentally mistaken policy to use the surplus good of each generation to repair the wastage that it wrought. His ambition was to make unnecessary the activities of charity which in course of time he came to hate. They left, he was accustomed to say, nothing but evil on both sides. "I hate to give," he told an audience once, "and most men are ashamed to receive as long as charity allows them to remain men." Here was a fundamental count in the indictment. Charity cut at the root of that personal initiative and independence which constitute the very essence of manhood.

Motives such as these impelled Mr. Fels to turn away from charity as inadequate, and to keep himself from the personal importunity which engulfs those who resign themselves to the philanthropic life. He soon perceived that it was in the political field and through political agencies that his cause must advance. He determined, therefore, to put his financial resources and his personal services into the effort to place the taxation of land values upon the statute book. He was naturally compelled to

establish relations with his fellow workers, to assist and extend existing agencies, and generally to seek for means of bringing his reform more fully into the field of public discussion and political action. His relation with the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values was always close, and this group of able and devoted men could always count on his unstinted help. The members of Parliament who were advocates of the reform were his friends. They were affiliated to the Liberal Party and, of course, pledged to the general aims of Liberal policy. The United Committee has always believed that their reform would be brought about only after being integrated to Liberal plans, with the consequence that its advocacy has had to remain secondary to the more general party intentions. That this affiliation has served some useful purpose no one can doubt. But it was hardly consistent with Mr. Fels' character and methods to allow what he conceived to be a matter of prime importance to be kept in abeyance until the scope of Liberal policy might be sufficiently extended to include it at some remote future



date. He did not, therefore, join the Liberal ranks. His discernment had been too well trained in business affairs not to make it clear to him that Liberal policy would give no large place to the taxation of land values. It formed an instrument of tremendous effectiveness in the fight with the Lords, but Liberals were interested in it only as a means of war. If the cause had been put on its own merits, what was at that time only smoldering rebellion would have risen to the point of open repudiation. It was clear to Mr. Fels that by land reform the Liberal politicians did not mean what he meant. It might be very well to fight the Conservatives, pre-eminently the party of landlords, but as soon as the fruits of the new land policy should begin to show themselves in the world of industry, the magnates who constitute the backbone of liberalism would give it their unflinching opposition.

These considerations led Mr. Fels to turn always more hopefully to the cause of labor. Here were the people who held his sympathy and whom he desired chiefly to benefit. Only the workers would find it to their interest to

carry through the reform in its full and effective measure. It might take long for the common people to see the advantage of land reform, but they in the end would find it their most certain means to the attainment of freedom and justice. Mr. Fels, therefore, worked in the interest of the Labor Party, and there were few contests in which the Labor candidate did not have the advantage of his helping hand.

But there were, and are, many difficulties in the way. The working man, however intelligent, who has been bred to town life, who by apprenticeship or otherwise has been trained into exercise of a particular craft, is unable to see at first view how land reform can solve his special problem, that problem being the simple one of securing a due proportion of the earnings of the industry in which he participates.

It seems to him a matter that lies between himself and the capitalist who employs him. About this central question group the minor ones pertaining to the conditions of labor. He joins his fellow-workmen in order to bring united action to bear upon the employer. His

ultimate recourse is the strike which periodically faces the employer with the alternative of advancing wages or seeing his employees leave their work in a body. This seems to be the essential purpose of trade unionism. The practice of Mr. Fels' own firm as large employers of labor, had been to advance wages to as high a point as possible on their own initiative, because they found it to be good business policy. He knew that any struggle over wages was for the workers an unequal and losing one. However much the employer may suffer, he is nearly always in a better position to carry on a protracted conflict than his laborers who, in most cases, have few resources and can only undertake a strike at the risk of the most terrible consequences. Mr. Fels knew also that, union or no union, so long as the labor market carries a large surplus, wages can be held almost at the limit of subsistence. Whatever might or should be, the price of labor is in fact determined, like that of other commodities, by the supply on the market. If the supply can be reduced, the demand and therefore the price, will rise just as with coal, corn or any-

thing else. It is well known that the suppression of any industry will throw those who practice it into other channels. The suppression of agriculture carried on continuously over nearly a century has moved the country population to the town, and given a steady stream of applicants for industrial occupations. How can the tide be set the other way, and what would be its consequences? Agriculture, in countries where the common people prosper, is not merely one occupation amongst many others, but the great alternative to all industry. Let the conditions for its practice be advantageous as compared with the trades, let the land demand workers and pay them adequately for their work. The consequence would be seen immediately in the withdrawal of the labor surplus in the industrial market, and that desirable state of affairs would be reached in which employers would compete for laborers, instead of laborers competing for the privilege of obtaining a job at rates that barely keep them and their families from the verge of starvation. Moreover, the taxation of land values would relieve the working population of

that unfair incidence of rates and taxes which under the existing system they have to bear.

The way in which adjustment as between agricultural and industrial pursuits would take place is precisely the same as is found in the adjustment of the trades. When a young man is faced with the necessity of choosing a means of livelihood, his choice is determined partly by inclination, partly by opportunity, but in the main by the economic advantage which one trade manifests as compared with the others. There is a perpetual selection going on of men by trades so that the benefits are equalized by reason of numbers entering. Agriculture would, therefore, not only stop the constant migration from country to town to swell the ranks of industry, but if permitted to exercise the advantages and attractions that belong to it, would undoubtedly produce a current in the opposite direction and reduce the supply of labor.

But a more important difficulty that Mr. Fels had to face in endeavoring to secure the assent of the laboring world to his reform, was due to the fact that the laboring world had to

a large extent committed itself to the tenets of socialism. One of the chief of these is the nationalization of land, which naturally presents itself as an alternative reform. It is a curious fact that reformers in so many cases keep their ideas within a closed system of principles, thus preventing co-operation in practical political activity; and it must be said that many socialists would rather sit still contemplating the joys and the advantages of a socialist state that is to spring full-fledged out of a moment's intervening revolution, than set themselves laboriously, little by little, to shape the trend of social evolution. Mr. Fels, always practically bent and basing his program on existing conditions, was unable to give his assent to those proposals which involved state ownership of all industry and the nationalization of land by legislation or purchase. These matters might be supremely desirable of themselves, but appeared to him out of the range of possible achievement in the first case, and altogether undesirable in the case of the land. The socialistic principle as applied to the great public services of distribution and communica-

tion had his complete support. He conceived the object of revenue to be the extension and betterment of such services, and saw also that these services were the instruments that conferred value in a great degree upon the land. It was with reference to the socialization of these land values as the source of revenue for the public services that differences arose. He endeavored to make his socialist friends see that whereas the confiscation of land by legislation was impracticable, and whereas acquisition by purchase would throw an intolerable burden upon the people, the taxation of land values would accomplish what they wanted, and possess the superior advantage of being within the sphere of practical politics. Moreover, it is not clear that nationalized land would provide the remedy for present day evils. There must in the last analysis be individual tenure of some kind, and the state as ultimate landlord may not prevent the existence of a host of sub-landlords who would exploit rental values more or less as at present. It is difficult to understand why socialists have not adopted the taxation of land values as a prac-

tical and certain method of bringing about what they desire. Once the whole of ground rental is secured to the state, it is obvious that ownership is merely a matter of words, while tenure and use must be provided for in any case.

In addition to the foregoing, Mr. Fels could see that full utilization of the land would go far toward the abolition of industry for profit, which lies at the heart of the socialist contention. There is a distinction in the capital employed in industry not sufficiently taken into account. It is a simple distinction between debenture and preferred stock, on the one hand, and common share issues on the other. Everyone knows that the initiatory and working provision for a new industry is supplied as capital bearing a fixed charge and constituting a mortgage on the business. This supply is necessary whoever owns the business, state or individual, and it would have to bear a charge either as interest or sinking fund for redemption. Exploitation for profit comes in connection with that large world of common share issues, the home of promoters and jobbers, in which values are capitalized dividends,



and which is firmly established upon the backs of the toilers. If it is admitted that the proceeds of any industry should go as reward to those who supply the actual and legitimate capital, and to the workers who carry it on, then clearly there is no room for fluctuating share values. The greater part of the City of London would be in search of means of livelihood. The difficulty is that the worker has no way of collecting his proportion. He does not even trouble to understand that while he toils for his sovereign per week, the well dressed individual whom he sees on his way to the city and for whom he feels so much respect, has merely pocketed the other sovereign that he, the worker, has earned. The problem after all is simply how to place the laborer in a position to collect the due return of his labor. Antecedent to the millennium, there appears to be only one way, namely, to make him free to give his services to, or withdraw them from, any employer. When the owners of land clamor for men to help them earn the rent which the state inexorably collects, the workers will have achieved their freedom.

## VIII

### Home Colonization

**I**N the winter of 1905, the late General Booth, appalled by the degree of unemployment then existing, came to the conclusion that only in emigration was a remedy to be found. He proposed therefore to raise a fund by means of which five thousand families should be assisted to emigrate to Australia. He was convinced that it lay in his power to send out the type of settler of which he believed the colony to stand in need. Mr. Fels emphatically disagreed with this suggestion. He was not convinced, in the first place, that work was to be had in Australia. He doubted very seriously whether "assisted" emigration of the type suggested by General Booth would result in the choice of fit persons; and above all he felt certain that there was room and to spare in England for the proposed emigrants. With this thought in mind he made an offer through the

press to the British Government. It was in the following terms:

“I am informed that, probably encouraged by Mr. Rider Haggard’s report to the Government on the success of Salvation Army colonies in South America, General Booth has offered to settle some 1500 families on land in the Colonies, if the Government will provide, say, £300,000 for that purpose.

“I believe England’s own home land will support her present population and she should not allow some of her best blood to leave her shores by assisted emigration. There can be no objection to voluntary emigration.

“If General Booth’s scheme is really to settle 1500 families in the Colonies and if he makes the proviso that the Government shall assist him in his undertaking to the extent of £300,000, I am quite sure that better results can be obtained with a like amount of money without so large a proportion of the money being unproductively paid over to transportation companies or in commissions to land and other agents.

“Bearing these points in mind, I would

gladly be one of twenty to guarantee the settling—right here in Great Britain—on home land, of the same number of families with the same assistance from Government. If nineteen others cannot be found to join me, I shall still be prepared to act alone to the extent of my proportion.

“Inasmuch as there is a hitch in connection with General Booth’s scheme which will probably ultimately cause it to be entirely dropped, the present seems an opportune moment for carrying out home colonization. During the last fifty years the number of persons employed upon the land in this country has decreased by some one and a quarter millions, whilst there is no evidence to show that the quality of the land or the conditions of the climate are responsible for this great falling off.

“Experiments made by private land owners and public authorities prove conclusively that, under a system of small holdings, with absolute security of tenure for the cultivator, farming is still a profitable occupation. The Vale of Evesham, Worcester, is somewhat of

an object lesson in this direction, there being thousands of acres in small holdings, though conditions are not nearly what they should be in respect of permanence of tenure or of occupation.

“The public does not know that there is about the same percentage of unemployed in most of the Colonies as in the mother country. It may also not be aware that the United States is not a Mecca for the unemployed and the moneyless.

“In addition to agriculture which has been so much neglected of late years in Great Britain for reasons which must be obvious to most thinking people, there is the question of afforestation. A Royal Commission has shown that there are in Great Britain some twenty million acres of absolutely waste land capable of being put under timber. Not less than one hundred thousand adults representing a population of (say) half a million people, would find profitable and healthy employment in this class of industry.

“The state forests of Germany bring in an average of about eighteen million pounds to

the national exchequer; Great Britain imports timber to the value of over forty million pounds, a great proportion of which could and should be grown on home land."

It was but a nine days' wonder. General Booth's scheme was, as he had foreshadowed, already doomed owing to great divergence of Australian opinion as to its merits. The press loudly acclaimed Mr. Fels' generosity, articles were written about his public spirit, the usual notices were contributed on the possibilities of afforestation; in prospect indeed the money was spent over and over again. One comment on the plan, that of the *Star*, is worth preserving because it shows so real an appreciation of Mr. Fels' object. Its editor commented on the plan as follows: (Issue of October 18, 1905.)

Mr. Joseph Fels comes forward with a practical proposal for the restoration of the manless land to the landless man. If the Government will grant a sum of £300,000, he will make one of twenty to guarantee the settling of fifteen hundred families in this country. If nineteen others cannot be found to join him, he is prepared to act alone to the extent of his proportion. We need not say that we heartily welcome Mr. Fels' patriotic offer. We hope he will get

his nineteen partners in double quick time. Surely there are nineteen men who are willing to save England from the fate of Ireland, to stop the torrent of emigration which is draining her life blood. We have often been called "Little Englanders" because we refuse to treat these islands as a mere parish, and because we hold that the health of the outer empire depends upon our heart beats. That is why we supported Mr. Jesse Collings in his opposition to General Booth's scheme for deporting five thousand stalwart Englishmen to Australia. We are convinced that there is plenty of land at home for the strong man, if only the barriers between him and the land are leveled. During the last fifty years, as Mr. Fels points out, the number of persons employed upon the land has decreased by a million and a half. . . . There is no doubt that the scientific farmer, employing modern methods, can hold his own against the world. But he must be delivered from the fetters which our obsolete land laws have riveted upon his enterprise. It is time to call our great landlords to give an account of their stewardship. There can be no radical reform without compulsion. The state must recover the land for the people.

It is, of course, more picturesque to ship our bone and sinew off to Canada, Australia and New Zealand. But it is a fact not generally known that the percentage of unemployed in most of the Colonies is as high as it is here. The state of South Africa at this moment is deplorable. Thousands of white men are walking in gloomy despair about the streets of Cape Town and Johannesburg. We hear a great deal about the successful emigrants but of the dismal fail-

ures we hear less. There are plenty of young men who curse the day when they left England. Yet, take it all in all, we do not believe there is a finer country in the world for the honest, steady and strenuous man than this England of ours. We ought to rediscover its unknown rural charms, and to repopulate its desolate acres. The cult of the country, which the bicycle and the motor have revived, ought to make the task of manning the land an easy one. . . . If some part of the millions which our imperialists waste on barren war were spent on afforestation and land nationalization, England would be happier and stronger. What did we get for the two hundred and fifty million pounds squandered in the South African War? We provided work under degrading conditions for forty-five thousand Chinamen. We established an oligarchy of landlords. Why not, in future, spend our millions at home for the benefit of our own people?

Mr. Fels heartily welcomed so spirited an appeal. He urged everywhere the justification of an immediate experiment. No country, he wrote, could be truly prosperous where the "submerged" population formed a large percentage of the people. The endurance and vitality of England must, sooner or later, be seriously threatened if there grew up a permanently unemployed class. If competition were so to operate that the worker thrown out



of employment found it impossible to recover the means of livelihood, any real sentiment of patriotism became impossible.

Such was his plea. But beyond the demands of the press that attention be devoted to his plan, nothing was done. So far as can be discovered, no seconder of his offer appeared. The rich classes were clearly apathetic. Of Government action of any kind we are ignorant. It is possible that the plan, like that of General Booth, was referred to the ministerial committee on agricultural settlements in the Colonies; perhaps in the last month of Mr. Balfour's administration no time could be spared from the all important task of saving his ministry from the destruction to which it appeared doomed. Certainly Mr. Walter Long failed to give this experiment the thoughtful consideration he had devoted to the farm labor colonies. Mr. Fels, not unnaturally, was keenly disappointed. The need was clear, conditions were urgent. Continental experiment and analogy justified high hopes for the success of a well executed plan of home colonization. The existence of a real land hun-

ger had been many times demonstrated; that industrial workers could be made into useful agriculturists Mr. Fels himself had shown. If landlords cared nothing for his plan, something was seriously wrong with the landlords. Here, as in all his other endeavors, he came face to face with the same intolerable barrier to progress.

Mention has already been made of Mr. Fels' work in connection with the cultivation of vacant lots in Philadelphia. In 1904 he conceived the idea of starting a society in London with the same object. He went over London seeking the co-operation of men and women whose help seemed likely to be of service, and by the end of the year an association, with a committee to which such men as Mr. Percy Alden, Professor Patrick Geddes, Mr. George Lansbury and Mr. Israel Zangwill gave their assistance, was formed. Mr. Fels himself acted as secretary of the enterprise. The society had objects more or less similiar to those of its American parent. The temporary loan of unused land was to be obtained

from every possible source. This land was to be prepared during the winter for cultivation, thus providing, in some degree at any rate, a source of constructive work for the unemployed. The land so prepared was to be let either free or at a nominal rent to approved applicants, the preference being given to those with families. Tools and seeds were to be provided either free, or at cost price, and practical instruction was to be given wherever necessary.

A beginning had already been made when the society was organized with land lent by the Bromley Gas Light and Coke Company in West Ham. This was a dreary-looking tract situated in the most desolate region of East London. It had once been a fertile market garden famous for the production of celery. It was now covered with twitch which flourished and killed every other plant. In a few months twenty-five acres of this desert were transformed into flourishing vegetable gardens. The heavy labor of preparing their allotments fell mostly upon the applicants themselves and provided a serious test of their in-

terest and perseverance. The result of the first season's working was a return of about forty pounds per acre, which meant that the holders of even a few rods had gone far toward the maintenance of themselves and families. The success of this first effort strengthened the society in approaching public authorities and private owners. The London County Council placed at its disposal several pieces of unused land and the work was extended in Fulham and other sections. The Gas Light and Coke Company gave the use of seven acres, also situated in Fulham, which was allotted to fifty-six men, each of whom held an average plot of twenty square rods. There was no example of failure and the more serious mistakes were avoided through the efficient superintendence of Mr. R. L. Castle who had been gardener to the Duke of Bedford. The rules adopted in connection with the Fulham tract will illustrate the general method:

1. The plots of land, twenty square rods in extent, are let to partially employed men by the above society, free of rent, rates and taxes.
2. In the event of the land being required

by the owners, the longest possible notice will be given to the men for the removal of their crops.

3. If a man subsequently obtains full employment which does not permit him to give the necessary time to the cultivation of his plot, notice must be given to the superintendent who will arrange for another man to take over the plot and crops upon fair terms.

4. The plots must be cultivated and cropped to the satisfaction of the superintendent who will give all the instruction required. For the first digging, and for wheeling on to the land the apportioned manure, supplied free by the society, ten and sixpence per plot will be paid to the men on the completion of the work.

5. Each man must remove all rubbish as directed, and keep his own paths clean.

6. The crops may be sold or used by each grower as he prefers, but he must report the quantities as removed to the superintendent. The plot holders would, however, greatly assist if they keep a record of all crops grown, and an account of all moneys received for sales

of produce. This information is required by the society to enable them to make out their yearly report.

7. Seeds or plants purchased and supplied by the society will be charged to the men at cost price, but the amount can be paid when the first crops are used or sold.

8. Work on Sundays should be completed by ten a. m.

9. The men are expected to behave honorably with regard to their neighbors' crops and to take all possible care of the tools supplied which must be returned to the shed every day in a clean state.

10. A deposit of sixpence will be required for each key supplied, and this deposit will be returned when the men give up the keys and plots.

11. Misconduct or wilful neglect will subject a holder to the loss of his plot and crops.

Within six months after the London Society's origin, it had given birth to similar societies in Edinburgh, Belfast, Middlesboro and Dublin. Wherever an invitation to explain the scheme was forthcoming, Mr. Fels threw

other work aside to go. By the end of the first year the London Society had two hundred and fifty men at work on its plots, and had many more applications for land. Ninety per cent. of the men were successful in their experiment, and the average yield per acre exceeded forty pounds. Nothing handicapped the Society except the lack of land, and the characteristic refusal on the part of Mr. John Burns to grant a loan of money for clearing the land let by the public authorities of London. When it is remembered that the income of the Society barely exceeded five hundred pounds, the measure of its success will be in some degree realized. The Society has just received a grant from the government, and with the greater need of cultivating unused lands created by the present war, it may well have a large field of usefulness.

## IX

### The Methods of Monopoly

**A**S has been seen, it was clear to Mr. Fels that there was no necessary conflict between legitimate capital, that is, capital destined for actual use in the provision of equipment, and the labor necessary to make use of it. It was equally clear that profits could be derived from illegitimate capital, simply because some mode of constraint was brought to bear upon the choice of workers which forced them to lower their margin and sell their labor cheaply. His concern was to discover the origin of this constraint and he found it in the conditions which make agriculture unattractive and unprofitable, conditions associated with the private ownership of land used for the exploitation of rental values. His further thinking led him to an understanding of monopoly in general and how it always serves to



keep labor in servitude, and seize upon a portion of its due return. The same forces that exploit labor exploit the consumer of commodities in so far as this is possible. The consumer's only protection lies in the perfectly free play of all the activities of production and exchange, which is known as competition. It is difficult to see how the economic world could keep itself going among a people with even a semblance of freedom without that determination of values which commodities find on the market under competitive conditions. There is no other way in which any one of the indefinitely divided and specialized functions of production can automatically find its place. The simple question in any business activity, "Does it pay?" means that in the totality all functions are limiting and corrective.

But there are elements in every business which strive to make a commodity pay more than its actual value, to intervene in what may be considered the natural economic process and so restrain it as to take an undue share of profits either from consumer or laborer. An extreme example may be found in that type of

South American enterprise which secures persons by the trickery of loans, keeps them bound by debt, pays them what it pleases and compels them to purchase all supplies at its own store and at its own price. This is interference in the normal adjustment of values, both of labor and of supplies. A ring of coal dealers, acting in conjunction with producers who held the claims of labor in abeyance by threats of government intervention to avoid disturbance in war time, has been able to force consumers to pay for a necessary commodity something more than double its value. Any large aggregation of capital, dealing in any commodity, can throttle small competitors and collect the losses involved through subsequent enhanced prices to consumers. These commonplaces illustrate the fact that business is always endeavoring to over-reach and levy a tax for the use of commodities. Such factors are difficult to find and more difficult to deal with, but they exist everywhere and prove that competition is merely a Utopian condition, and *laissez faire* a blind doctrine which permits the most ruthless exploitation.

The function of the state is increasingly conceived as one of intervention in the economic process, not, however, in the old manner of being itself a monopolist. The days are past, except in backward countries, when the privilege of exclusive dealing in any commodity is sold by king or government. There is diminishing tolerance for the derivation of revenue from the direct monopoly of any article of continuous necessity. Obviously a tax upon salt could secure whatever income a state might require. The article merely goes upon the market and collects from the consumer its own value plus the tax. Any article so treated, whether matches or tobacco in France, spirits in Russia, or tea or tobacco in England, come within the same category. Excise or tariff duties involve no difference in principle; the liquor traffic in Great Britain is, as a matter of fact, a form of government monopoly. The tendency is away from crude and primitive forms of interference in the economic process and more in the direction of restraint upon the more obviously predatory elements in the business world. To redress economic grievances

and maintain the balance fair, seems to be increasingly a function of the state.

It is obvious, however, that regulation is a mode of interference which differs in principle from intervention, or playing a direct part in the business world. Possibly regulation could be carried far enough to prevent exploitation in some kinds of industry, but its machinery would have to be elaborated to an extensive degree, and there would still remain many modes of evasion; and it is not always certain that inspection is efficient. The British railways provide a good example. The conditions of labor may be perfectly defined and well enforced, tariffs may be adjusted with great precision, there may even be control over the issue of capital and the collection of dividends, but the railway remains in principle a business for exploitation and not for service. Again, the most careful and thorough-going inspection of the coal industry can hardly alter the fact that neither labor nor the consuming public has more than a small portion of the benefit from this national possession.

In America, experience proves that the In-

terstate Commerce Commission, even after great efforts, can have only a slight and momentary effect upon the gigantic interests that it endeavors to hold within bounds. It needs be recognized, therefore, that while regulation and inspection are probably always necessary as a mode of state interference, they differ essentially and in principle from direct participation in the economic process. The opinion is always growing, however, that the state should be able in the last analysis to play a decisive part in the conduct of business, and that this part should somehow be associated with the derivation of the national income. If some guiding principle could be discovered which would place in government hands the special territory in which the most extensive forms of exploitation are practiced, and from which others are derived, the state would at once be in a position to apply a large income to national purposes and at the same time hold the economic balance.

Only slight examination of existing facts is needed to show that in productive industry neither capital expended on equipment nor la-

bor hired for operation, receives an undue share of returns. It is therefore to the other factor in production, namely, that of natural resources, that attention must be given. When the combined effort of capital and labor brings to the surface a ton of coal, the first charge upon it is a royalty, to the colliery owner. The accident that a man possesses a plot of land beneath which nature has placed a carboniferous deposit enables him, without the expenditure of capital or applying the labor of his hands, or exercising an effort of any kind, to levy a tax for his private emolument upon the consuming public. It shows great consideration on his part to allow the nation to make any use of these natural and national resources, and the people, possibly out of gratitude, as nothing else can explain this curious fact, reward him with a fortune which he does nothing to earn. One has only to mention oil, coal, steel and copper, together with the railways which transport them, to account for nearly all the great fortunes made in America. Probably the capital actually expended in boring and pumping machinery is never overpaid;

it is certain that the laborers who carry on the work never receive more than their due. How then can oil produce fortunes? The answer is perfectly simple. It is by securing control of the oil supply and levying a tax upon the world for being permitted to use it. This tax is merged in the price of oil, and the world does not seem to have sufficient intelligence to distinguish it. A London laborer who with his family occupies a single room, pays for the privilege of being somewhere above a few square feet of ground, a tax to some individual who exerts himself no more than to check his receipts, and usually even this is deputed to someone else. One is taxed if one walks or sits or sleeps upon the earth's surface, and even for the privilege of being buried. The rule for fortune making is then a simple one. It is to corner some portion of nature and charge the world an admission fee.

So far in commercial evolution there has appeared only one mode of protection for the purchasing public. The housewife's reply, "It is cheaper across the way, I will buy it there" contains the whole philosophy of com-

petitive prices and the fixing of values. It is therefore of prime importance for any would-be monopolist to drive his opponents from the field, so that the purchaser may have no alternative but to buy his commodity, if it is an object of necessity, at his own prices. If a competitor cannot be driven out he may perhaps be absorbed and the spoils shared. As capital aggregates, it becomes easier to make life impossible for the smaller opponents. For this purpose, it is useful to control the means of communication. The great monopolistic trusts of America invariably dominate the important railway lines. The practical effect is simple enough. If you are a great colliery owner in any district and a small opponent begins to work a coal field that he happens to possess, you have only to see that he is given no railway trucks to transport his produce; you may then purchase the mine at your own price.

There is much idle talk in this day about the morality of business. It is held a reprehensible thing to strangle a small competitor or to exploit the public in a ruthless manner;



but this attitude is altogether senseless. Business is business, and men do what the conditions permit them to do. There are not many who would refuse the prerogatives of president of the Standard Oil Company or of a London ground landlord. If the business of highway robbery had not been excluded by a very efficient set of conditions and if it had depended upon merely moral sanctions, it would now be in a flourishing condition. As circumstances made it more difficult for the highwayman to practice his profession, he doubtless developed strong convictions regarding the inviolability of the person. It is useful for all monopolists to control the channels of publicity in order to keep before the public the eternal principle of the sanctity of private property. The fact is that as soon as the world understands the matter and is aware of parasitism, it will say little about the immorality of business but promptly rearrange conditions to make it impossible. The monopolist is probably in the vast majority of cases like anybody else, no better and no worse, and merely takes advantage of a business opportunity presented

to him, just as anyone else would do. It is foolish to attack persons instead of rearranging conditions. Mr. Fels often said that circumstances had made him a robber. He merely accepted profits from a business which depended partly upon the sagacity of his brother and himself, and partly upon the monopoly of a most valuable manufacturing process. Anyone else would do the same; but Mr. Fels possessed a clarified vision and knew how the trick was done, and to the end of his life never felt his money to be a private possession. He was determined that in so far as lay in his power, monopoly should be suicidal.

It is clear then that there are factors in the business world which tend to emerge and assume a position of advantage with reference to the others. Even if they are for a time involved in production, they gradually withdraw and assume the rôle of tribute gatherers. Landlordism in any one of its multitudinous forms is merely a monopoly of one of the natural sources of wealth; and rent, instead of being a reward for labor or for the use of capi-

tal, is a type of profits which represents no contribution to the world's store of wealth, but is a tax levied on production for permission to approach the natural sources, paid by both capital and labor unless they can devise some means of re-collecting from the consumer. As wealth accumulates through production, the tendency is for any large fortune to entrench itself as landlord. To collect rent is the best and most secure method the world has yet devised for getting something for nothing. In a nation with multiplying resources, there is eager competition in the monopoly market, and these commodities are forced to high prices. It is a commonplace that increase of wealth and population carries an increase of land values and correspondingly higher rentals. It is also a profitable field for speculation. To hold landed property on the outskirts of a growing town and wait for the ripe fortune to drop into one's hands is the most common of spectacles in all new countries. This eagerness to collect tribute is probably an explanation of those recurring waves of business de-

pression which sweep over the world. It is well known that the cost of land in the Argentine has passed its productive value, that the profits of working can hardly more than meet the rental charges and operating expenses, and yet people wonder why there should be depression in the Argentine trade. The explanation is a simple one. If the landlord collects all that the land produces, there is little left with which to buy imports, and given a credit system which stands like a pyramid on its apex, it is not strange that the countries which depend on the sale of manufactured articles should feel the consequences. There is of course an arrest in the increase of land values until capital and labor, by improved processes or by adjusting themselves to a diminished margin, can recover the balance. It is difficult for the British mechanic to understand that the hard times which throw him out of employment and reduce him to privation, may result from the grabbing propensities of landlords in the Argentine or Australia or South Africa. Mr. Fels knew that his reform needed to be as world wide as commerce and credit, and for this rea-

son refused to work within the closed limits of nationality. He was "the American who came interfering in the domestic affairs of England."

## The Single Tax

TEN years' social and economic experimentation had brought Mr. Fels to an accord with the political teaching associated with the name of Henry George, to which he had given neither close study nor careful thought. Now it seemed to him as in a sudden illumination the social truth for which he had been so long seeking. It provided, he conceived, not merely a means for the mitigation of the ills of poverty, but a method by which poverty itself could be finally wiped out. It is characteristic of the man that once the vision was clear, he did not hesitate to throw his whole energy into the propagation of this doctrine.

The teaching which centers around the name of Henry George has come to occupy a prominent place in contemporary economic discussion. At the very height of its power

and influence, the *Times* thought it necessary to devote two pages of space, more valuable than than now, to a consideration of *Progress and Poverty* by the then unknown Californian. It was not a book lightly to be dismissed. Its doctrines were not sufficiently answered by the mere reply that it did not meet with the acceptance of orthodox economists. It has been characteristic of orthodox economists to brand as impossible every new doctrine that has not yet won its way into the ordinary thought of men. The theory could command considerable antiquity if that assists to its adequate appreciation. It was urged at the birth of scientific economics. Quesnay and Turgot had firm hold of its central idea; the latter indeed had so far understood its significance that its application was the central point of his policy when minister of finance to Louis XVI. If the attention of thinkers was drawn away from the direction the Physiocrats attempted to give to economic study, that was due to no fault of their teaching. It was because the application of science to industry changed the whole orientation of European thought.

Wealth, the Physiocrats taught, is based in the last analysis upon land. Man is economically as well as by nature a child of the earth. Henry George seized this cardinal truth at the very outset of his thought. If land is the basis of all wealth and if all men have need of wealth that they may live, it is clearly unjust that land should become the possession of the few; the vast majority must thereby be deprived of access to the means of living. "The ownership of land," wrote Henry George, "is the great fundamental fact which ultimately determines the social, the political, the economic, and, consequently, the intellectual and moral condition of a people. And it must be so. For land is the habitation of man, the store-house upon which he must draw for all his needs."

In the course of history men have, for the most part, been deprived of their natural inheritance. In order that they may live and increase they have been compelled to add to that inheritance, to augment the fortune that the few enjoy. It is impossible to trace the



steps in that process, for it is the record of the whole of mankind. But it is historically undeniable that as men have been in greater numbers divorced from the soil, as they have been forced into the class called the proletariat, have arisen the crucial economic problems that confront the modern democracy. The value of land, Ricardo taught long ago, is fixed by that least productive soil which social circumstances call into productive use. The difference between its productivity and that which gives the highest yield is called, simply, rent. But who created this difference? It is due to the foresight of no individual. It is due to position, the pressure of population, the possibility of supplying with greater ease the needs of that population. It is in short the existence of the community. In proportion as land has been concentrated in the hands of a few, those few have been able to profit by the genius and industry of the community. Society suffers from its own improvement. By one of the grimmest ironies to which history bears witness, those to whom a purely fortuitous event

has given possession of the soil, become legally and economically entitled to tax the community in proportion to its progress.

For Henry George, the central social problem consisted in the removal of this anomaly. He understood what Joseph Fels later expressed in a single emphatic phrase, "No man should have the power to take wealth he has not produced or earned." The value of land is mainly increased by communal effort. "Land," Mr. Fels wrote, "has a value apart from the value of things produced by labor; as population and industry increase, the value of land increases. That increase is community-made value. I believe it belongs to the community just as the wealth produced by you belongs to you. Therefore I believe that the fundamental evil, the great God-denying crime of society is the iniquitous system under which men are permitted to put into their pockets, confiscate in fact, the community-made values of land. It is proposed to take to the community that which is so obviously its own. What economically it creates, that it has morally the right to enjoy. If this view

were put on no ground other than that of common sense it would of a certainty be obvious enough. It is in fact socially axiomatic. We can proceed no further in our social development unless account be taken of its essential rightness."

If society creates these values, it has a clear right to their possession. And, as Joseph Fels was never tired of insisting, it is a little late in the day to bring against this new declaration of right the sneer that such rights are unhistorical. We urge, he once told an objector, that the right is the offspring of an obvious social need. How then is that right to be enforced? The answer given by the Single Taxers has at any rate the merit—and administratively this is of vast importance—of simplicity. It is proposed to tax the value of land, irrespective of any improvements that may be effected thereon, and to tax nothing else.

Income as a result of personal exertions is economically justified in claiming exemption. Imports and exports should be exempt because they are ultimately the product of

labor. It is difficult to exaggerate the social changes which would result from this reform. It is in fact, what Henry George called a true reform because it makes other reforms possible. The taxation of land values will in the first place raise revenue. Even here it has an advantage over other systems. It is open and it is certain—two advantages not lightly to be minimized. It will have about it none of the complex mystery which is associated with taxation at the present time. That, however, is comparatively a minor advantage. Its effect on industry must necessarily be of a far reaching character. The tax in the first place will be borne by the land owner; economists from Ricardo to Marshall have united in the declaration that a tax on economic rent cannot be shifted either to tenant or to consumer. It will thus force into use land that is at present, either for purposes of speculation or of selfish enjoyment, held out of use; for the tax will be greater than the land owner can bear unless he attempts improvements to meet it. He will use his land simply because he will not be able to do otherwise.

What would happen in an urban community as a result of this reform was, to Mr. Fels' thinking, one of its most important consequences. The more land is forced into utilization the cheaper must rents become, because the quantity of buildings is greater, supply is increased relatively to demand. That is itself an important change in modern urban conditions. A serious blow may thus be struck at the prohibitive rents of great industrial centers. Not only is the landlord economically compelled to improve his urban property, but to improve it he must give work that is socially useful and thus increase employment.

If more land is forced into cultivation clearly the price of raw materials must be reduced. This from a business point of view was an argument to which Mr. Fels attached great importance. In his own industry he found grave difficulties resulting from the possession by very few of all the available sources of supply. It was not that those sources were scanty and approaching exhaustion; supplies were deliberately restricted in order to enhance profits on a small output. Mr. Fels urged

constantly that half the evils of the increased cost of living in recent years were due to this one tremendous fact, the "cornering" as he put it, "by a few, of the natural resources of which all men have need." He saw that if the full extent of those resources was brought into use, the price of raw materials would be reduced with a clear effect upon the cost of living.

That result would assist greatly the condition of the working class. If there is an increased demand for labor there must be an increase in wages; not even the opponents of the Single Tax deny the applicability to modern conditions of the law of supply and demand. Here was what appeared to Mr. Fels the essential merit of Henry George's doctrine. By calling into use to their fullest extent the natural resources of the state, an attack would be made at the very root of the social problem. The cost of living would be cheapened, the possibilities of the community utilized and new opportunities opened for labor. A reform such as this seemed to Mr. Fels the first satisfactory method he had encountered of dealing with the problem of poverty.

It seemed to him, moreover, a natural reform. It would remove restrictions. It would make unnecessary those taxes on commerce which, as Henry George pointed out, prevent the free play of exchange. It would stimulate industry by opening out new opportunities for the efficient use of capital. It would make far easier the collection of revenue by substituting a single and simple method of taxation which would require comparatively little administration, for a number of complex and usually conflicting methods which require a heavy staff of operators. It would lessen to a remarkable degree and even destroy the opportunities by which monopoly and special privilege have attained their present high position in the state. It would be an equal system inasmuch as it assumes that a man should pay for what he possesses of the peculiar benefit in the way of economic privilege that the state can confer, the use of the land. It thus conforms to Adam Smith's canon of taxation that men should contribute to the state "in proportion to the revenue which they respectively enjoy under the protection of the state."

Mirabeau's father was wont to say that the discovery of the principle of land taxation was of an importance equal to that of the invention of writing.

Important as were these economic considerations, it was for reasons of an ethical kind that Mr. Fels embraced the Single Tax doctrine with so whole hearted an enthusiasm. For him, it made possible the approach of a new social morality. It gave each man the opportunity to be himself. It opened out for the first time the well springs of his own nature. It made possible an era of justice. This was for him essentially its greatest recommendation. For he had long been seriously oppressed by the perception that justice was impossible in a social order unjust in its very foundations. A real freedom could come only when the community had acquired the material basis of freedom; and he realized that until that liberty was attained every plea for social fraternity was the veriest hypocrisy. Brotherhood, he said often enough, is only possible among equals. If a condition of life obtains in which the vast majority is dependent upon



a small minority for its daily bread, that economic subjection will result in political enslavement. It was, as he saw, a slavery in everything but name. It was a negation of democracy. It destroyed equality of opportunity. It created unjust distinctions of class. The economic falsehood permeated even the church. Men of religion came to preach that morality was the acceptance of this untruth. It vitiated the system of education. Political economists constructed a code which attempted to weld ever more firmly the worker's chains. That is why Mr. Fels stigmatized the land monopoly as a "God-denying crime." He could see no end to its ramifications. It seemed to penetrate into every nook and cranny of the state. The divorce of men from the soil had been the main source of poverty. They had lost their birthright and it seemed to him that of all tasks by far the noblest was to restore them to their inheritance.

Many who met Mr. Fels after he had become interested in Single Tax were inclined to complain that he thought of nothing else. In a sense this was true, and he gloried in the

complaint. He told how for the first time he had a faith which was compelling and adequate. He had tired of the continual tinkering at social ills. He had wearied of the endless procession of unavailing reforms. Expedients of every kind he had tried. Investigations of every kind had had his sympathy and support. Yet, as he saw, decades of zealous inquiry had not seen beyond the stage of mitigation. The cry for social reform, for better housing, higher wages, shorter hours, all these were so many soporifics to make men willing to endure an order wrong and rotten in its foundation. The cure for poverty, he once said, is its prevention. He hated from the very depths of his being the smug complacency of charitable endeavor. What he wanted was more than a formula of benevolent regret. That is the secret of the devotion he paid to his faith.

It is worth while emphasizing how empirical was Mr. Fels' faith. It was not some sudden revelation of a mystery that had been previously hidden. It came to him after long and careful inquiry, after manifold experiments.

He had tried charitable work. He had supported almost every socialist and labor movement. He had attempted colonizing enterprise. Increasingly he had come to see how clearly the dearth of available land lay at the root of social ills. He saw, too, that the land monopoly was a hydra-headed monster; to cut off any save the central head was but to strengthen and revivify it. It came to him slowly but with the deep conviction that is born of intimate experience, that the cardinal principle in any declaration of social faith must be the destruction of the land monopoly. Everything else seemed to him but the establishment of fine superstructures upon a worthless basis of sand, and, as he once whimsically said, even for that rent had to be paid. He did not put forward the Single Tax as a panacea. He had too much knowledge of the complexity of social life to be thus unintelligent. What he did insistently emphasize was the truth that the time for tinkering at our ills had gone by, that it was vital to set about the building of a new social structure.

With Mr. Fels to realize was to act. Once

the vision had been clearly seen, he set to work to attempt its fulfillment. He made inquiries in every direction to know what work was being done for the Single Tax, who were doing it, how it was being done. He proffered whatever services he could render, time, money, organization, thought, with an eager gladness that put new courage into the hearts of all with whom he came in contact. Unlike the majority in any movement, he contributed not only enthusiasm but also, what was even more important, suggestive ideas. He was so essentially a man of action that in him theory, almost at the birth, crystallized into practice. The thing was urgent, it should be done. There was something infectious in the optimism by which he became possessed. He was, as he conceived, working directly at the main root of social ill. He had been given a key that opened the gate to a new and splendid world.

It is not without significance that to Henry George no less than to Joseph Fels did the inspiration of this work bring content and optimism. Those who knew him found in him

a new purposiveness direct and impressive. The reason is simple. They had both been puzzled by the confusion of the modern social order. They had both, until comparatively well on in years, wandered almost blindly ahead, searching, experimenting, hoping, and yet ever failing to find a real clue to that vast labyrinth. The watch words of a campaign were theirs. They knew that over the gateway to the world of their dream liberty and justice must be written. They knew there was work for them to do; and then there came knowledge of the way. "Liberty," wrote Henry George, "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 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 in their poets strains that yet phrase the highest exaltations of thought." It was the desire to recover the spirit of liberty that took possession of Henry George and, in no less degree, of Joseph Fels. He would help men, in that

fine phrase of Mirns, to share no less in the gain than in the toil of living. The optimism which characterized both George and himself was born of a certainty that his mission was true. To him the axioms of the Single Tax not merely represented the sum of his whole industrial experience, but were the truest description of the economic realities that lie at the bottom of social appearance. Had it been objected to him that these axioms were too simple for the facts they attempted to describe he would have replied that the truth is in its nature a simple thing; it is, he once said, the "rediscovery of the obvious." He believed that social complexity was simply the child of social ill. It was the product of centuries of accumulated economic error. Once we returned to the working of what he called natural law, once we restored to man what was his by right, economists would find that social life would proceed simply, because it would proceed justly. To him the application of Henry George's doctrine meant the restoration of man's natural right. If men are to possess

happiness they must have access to the means of life.

Mr. Fels had always a deep interest in the opposition to the Single Tax and his correspondence, no less than his speeches, is full of comments on its nature. To the argument which has latterly found favor with the most academic and distinguished of his antagonists, that the Single Tax means the abolition of a system of protection to home industries, Mr. Fels would have replied that there was nothing he so ardently desired. It was not only, as he judged, that a protected industry was a parasitic industry, and thus an industry never standing on its own feet by virtue of its native strength, but what to his cosmopolitan temper was far more serious, a protective system was supremely hostile to international fellowship. He pointed out again and again that a nation's trade was the expression of a nation's mind, that the more closely nations enjoy commercial intercourse, the more do they come to understand each other. Free trade, as Cobden—whom he was proud to acclaim as a supporter

of the Single Tax—saw, was thus a means of spreading friendship. By breaking down isolation, it broke down misunderstanding, than which there was no more fertile cause of war.

Perhaps the argument which most puzzled him was the somewhat curious plea that the Single Tax was dangerous because, while the object of the budget is to balance expenditure and revenue, it may produce a surplus. The fear of this surplus he could never understand because he knew how immense were the communal needs to which it could be appropriated. As he once told a questioner, on education alone he would be willing and prepared to spend tenfold the present appropriation. "We have not yet begun to exploit the nation's abilities," he told a friend, "and we can sink plenty of money in finding them out." Indeed it was his eager anxiety to put the plans he cherished into action which made him desirous of increasing the income of the state.

He was often told that the Single Tax was fallacious because it over-simplified the problem of assessment. People were fond of quoting to him cases where property had been



rated either too high or too low as evidence that a true valuation was impossible. But to him this was to neglect the whole point at issue. The advocate of the Single Tax takes as the basis of his estimate the selling value of any piece of land, which is sufficiently easy to ascertain.

There is a last group of objections with which he was frequently confronted. He was sometimes accused of sowing class hatred because he proposed to tax only the land-owning class of the community. It was once urged to him that the payment of taxation confers a sense of social responsibility which the Single Tax would destroy. It gives a certain stake in the community which promotes good government. It was, again, represented to him that the evils borne by the peasantry of France under the ancient régime were largely brought home to them by the unjust burden of taxation they were compelled to bear. Inequitable taxation roused America to revolution. The history of English liberty is a history of a struggle to control the revenue. So that, in this view, taxation ought almost of necessity

to be unfairly imposed to arouse a people to a keener sense of its wrongs. It is curious to find Mr. Fels denounced as a promoter of hatred. Perhaps more than any other man who took part in the stress and heat of the great social conflict of his time, did he have an abiding sense of the ultimate unity of which men are capable. If he cried out against the land-owners it was because they retarded its realization. It was because they prevented the promotion of economic fraternity that he was assured of their danger to the state. To the argument that to abolish taxation is to destroy a sense of social responsibility, he made answer that the spirit taxation breeds is not the spirit that makes a state endure; for him it was tainted with compulsion and was therefore a barrier in the way of freedom. Unjust taxation, he once said, did not cause the American Revolution, but the repression those taxes symbolized. No one can understand the basic motives of his life who does not realize how much of his intense faith in the teaching of Henry George came from this hatred of bondage. The prophecy of eternal poverty

was to him a doctrine of eternal damnation. He had to fight against it because as he said again and again, there was no other fight worth while.

In every man and woman he saw a possible crusader. He made no apology for urging their assistance; he could not understand a lack of enthusiasm for his ideal. If anything in the world aroused in him a sense of bitter antagonism—and it was rarely he could be so aroused—it was the sight of satisfied men and women. “So keen am I in the opinion that we are doing great things these days,” he wrote to a friend shortly before his death, “that at the risk of making myself a nuisance I am approaching every man who I believe has money and whom I know to have a heart.” It is thus that great movements are made.

It has been pointed out how deeply his business experience confirmed him in his belief. Often he expressed his amazement that the government of cities and nations should be carried on with so little regard to business. “Election to a public office,” he wrote, “seems to denude a man of all his business acumen

and cause him to forget all the sound methods which are essential to success in the commercial world." It troubled him to see a system of taxation which had simply grown up by accident, in which there was neither method nor principle. He believed that this confusion lay at the root of public indifference to social questions. Men did not study the problems of communal life simply because an artificial complexity made them seem dull by depriving them of their real vitality. "If a business man is asked," he said, "what principle is adopted in raising the revenue of his city, he will either be quite nonplussed, or else he will blurt out that ancient shibboleth, ability to pay. Imagine him trying to carry on his business on these lines, and yet that is the method we are told to adopt in taxation." This fact made him eager to preach the doctrine to business men. He believed that with them it would make the greatest progress because it was, as he urged, in accordance "with sound and honest business principles." It should make a practical and immediate appeal to manufacturer and worker alike; as he once expressed it, "it

is the key that opens the door of their common interests.”

This then was the economic system of Joseph Fels, assuredly no dismal science. He tried to see simply and truly the path that lay ahead. He knew that his belief ran directly counter to accepted tradition. He knew that it cut at the root of convention and prejudice, he knew that realization would lie far beyond his time, but his courage never wavered because what he had he knew to be the truth.

## XI

### The Contest With the Leisured Class

**T**HE objective of all of Mr. Fels' later activities was to bring about a thorough discussion of the taxation of land values on the platform, in the press and in Parliament. In England a particularly favorable opportunity for action had arrived. A new government had come into office in 1906 with a majority greater than that possessed by any previous ministry. Its head, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, had been for many years sympathetically disposed towards the movement. In the House of Commons itself the group of land taxers was, numerically at any rate, more powerful than it had ever been before. Mr. Fels soon won his way into their confidence. He had no personal axe to grind, no party affiliations to embarrass. He simply wanted to

help in any way in which help could be rendered. He traveled about speaking, wrote to the press, interviewed members of Parliament, entertained in that social fashion which makes half the legislation of Great Britain. His city office became a kind of campaigning center where invariably a little group of enthusiasts was to be found.

In 1909 came what was in a sense the turning point of his career. The chapter of political history which led up to and culminated in the budget of that year is sufficiently well known. It represented the fruition of the new liberalism. It had been many years since the taxation of land values had received, in the famous Newcastle program, the official recognition of the Liberal Party. Every Liberal leader of importance during the long period of opposition had given at least lip service, and some of them like Campbell-Bannerman seemed ready to meet its claims in full. The party, however, continued to be dominated by the old guard with its Whig tendencies and Gladstonian descent. It circled about the time-honored policies of Free Trade, Dis-

tablishment and Home Rule. Measures of social reform were incidental and tentative. Liberalism had to find itself after coming into power. Gradually, however, the new elements began to emerge and take first place. The problems of dense population and the intensifying industrial struggle could not be solved by the Gladstonian formulas. The discontent of labor, now vocal in the House of Commons, was ever more ominous. The day had arrived for live issues handled by live men. Mr. Lloyd George placed himself at the head of the liberal democracy and led an attack upon the very stronghold of privilege. Whether or not its consequences may be obliterated by the war, the budget of 1909 will always stand as the acme of liberal achievement, co-ordinate with the establishment of free trade. What the budget actually proposed was little enough, but the principle which it involved will without doubt achieve a social revolution. A land tax was to be introduced which differentiated, for the purposes of assessment, between the site value and the improvement value of land. A new valuation was made



necessary which would give the English people the first understanding they had had since 1690 of what the land was worth and its possibilities as a source of revenue.

But the most important result of the budget was that the eyes of the elector were open to the meaning of the Single Tax. Mr. Fels began to make preparations for a campaign of unprecedented magnitude. The measure was not Single Tax; it was far from what Mr. Fels would have desired. But it was the thin end of the wedge. It marked the beginning of a statutory recognition of the land tax principle and as such was given the strongest support of the United Committee and all believers in the Single Tax.

An amazing outburst of opposition was provoked by the measure. The House of Lords, as guardians of privilege and representatives of the leisured class, decided to stake its very existence as a legislative power on this struggle. If there had ever been doubt as to the importance of a land tax, this sullen resistance showed it to be the conviction of privilege that the enactment of this principle into

law pointed the way to its doom. "Any one would have thought," Mr. Fels once exclaimed, "that Mr. Lloyd George proposed to consign the members of the House of Lords to the workhouse." The opposition was well organized. The whole power and tradition of privilege were invoked to secure the defeat of the measure. It was not without success that the Unionist Party endeavored to shift the burden of conflict from the tax problem to the constitutional question of whether the House of Lords had the right to reject a money bill. Leagues of protest against the budget were formed. From the beginning to the end of the fight Mr. Fels gave practical expression of his sympathy. He has even been accused of being the chief provider of munitions for the campaign. Although the budget was utterly incomplete from his point of view, he felt that it marked an era in constructive legislation. His liberality made possible the great demonstration in Hyde Park which did as much to revive the determination of the Liberal Ministry as it did to overawe the opponents of the measure.

He sailed for the United States late in 1909 on the eve of the general election in Great Britain. In his own country he spoke everywhere in explanation of the British budget. He was convinced that nothing was so important as to awaken the people to an understanding of what possibilities that measure contained. There have been few elections in British political history, the issue of which has been more significant and upon which the attention of the whole world was more clearly focused, than that of 1910. It returned the Liberals to power with a mandate not only to pass the land clauses of the finance bill, but to end once for all the veto power of the House of Lords. It was the first concerted attack on the leisured class. To Joseph Fels, a democrat, that was not its least achievement.

Social evolution is so long in passing beyond the stage of tribute gathering that it would almost seem that this is established in the natural order of things. At any rate this appears to be the conviction in the minds of the modern industrial community. From the earliest days of the production of wealth there

have been modes by which some of it could be taken without compensation. The savage chief with his band of warriors descended upon a village, killed the men and carried off the women and chattels. With a more extensive and elaborate organization it was found that conquest might be put to more useful purposes. Larger returns were available if the conquered communities were allowed to live and proceed with the work of production. It was now only necessary that a portion of the proceeds should be handed over. While savagery destroyed life outright, barbarism gave the privilege of continued existence in exchange for labor, and this evolutionary stage has lasted with some modifications to the present day.

When William the Conqueror came to England he achieved a very insignificant military object, but brought into play the powers of a most expert political economist. By parcelling out the conquered territory to his followers, he assured the country a thorough-going and efficient rule which centered in allegiance to the throne; the law of rent is infinitely more powerful than the law of arms. In

course of time the nobles came to doubt the validity of the King's first mortgage, but that made no difference so far as the people were concerned. From then till now, England has had the unshaken distinction of possessing a leisured class. Never once has the right to collect tribute from the people been brought into question. As the old families exhausted themselves, the class has been recruited from the multitude of candidates derived from more common clay, but the tribute has gone on without ceasing. It must be a matter of pride to the common people of England that they have always done this duty so nobly and unflinchingly. The result is that the modern community finds it difficult to obtain the means of subsistence because its leisured idols have discovered in modern times so many expensive devices for increasing their comfort and luxury.

As this is one of the most interesting fields of human psychology, it may be well to inquire into the prerogatives of landlordism. That the position is one of power goes almost without saying. The fear of eviction or increased extortion is a potent instrument of con-

trol; in case of urgent need the landlord seldom fails to use it. Even political convictions sometimes feel its influence.

But even more important than the direct relation between the landlord and his retainers is the exalted position which leisure maintains in the eyes of the whole community. Respectability constitutes the certain and unassailable line of intrenchment for the leisured class. The plain fact is that the only completely respectable person is the one who does nothing at all, that is, one who participates in no kind of productive work. In this, parasitism does not suffice, or else paupers and vagabonds would be elevated to high places; but the fact of leisure must be elaborately and expensively advertised. No device can be neglected which may illustrate the fact that one is far removed from any kind of useful work. The principle operates in many curious ways. Clothing of both men and women mounts the social scale just in proportion as it proves that one could not, if one wished, do anything. The elaborate cylinders in which the respectable masculine form encases itself,

no less than the laced and hobbled and high heeled attire of women, are intended to give the impression that life is free from labor. Ideas of cleanliness are to a large extent fictitious and conventional. The laborer is despised not for being dirty but because he works. Clean collars and wristbands are desirable because they show an absence of manual activity. The advertisement of leisure goes so far as to necessitate the existence of a class attendant upon the more exalted, which also participates in the benefits. Leisure, so to speak, spills over. The flunkey must maintain the appearance and demeanor of an individual free from work, at any rate when seen in attendance upon the larger parasite. The greatness of the master is enhanced if butler and footman can also produce the illusion of being great personages. On the other hand, those who toil must never be allowed to forget the fact that they are low. Even servant girls who escape from their servitude for a weekly outing and desire for that short time to make the world believe by dress and manner that they are not working, need to be criticised

and even repressed. The descending scale of respectability manifests many examples of dual personality. Perhaps the most pathetic is that of the clerk. He is under the painful necessity of combining a life of unspeakable drudgery with the appearance of exalted leisure. Practice, however, habituates him, without much psychological difficulty, to put aside top hat and frock coat when attacking his ledgers. Imaginatively he dwells in the world of leisure. This makes him the bulwark of the Conservative party. Other professions that cultivate display of the symbols of leisure are those that depend upon humbug for their success, such as those of law and medicine. There is nothing more valuable than to let your client get the impression that you do not really need his case. The vicarious respectability of the clerk is also seen in shop assistants and waiters. Here the intention is to advertise the greatness of the establishment to which they belong. There must, however, be some show of leisure on the part of the heads. College professors must keep apparent the respectability of their institution as well as of academic



learning which is esteemed in inverse ratio to its utility. Thus respectability shades down in terms of leisure and the pretense of leisure, distinguishing and defining the social classes until the navy is reached, and even he finds the means of impressing his superiority upon somebody else, it may be his wife. The whole system derives from and centers in that apex of the social order, the not inconsiderable group who own the land and therefore the people.

Let it be said again that the persons concerned are not to be blamed. The rent roll for them is an inexorable determinant of their existence. Often a lad leaves Oxford with an imagination stimulated by the world he faces and resentful that life can never have for him the flavor of a great adventure, that his hands can never know the joy of making and shaping things. The scheme of things determined his course from the day he was born, and not many years are needed to settle him in acquiescence and maintenance of the system. The class is of course being constantly increased by the possessors of newly made fortunes. Their admission to the ranks of leis-

ure is for some time resented, but the economic factor on which the whole scheme rests is all determining, and no rich man can be for long excluded in spite of the vulgarity which his wealth derives from recent contact with labor.

It is refreshing to know at least one rich man who played the rôle badly. Joseph Fels was never able to see that the humanity beneath a greasy engineer's suit was essentially different from his own. He could never bring himself to believe that it did not matter whether poor children were fed or not. He knew that if these people had their due there would be no great fortunes to expend on carriages, flunkeys, great houses, expensive dress and charitable subscriptions. Directness of vision and honesty of principle made impossible for him participation in the great masquerade. Behind the array of conventional pretense he recognized the sordid form of the world's greatest injustice. A leisured class rides upon the backs of the poor. The community which displays great luxury displays a corresponding degree of privation; the counterpart of the palace is the hovel. To enable any individual

to flaunt his leisure, numbers are doomed to grinding toil. Confronted with this situation, the course of an honest man is simple. One accepts the situation or one does not. Joseph Fels did not.

## XII

### Personal Propaganda

**T**HE great value of the budget for Mr. Fels was that its principle when fully applied would give opportunity to those desiring work and would force the leisured into some useful occupation, would mark, as he said, "the greatest national industrial revival that the world has ever witnessed." For leisure is retained through the monopolization of resources that rightly used would be communal. "The tax," he told an audience in Portland, "will be taken off industry and thrift and labor, all of which will be stimulated. Monopoly will be taxed out of existence, for all monopoly is founded on land. Competition will be free . . . the leisured classes are against the land tax reform because it will destroy their monopoly in land." He explained how the trusts of the United States would be affected by such a measure. "There is the oil trust.

If it had to pay taxes on its great oil and gas fields at their real value, and not just as waste lands, how long would it hold them out of the market unproductively? It would produce all the oil it could sell, and the kerosene would be cheap to the poor man and gasoline to the automobile owner. The trust would have to sell the lands it was unable to use, and there would no longer be a monopoly in oil."

That the working out of the budget was a failure Mr. Fels would have been the first to admit. The reason of that failure seemed to him sufficiently simple. When the administration of its principles came to be applied, there was a lack of courage for which he had scarcely been prepared. "He is not really a land-tax man," he wrote of Mr. Lloyd George three years later, when early in 1913 the conclusions of the latter's Land Enquiry Committee were published. Mr. Lloyd George, in his view, failed at the critical moment to apply consistently the principles in which he had declared his belief. He so framed the details of the measure as to make possible endless delay and litigation. Mr. Fels himself would

have had no agreement on valuation or references to a court. The assessment would have been made once and for all by government experts without what he called "the fanatical appeal to a court prejudiced beforehand" against the effort the budget was intended to further. It was to him a disappointment that so fair a promise should have issued in so meager a fulfillment.

Whatever disappointment he felt was lost in the activities which made more and more demands on his time. Any chronological record of his movements after 1909 becomes practically impossible. Roughly, it is true to say that half the year was spent by him in England and half in America. But there were two long Continental visits when he braved the difficulties of language and tried to stimulate the organization of the Single Tax movement in Denmark, France, Sweden, Germany, Italy and Spain. In 1909-10, he toured through most of the Middle West of the United States. In the following winter he was speaking through the Southern States. In 1911-12, he toured through Canada and the

Far West. His time was filled with tireless activity. He wrote countless letters, considered schemes of propaganda, visited anyone from whom there was the hope of assistance. He did not hesitate to expose himself to rebuff if he felt that eventually he might be able to effect some good. He even approached Mr. Carnegie twice in a single year trying, of course vainly, to convince that unsparing philanthropist that his right hand was endeavoring to re-erect what his left hand had destroyed. He attended congresses, meetings, lectures, debates. He sought out the prominent men of any town he visited, and attempted their conversion. He denounced the rich, including himself, unsparingly. "We can't get rich," he told a Chicago audience, "under present conditions, without robbing somebody. I have done it; you are doing it now, and I am still doing it. But I am proposing to spend the money to wipe out the system by which I made it." This speech created no small sensation and he was asked for an explanation of his remarks; but he had nothing to explain. Under a system which

placed a premium on economic exploitation, it was simply impossible for a man to make money on a large scale by fair competition. "People listen to me," he told an interviewer, "when I say this, because I am a rich man. Many a poor man has said exactly the same thing and suffered imprisonment for sedition."

Instances abound of remarkable events on these tours. In London for instance he persuaded a famous American statesman to visit the offices of the United Committee, and the interview Mr. Fels wrote to a friend is not without interest.

"I consider him," he wrote, "an ignoramus on our question and think he is working too much on the preaching track to be an open-eyed public man. I went to see him at Claridge's Hotel and talked with him for about an hour and a half. He knows nothing about the land question or, at any rate does not show it by his talk. Finally, as he said Tom L. Johnson insisted that he should see John Paul, I took him to the office of our United Committee the next morning. . . . After a little general talk, Orr asked a couple of questions. The first he tried



to answer, but got so mixed that he jumped up, grabbed the telephone, called up the hotel and asked to be connected with his wife's room, when he inquired of her whether the man had come and then said he would be there in fifteen minutes. He thereupon jumped up, shook hands with all of us and slipped out." It is not difficult to understand why Mr. Fels refused to be bound by the ordinary ties of political association.

An incident in a budget meeting is not without interest. A discussion on the Single Tax had taken place and questions were asked. The following interlude occurred.

"Major-General," who occupied a front seat and had followed the procedure with close interest, said, "Gentlemen, to get the matter through, I am a proprietor of some waste land, and I would like to know what to do with it. I don't think it would be right to tax it."

MR. HEMMERDE: "What sort of waste land?"

GENERAL: "Land of no value."

MR. HEMMERDE: "If it is of no value then the tax would not hit it."

GENERAL: "I understood that you proposed that all land should be taxed."

MR. HEMMERDE said he knew of a case of waste land rated at 4s and 5s an acre and when the town

bought it, they had to pay £1,000 per acre. They would like to know if this piece of waste land had any ratable value.

GENERAL: "No, it does not produce anything."

MR. HEMMERDE: "Could it produce anything?"

GENERAL: "No. I want to know what to do with it. I understood you proposed that the whole of the land should be taxed."

MR. HEMMERDE: "Certainly."

GENERAL: "And that all land has a value."

MR. FELS: "Would you give it to anyone who wanted it?"

GENERAL: "No."

MR. HEMMERDE: "We could get the surveyor of taxes to put a value on it."

GENERAL: "I would say it was valueless. It does not produce anything."

MR. HEMMERDE: "It must have some value, or you would not wish to keep it."

GENERAL: "I like to look at it." [Laughter.]

MR. FELS: "Suppose someone else was prepared to do something to get . . . looking at it, would you let them have it?"

GENERAL: "No."

MR. FELS: "May I ask whether you have ever received an offer for the land?"

GENERAL: "No."

MR. FELS: "Would you take £1 an acre for it?"

GENERAL: "No. It doesn't produce anything. I don't want to part with it."

MR. FELS: "Would you take £2 an acre?"

GENERAL: "I don't want to sell it."

MR. FELS: "Would you take £5 an acre for a plot in the center of it?"

GENERAL: "I don't want to sell it."

MR. FELS: "Would you take £20?"

GENERAL: "I don't want to sell it. I like to look at it."

MR. FELS: "Then it has a value." [Loud laughter.]

There could hardly have been an apter illustration of what the budget was to effect.

Almost equally characteristic was a letter to a wealthy American who wrote criticising his propaganda. The American may be named Brown.

My dear Brown:

I have held yours until I cooled down, because there are some things in it that are not fair to yourself. My state of mind has cooled; here is what I have to say, not from the rich man to his fellow rich man, but from the naked Joseph Fels to the naked John Brown.

You freely say that the economic philosophy of Henry George is a practical and just method of taxation and deserves the support of all right-minded men, and that the introduction of the Single Tax is one of the greatest tasks to be undertaken.

You then go on to say that you would like to help me more, but cannot except at times by writing upon the subject, because, being no longer a young man, you have not the power and strength that you had in bygone days. You also refer to other responsibilities which, you tell me, "weigh heavily upon you."

You wind up this particular paragraph of your letter by saying that the Lloyd George Insurance Bill absorbs you.

The above are your reasons for not helping financially, though what your age and interest in the Insurance Bill have to do with the matter, I cannot conceive.

Now let us see where the responsibility of age and the Insurance Bill will defeat the thing you freely acknowledge as one of the best in the world. You are a millionaire, have always been a millionaire, so far as I know, and perhaps as long as you can remember. You live, when in London, at a swell hotel, keep a motor car, private secretary, and other more or less useful adjuncts to a rich man, including the hob-nobbing with other rich men, which, of course, means a large expenditure of money. In New York you live at the —— Hotel, as you tell me, which, I take it, means \$100 a week. You perhaps spend in luxuries \$50,000. To you they may not be luxuries because you have never known anything else, but they are luxuries to me, and to others who have a conception of the right use of money.

You got your money—as I freely acknowledge I got mine—through one or other of the various monopolies and special privileges. You play with the matter of charity and philanthropy, and try to comfort your immortal soul and stifle your conscience with the idea that you are doing something. Well! you are. You are making matters worse, and it won't matter much to the world in general. . . .

Now I am looking for millionaires, and I prefer American millionaires. I want each one of them to

put up \$100,000 a year to help free men, and make such as you and myself impossible. . . .

My dear Brown, had you not better tear the veil from your eyes? It is a simple process. Just look at yourself in the clear light of truth and personal responsibility. I am fully aware that this letter may lose me an acquaintance, but I am not pleading for you to help *me*. I am pleading for you to help *men*.

To Mr. Carnegie the first letter, of June 21, 1910, is as follows:

Andrew Carnegie, Esq.,  
Skibo Castle, N. B.

My dear Sir:

An item in the enclosed paper has just caught my eye. Are the statements therein correct? If so, your memory is a little short, you and I having met some five years ago at Charing Cross Station by appointment, as I was then anxious to interest you in the farm labor colony movement here which I was then promoting. I need hardly say that I was promoting that movement to create land hunger, and not because I considered the establishment of such colonies a cure for the poverty question!

Taking it for granted that you are correctly reported, I plead guilty to the charge that my object is nothing more nor less than the Single Tax according to the Henry George philosophy; but it is not in a resuscitated form at all, as Henry George was never more alive than at present, even though no longer with us in the flesh.

I am glad to note that you knew George, and that you appreciated his integrity. I hope, however, you are not correctly reported in the statement that you could never see anything but absurdity in the Single Tax, for I have heretofore given you credit for having brains of quite an unusual character.

I have no doubt that George was highly appreciative of the fact that you told him his philosophy was impossible of being carried out in the States, but am equally sure he did not agree with you, as we have carried the fight for his philosophy into one of the States of the Union where the American farmer predominates, and, in my opinion, we shall have a large measure of the Single Tax in that State in 1912 — I refer to Oregon, which is really as important as an agricultural State as Iowa, which you are reported to have said that George invaded, but that his views were so ridiculed by the people as to cause him to conclude that his campaign was useless. I don't believe this, either! No work done anywhere at any time for furthering the cause of economic freedom was ever hopeless; and you—of all men—should know this, seeing that you have done so much to make it hopeless, without succeeding in breaking down the courage of the common people.

I do not doubt that your hobby lies in free libraries, though these "free" libraries are perhaps not so free as you would like to believe, as all I know of are a permanent charge on the local rates, and, to this extent, are not free, but are a noose around the necks of the common people, for which they will yet rise and curse you—indeed, they have in many cases already done so.

I do not doubt that, during the money panic in New York, you could have made an extra \$50,000,000, but I can hardly be asked to respect your reason for not making it! Somebody else probably made it, and did his share towards further choking the freedom of the people!

Your frank expression of want of sympathy for the so-called submerged tenth is in keeping with the balance of the statements in the enclosed article. Of course, you have little sympathy with the submerged tenth. Indeed, I do not know of anyone who has expressed his soft impeachment of your sentiments in this connection, and I am confirmed in this by the fact that you have done so much during your life to submerge so large a proportion of the tenth. I am, too, not insensible to your sympathy with the swimming tenth, who, as you say, are striving to help themselves; but this is only carrying out your own philosophy, as you belong to the swimming tenth of those who have risen on the backs of their fellows.

Natural laws do, in the end, control such matters, as you well say, but they control them in quite a different way from that which you are so much in the habit of propagating.

You make an absolute mis-statement, however, in saying that the deserving rise out of their poverty, and save their own respect from the mire. Are you not really talking through your hat in making such a mis-statement, when you, as a man long immersed in monopoly and special privilege, must know that the submerged tenth (indeed in Great Britain, the submerged third) is submerged by monopoly and special privilege; I refer especially to land monopoly.

Just recall a portion of your own life, and the thousands—yea, tens of thousands!—of men, women and children you have done so much to submerge; recall the Homestead strikes, and the hundreds of labor wars in which you and your companies were, and are still, engaged!

You will answer this by saying that you are no longer in business; but that is hardly a correct way of putting it, seeing that you converted your monopolies into 5 per cent. bonds, and still draw your interest from the sufferings of men, women and children. The fact that you have made 50 or 100 men of your own build millionaires merely adds to the agony by spreading the suffering, and the only way you can remedy the matter is to stop spreading suffering by putting your money and great abilities to the task of destroying the power of one man, or set of men, to stamp under foot the liberty and free will of thousands of other men.

The economic philosophy of Henry George is now a living issue in the world—and not an inconsequential exhibit of it—and in last year's British Budget, the land valuation clauses may even touch your own pocket through Skibo Castle and all the enterprises or investments in which you may have an interest in Great Britain.

In conclusion, I am writing you this letter direct, instead of spreading it in the pages of newspapers, and I do so in the hope that you will write me fearlessly and frankly; and, if I have made a single charge in this letter which is not well within the truth, I will personally apologize to you and withdraw the part that is untrue.

Yours very truly,  
(Signed)    JOSEPH FELS.



The second letter was sent six months later, shortly after Mr. Carnegie had made his gift of ten million dollars to the International Peace Foundation. Mr. Fels wrote to him and pointed out what he conceived to be the fatal effects of the method of peace propaganda pursued by Mr. Carnegie. "You have given," he wrote, "ten million dollars to an international peace fund. The object is worthy. The donor's intentions are good. But a worthy object and a good intention cannot alone make a gift a real benefaction. Donations, no matter how large, to suppress evils, no matter how great, can accomplish nothing unless they should be used to remove the fundamental cause of the evils.

"Aggressive warfare is always the result of what appears to be an economic necessity. The last great war, that between Russia and Japan, will serve as an illustration. These two nations fought over the possession of Korea. Russia wanted Korea because she feels the need of a seaport accessible all the year round, that she may be able to export and import merchandise freely without being both-

ered with any tariff restrictions other than those of her own making. Japan felt that her independence would be threatened — that is, she realized that her refusal to trade freely with the rest of the world would create a temptation for other nations sufficiently strong to deprive her of independence.

“If conditions of absolute international free trade had prevailed, Russia would no more have felt the lack of an accessible seaport than does the State of Ohio. If Japan maintained no custom houses, the power that would try to rob her of her independence would have nothing to gain and very much to lose. Henry George made this clear in his *Protection or Free Trade*.

“‘What,’ he wrote, ‘are the real substantial advantages of this Union of ours? Are they not summed up in the absolute freedom of trade which it secures, and the community of interests that grows out of this freedom? If our states were fighting each other with hostile tariffs and a citizen could not cross a state boundary line without having his baggage searched, or a book printed in New York could

not be sent across the river to Jersey City until duty was paid, how long would our Union last, or what would it be worth? The true benefits of our Union, the true basis of the interstate peace it secures, is that it has prevented the establishment of state tariffs, and given us free trade over the better part of a continent.'

"The 'need of foreign markets' which is so frequently used as an argument to justify wars of criminal aggression is a 'need' that would not be felt if the aggressing nation enforced justice at home. Our own war in the Philippines would not have received popular indorsement but for the false hopes of 'new foreign markets' held out to commercial interests. This bait was held out and was swallowed, in spite of the fact that potential new markets exist here at home.

"The unemployed and partially employed population and the underpaid workers form a potential market far greater than any war of conquest could secure. To secure this new market, labor need but be given access to the natural resources now withheld by private mo-

nopolists. The vacant and the partially used city lots, and the valuable mining and agricultural lands held out of use for speculation, are causing poverty, unemployment, and low wages. The result is under-consumption of manufactured products, which manufacturers and merchants are bamboozled into believing can be relieved by forcing the people of weaker nations to purchase.

“Then again, the interests which dragged the United States into the disgraceful Philippine adventure would not and could not have succeeded in doing so, had not the existence of land monopoly at home made it evident that the same institution would surely be continued by our government in the Philippines.

“Will the Carnegie fund be used to any extent in abolishing land monopoly, thus checking any possible repetition of successful appeals to commercial cupidity in support of land-grabbing schemes abroad? Hardly.

“A gift of ten millions to secure relief from malaria in a swampy district, which could not be used to secure the draining of the swamps, or the destruction of the mosquitoes would be

just as effective as your peace donation.”

It goes without saying that Mr. Fels' advice was disregarded; we cannot even find that his letter received a reply. Perhaps, as he suggested, he had made a proposal too radical even for a retired millionaire. But it was not only with the powerful that his enormous correspondence in these years concerned itself. He received every day scores of letters offering suggestions, criticising, cursing, requesting information. The first he considered always with a courteous attention. To the criticisms he replied for the most part in an amusingly optimistic vein. Those who cursed were amply repaid in their own coin; Joseph Fels never hesitated to tell any man in full and plain terms exactly what he thought of him. To those who asked for information he always replied in elaborate detail, and a separate packet of literature, with a copy of *Progress and Poverty* would, as a rule, accompany his reply. His ideas and views were embodied in many short articles and public letters. It was his habit never to let any occasion pass when the theory of the Single Tax could be driven

home. A housing bill was proposed; he would urge that the present assessment on improvements simply penalized the tenant. A park was presented to some neighborhood; he would point out the benefit it conferred on the landlords of the locality. One grows almost bewildered at the multifarious and incessant activities he undertook. He arranged, at one time, that every elector in Great Britain should receive a bundle of Single Tax literature. He attended practically every Trade Union Congress from 1909 to distribute leaflets to the members. He gave evidence to the land committee of the Labor Party. He went to radical congresses of every kind in the hope that they might be turned to good use. If a friend started a journal of any description, he clamored to be allowed to explain his cause therein. It mattered nothing that the purpose of the paper was different from, even on occasion, antipathetic to the Single Tax. If the purpose was different, then his article would introduce a little variety; and if it was antipathetic the editor could point out his errors in a leader.

Two characteristic tales may be told in this connection: In 1910 Mr. Fels persuaded Tom L. Johnson, the famous mayor of Cleveland, and a close friend, to pay a visit to him in England. While they were there, Johnson noticed that a Free Trade Congress of all nations was to be held in Antwerp, and the idea occurred to Mr. Fels of using it for propaganda purposes. To receive credentials from the American Free Trade League was the matter only of a cable. Mr. Fels took over a band of thirty stalwarts, eager to declare their enthusiasm for a Free Trade that went far beyond the ideals of most of its professed adherents at Antwerp. At first, the Congress was adamant to his insistence that the Single Tax was merely the logical development of Free Trade ideas; it could not hear him. Then procedural objections were urged. No place had been set for him in the program — were he to speak, all arrangements would be upset. The myriad official difficulties were coldly set before him. But Mr. Fels was not thus easily daunted. A tribute was to be paid to Richard Cobden—Cobden who, seeing the land-hunger of Eng-

land had declared his belief in Free Trade in land. Mr. Fels saw his opportunity. No more enthusiastic appreciation of Cobden was paid than his, but it combined also, and skilfully, a eulogy of Henry George as the man who had logically carried out Cobden's conclusions. And no member left the Congress without ample literature upon the subject. "It was the best piece of work I have yet done," he wrote to a friend, "we came near to stampeding the Convention. I feel pretty sure that Henry George was never so near coming into his own as now—in any country. It is the struggle of the century, and the most inspiring struggle, too."

His other exploit was suggested by the Antwerp adventure. An International Conference on Unemployment was held in Paris in September, 1910, and Mr. Fels, with a large box of literature, freely distributed later, was in attendance. The conference was divided into three sections, on the statistics of unemployment, on labor exchange, and on unemployment insurance. He spoke at length in all three. In the first, he urged that the time



had passed when they need bother about the actual extent of unemployment. The age tended to choke itself in a series of "spluttering investigations" which resulted in nothing save satisfaction to the investigators. They knew that there was serious unemployment; that was sufficient to make them anxious to get ahead. He objected to labor exchanges and to unemployment insurance because they were beginning the problem at the wrong end; they assumed the inevitability of unemployment and then attempted its minimization. He was not content with that. He assumed that it could be prevented by the adoption of the Single Tax. Then the Conference heard some bitter home-truths about satisfaction with palliatives. He ended by an appeal for converts to his crusade. He wrote of this Conference to a friend: "Of course you will know what I had to say on these things. I take it we cannot do better, wherever possible, than by attending all such conferences and showing those assembled the utter futility of palliative measures, and the absolute necessity of attacking unemployment at its base. I do not think

I ever before felt more bitter against a set of well-dressed, well-fed people who did not know what they were talking about, and I imparted as much bitterness to what I said as I knew how." He accomplished something more on this journey than mere skirmishing. "The most interesting incident of my Paris trip was that I had to inaugurate the first Single Tax League in France. . . . The fact that the Physiocrats before the great Revolution enunciated what practically became the Henry George philosophy made it peculiarly interesting." Then followed a characteristic thought: "Whenever you have an odd ten minutes to spare, write Georges Darien, the secretary of the new League, an encouraging letter; perhaps Eggleston or some other of the chaps will do it too." It was this initiation of comradeship in the movement which was not the least valuable of Joseph Fels' gifts to it.

It was to this friend, Mr. U'Ren of Oregon, that Mr. Fels wrote a letter that deserves reproduction in full, because nothing shows more clearly the trend of his political thought

at this time. It makes clear, too, how intensely he felt upon this subject:

“You were very good,” he wrote, “to write me so fully and freely on your opinion of my contentions as to the open agitation of our question in all its baldness. No one I can recall could have done it better, or been more patient about it. Thank you from the very bottom of my heart. You’re one who, seeing the justice of things in its right relations, gives his friend of his plenty, and opens his own reservoir of knowledge freely for his friend’s guidance. I value what you write to me, and it will serve me well in the work to which I have consecrated my life — I say consecrated, for so I consider devotion to the high and noble cause in which we find ourselves engaged. Surely no nobler or greater has yet crossed the horizon of the thinker, or the saint or sinner. Happily, too, one lives in an atmosphere which is not poisoned by fear of the stake or guillotine these days, though intolerance and ignorance and slavishness to opinion still find lodgment in the breasts of millions of people.

One often thinks these are equally bad, considering the high state of civilization to which we are supposed to have attained.

“Your letter gives one to think. I’ll keep it by me for a time — then I’ll make duplicates and submit them to a number of our colleagues. Perhaps, by and by, others will come up to the point of seeing the vision you outline; it is an alluring dream for the present. But who shall say that dreams which hold the germ of substantiality, as this one *does*, are impossible of materialization, even in the short span of our own lives? In considering this thing, I have taken on a new lease of life, and hope, and assurance. And so, though I have set myself to seeing human freedom as an established fact, in one or more lands, during the next twenty years, I am much inclined to wipe out the time limit, and to declare boldly, ‘I’ll see human freedom.’

“The mere hint of the prospect has given me greater happiness during the last three years than I can recall of the previous 53. There, you have my age.

“The suggestion you outline for Pennsyl-

vania is most alluring — Pennsylvania, my own State. It is a thing well worth the doing — no, the trying to do, even though one may not see it done. Perhaps (who knows?) I may find other men who will also see the vision to help with their purses. There are more and more devoted souls, who are glad to give themselves, coming to the front daily, hourly. There are few men given to view this great work going on in so many countries as I am. It all makes me very humble and very thankful. I'm sure you understand.

“I seem to have completely changed in the last three years in many directions. Perhaps this is caused by my earnest effort to see through the eyes of other men, of other nations, with other viewpoints than mine. I believe I am more patient with the opinions of others, and perhaps, too, the vision has enlarged.

“It is in my plan to go and see you at your work-bench, in your own shop and among your own people. A man is seen more clearly in his own environment, and I am hoping to leave for the West early in December. I must get

up to a number of the Canadian towns, certainly Toronto, Winnipeg, and Vancouver. I am promising myself to raise hell, and part of the \$10,000 Kiefer is still praying for, to round off his work. It may amount to preying for it, but I don't mind that. It is simply robbing in a good cause."

## XIII

### The Fels Fund Commission

UNTIL the beginning of 1909, that is, for the first four years of his connection with the Single Tax movement, Mr. Fels was content to work through the different organizations already in existence. He helped them time and again with funds, speeches, articles. Yet he was not altogether satisfied with their activity. The conviction grew upon him that the movement suffered seriously from decentralization and disconnectedness. It seemed to bear no obvious relation to movements akin to itself. It had economic, but not political significance. This, of course, was true mainly of the United States; in Great Britain the purpose of the United Committee had been the steady permeation of political parties. But in America, particularly since the death of Henry George, though Single Taxers had not lost any of their enthusiasm, Mr. Fels felt very

keenly that they had lost much of their direction. The movement tended to expend itself in the reading of papers, in colonization experiments, in social functions at which Single Taxers might discuss a coming golden age, which, for the most part, they did little or nothing to forward. The movement, in fact, seemed to have decreased both in vitality and in force. People in the United States did not discuss its principles as they had done in George's lifetime. Single Taxers were as prominent in opposition to socialism as they were in the advocacy of their own doctrine. Early in 1908, Mr. Fels began seriously to cast about for means to put a stop to what he called "the possibility of economic and intellectual dry-rot." Mr. Bolton Hall provided him with the opportunity he desired.

Early in January, 1909, Mr. Hall wrote to Mr. Fels and asked his assistance in a colonization movement in which he was interested. To that letter Mr. Fels replied from London as follows:

"Your letter regarding the use of the 'little lands' has just reached me, and I believe



it is a move in the right direction. For my part, I am a sincere believer in the taxation of land values, and while this 'little land' proposition of yours is not the most direct means to 'get back to land,' it works in that direction. Anything that creates land hunger must of necessity put before the public the unreasonableness of our present system of taxation, and the certainty that it must be reformed.

"And because of my belief that the time is ripe to spread information on land reform in general, you may draw on me for an advance of \$5,000 in that behalf, and I will agree to donate \$25,000 each successive year for the next five years towards a propaganda, provided others can be found to give an equal amount each year. In other words, I will spend \$125,000 altogether, to be under the charge of a committee of land reformers, provided others will contribute likewise.

"You can make the movement so broad that men like Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan, Mr. Andrew Carnegie, Mr. James J. Hill, and other equally conservative men can stand with us on the same platform."

This letter is the origin of the Joseph Fels Fund Commission of America. Mr. Hall showed the offer to a group of friends and they founded the organization which now bears Mr. Fels' name. An advisory committee, to which George Foster Peabody, Louis F. Post, then editor of *The Public* and now Assistant Secretary of Labor in Mr. Wilson's administration, Bolton Hall, Henry George, Jr., then a member of Congress, and Bishop Williams gave their adherence, was formed. In addition to this committee was the actual working Committee entrusted with the control and disposal of the Fund. To this belonged Jackson H. Ralston, Lincoln Steffens, most militant of American radicals, Frederic C. Howe, now Commissioner of Immigration in New York, and then in the famous "cabinet" of Tom L. Johnson, and Mr. George A. Briggs. Daniel Kiefer, probably, as Mr. Fels once said, the "most efficient mendicant in the United States," was appointed its chairman.

Two things must be emphasized. The Commission attached, despite his protest, Mr. Fels' name to its work, because they believed

that his position in the business world of America would give them a standing of practical importance. Mr. Fels himself neither in its origin nor at any other time played any part in the control or direction of the fund. He refused even to form part of the advisory committee. He preferred then as always to remain a freelance in the movement entirely unconnected with any organization. He stood to the Fund in no relation other than that of an important contributor who sympathized with its objects and always deeply admired the work it was able to achieve. He was, of course, often enough consulted on the plans of the Commission, though as often as not, he would refuse possibly to fetter its members by offering counsel. He simply stood to it from the outset in the relation of an interested spectator who cared profoundly for its success. Nor was he disappointed in his hopes of what it would achieve.

The plans the Commission set before itself in the first year of its activity were commendably large. It assisted largely the progressive movement in Oregon which, under the leader-

ship of Mr. W. S. U'Ren, seemed likely to do work of permanent democratic value. Mr. U'Ren was promoting a Single Tax measure in that State and the Commission felt that they could do no finer work than assist it. Similarly, did they help in Rhode Island where, under Mr. Garvin, the Single Tax forces were highly organized, and in Missouri where the atmosphere was akin to, though less developed than, that of Oregon. A Press Bureau on an extensive scale was established which not only distributed material to a large number of radical journals, but also constituted a bureau of information in regard to the land problem all over the world. A depot of literature was created which distributed books and pamphlets, mainly free of cost, all over the United States. Publications either definitely or largely Single Tax were assisted in various ways. A beginning was made of what is now a remarkably complete directory of Single Taxers all over the world, a list which has proved of invaluable service as a means of propaganda, and must be of unique utility in any political movement. Experts were sent

out to work up special districts. Arrangements were made to supply clubs and organizations of every kind with speakers thoroughly acquainted with the economic philosophy of Henry George.

From the very first, in fact, the Commission served, as it now serves in an increasing degree, as the clearing-house of the whole movement. It gave the Single Tax a national status by providing it with a national organization. It focused the activities of the Single Taxers and then reflected them outwards where they could prove of the greatest service. In its mere collection of funds to match the money subscribed by Mr. Fels, it probably penetrated into quarters where the Single Tax had never before been known. For the first time it endeavored to distribute literature not only on an enormously wide scale, but in a thoroughly complete and scientific manner. The fundamental thing was the spread of Mr. George's own books. To this end, the Commission arranged for the publication of cheap editions of his works. At Mr. Fels' suggestion translations of *Progress and Poverty* into

Italian, Bulgarian, Swedish, Yiddish and Chinese were arranged. The machinery of Congress was skilfully utilized in conjunction with Mr. Henry George, Junior, to effect an enormous distribution of Mr. George's *Protection or Free Trade* exactly at that psychological moment when the revision of the tariff was being everywhere discussed. Nor was this all. It was realized that if the movement was to make an adequate appeal, regard must be had to the variety of men's interests. Some men were farmers, some manufacturers, some engaged in the process of distribution, a large number were wage-earners. Each naturally desired to understand the relation of the movement to his own special problems. For each, therefore, in addition to the large mass of purely general literature, a special series of reports began to be issued. The relation of Single Tax to farming, to manufacturing industries, to the wage problem, to trade unionism, were specially studied and short, pithy pamphlets published upon them. At the end of its first year's work, the Commission could fairly claim that at no time since Mr. George

himself had taken charge of the propaganda, had the movement been so widely discussed or so generally appreciated.

The Commission, as was natural, did not fail to meet with criticisms, and it is but right to explain Mr. Fels' relation to them. It was complained to him that the Single Tax movement was essentially a democratic movement, that he had had no right thus to foster the establishment of an autocratic and self-appointed body. His reply to this was sufficiently simple. The need of the kind of body his gift had brought into being was daily becoming more apparent. Every organization began by a number of men agreeing to foster certain aims and so had the Joseph Fels Commission commenced. As to its autocratic character, Mr. Fels was never very seriously concerned. It was, as he again and again pointed out to his complainants, always open to receive suggestions; and the main thing was efficiency. When its actual work was complained of, it would be time to discuss its methods and character. To a similar complaint that "his" Fund had no right to divert to itself all the funds

of the movement, Mr. Fels replied that there could be no greater test of the popular appreciation of its merit. "People," he told one such critic, "give either because they like what the Fund is doing or because they sympathize with the way it is doing it. No one gives to anything just because he wants to get rid of his money." Nor did he pay much heed to those who complained of the broad basis upon which the Commission had been established. Some complained of subsidies to papers not entirely Single Tax in their character. Others thought that the Commission had no right to divert its funds to movements like the Initiative and Referendum movement. Mr. Fels had no sympathy with either of these attitudes. He did not like papers that were solely Single Tax in outlook because he knew by hard experience that they preach only to the converted. He preferred to support an ably conducted radical journal which had an outlook sufficiently Single Tax to make its readers understand the potentialities of the movement. This, indeed, was the reason why the Commission particularly chose out *The Public* as



its organ. Courageously sustained and brilliantly edited by Mr. and Mrs. Post for many years, the paper had, as Mr. Fels put it, "the real root of the matter"; and if people read a radical comment from the Georgian standpoint on the problems in which they were interested, their sympathy was far more likely to be won than by a journal for the object of which they had at the outset no affection. "It isn't business," he wrote in his practical way, "there won't be readers, and there won't be advertisements." Time has shown that he was not mistaken in that judgment.

He believed, too, intensely in the promotion of the Initiative and Referendum. Together they constituted a formidable weapon against the holders of monopoly. Often enough it was the constitutional expedient necessary to secure the passage of a Single Tax measure. In that event, it was as he thought, the necessary incident of the ideal, and he supported it with all the enthusiasm at his command. Indeed, to him the Initiative and Referendum were measures fundamental to any democracy. Their absence was due mainly,

as he conceived, either to fear or to distrust of the common people, and both of those sentiments appeared to him entirely without basis in fact. It seemed to him the merest stupidity not to trust the people. Confidence enough and to spare had been placed in the benevolence of an aristocracy and the sense of a legislature's responsibility, and in both events they had proved to be misplaced. He urged continually that no finer check than these existed upon the possibility of legislative misdemeanor.

Of one curious type of criticism a word may be said, and it is his own word. When he began to devote large sums of money to the Single Tax, he was criticized by the capitalist press in an amusing variety of ways. Sometimes it appeared that he was supporting an exploded fallacy. Sometimes he was told, as in a famous New York paper, that he had, like Mr. Carnegie, grown tired of his wealth and had chosen what he deemed the most fit method of its restoration. Point was supposed to be given to this type of comment by his own remark that he, in common with every

wealthy man, was virtually a robber, since he had battered on the monopoly the law had enabled him to maintain. A paragraph, "The wicked wealth of Mr. Fels," gave him the occasion for a pointed reply.

"I believe," he wrote, "as I said in my speech, that the fortunes acquired by many people, are largely due to unjust economic conditions, and from the moral point of view, these conditions are responsible for what is practically a system of robbery. You say that it is 'impossible to work up complete sympathy with the moral distress of Mr. Fels. He can divest himself of his stolen goods if he so much wishes, and thus re-establish his soul-cleanliness.' But surely this would solve no problem, nor remove the cause of distress from any sympathetic mind. No efforts of mine can repair the mischief which is wrought by the unjust distribution of wealth. I cannot discover the men, women, and children who have been wronged by being deprived of what they have produced with hard and exacting labor. Even if I could discover them, and if I were to restore to them the wealth, or a small part of the

wealth of which they have been unjustly deprived, they would offer gratitude to which I have no just claim, because the wealth was not really mine. This relationship would be bad for them and bad for me. There is only one method, therefore, of curing the evils that spring from the unjust distribution of wealth, and that is by putting a stop to the injustice.

“In your editorial you associate me with Mr. Carnegie, who has gained a world-wide reputation as a philanthropist, and thus suggest that his motives and mine, in discussing this subject, are the same. There is a mistake here. There is a clear distinction between our motives as well as our methods. Mr. Carnegie has generously endowed universities and libraries for the better education of working-people. I appreciate such work, but I would point out that this is not what the working-people are most in need of at the present moment. There are hundreds of thousands of well-educated men in Europe and America who cannot get reasonable scope for the application of their labor. The land of this world in some shape or other is the subject on which

every man must exercise his labor. Much of the land is held up by private individuals against the men who are willing to use it; and for more of it men have to pay too high prices or rent. The result is that we have vast armies of unemployed men in every civilized country. I venture to affirm that, whether as a matter of business or of justice, what these men require is not more education, but more freedom of access to land. The education they have received is rendered useless, and they are denied opportunity of developing and educating themselves further.

“I object to land being held out of use as it is, under the laws of most countries. This policy prevents men from helping themselves, and forces them into the miserable and humiliating position of accepting and soliciting charity. I object further to land being used by one man as a means of exacting from another part of his earnings. A tax on land values according to the principles of Henry George would bring the land into use and enable the tax authorities to exempt buildings and improvements from the burdens that now fall

upon them. This system would abolish poverty by stopping that form of legal robbery for which the laws of the country are responsible. I am willing to spend money to introduce this system; I invite others to join me. It is a more reasonable task to do what one can to prevent the waste and ruin of human life and happiness than to stand by while men are broken, even if we attend with bandages and ointment to bind up their wounds. This movement has taken root and is growing rapidly in the United States, in Great Britain, in Canada, in the leading European countries and in Australasia. In a few years we shall realize a large measure of our aims."

There is no more succinct statement of the Single Tax. The Commission was simply his commentary on its aims.

## XIV

### Educational Experiments and Suffrage

**I**N all his activities toward betterment, Mr. Fels proceeded upon the principle that a necessary condition to mental and moral improvement is the re-arrangement of the physical conditions of life. As the old Physiocrats maintained that culture is historically derived in its various forms from types of physical environment, and civilization a consequence of geographical conditions, so there are those who believe that the making of the individual man or woman is conditioned, not so much by the artificial environment of class-room and textbooks, as by the environment of physical things and conditions found in early childhood; it is through dealing with conditions of real importance and interacting with a world whose significance is vital that any learning worth the while must be derived.

At various times Mr. Fels endeavored to secure a larger measure of instruction and practice in gardening for the children, believing as he did in the unlimited possibilities of the soil in making men and women. As in most other cases during that period, he was before his time. The authorities were quite willing to be given financial assistance, to be applied as they thought best. They would give no grant and almost no facilities for gardening, believing that nature study was quite sufficient. Nature study at that time, as indeed at present, consisted in the Council Schools, of little more than producing before children a few flowers, twigs, leaves and tadpoles, with possibly a dove, rabbit or guinea-pig kept in confinement in the class-room. While the silent pressure of industry makes itself felt even in the infants' class, and especially in the growing provision for manual and technical training, those occupations which deal more directly with nature, which are vital in the conservation of national life and of overwhelming importance as the basis for individual development, these have found, and



still find, in British schools only sporadic and feeble support. Short-sighted education authorities are eager to serve their masters by producing in increasing quantity a proletariat of mechanical skill without knowledge of, or interest in, the one occupation which could save it from the industrial labor market, and at the same time, make life more worth the living.

Apart from what was done for the teaching of gardening in connection with the Vacant Lands Cultivation Society, Mr. Fels' endeavors toward altering the machinery of education resulted in disappointment. At Mayland, however, where he was free to organize a school without official interference, as there was of course no grant, he succeeded in producing an institution which might—had circumstances continued favorable—have become a model school of great influence. He called to his assistance the experience and judgment of Miss Maria Findlay, a veteran and leader in the cause of educational reform, and with the enthusiastic support of his teachers, arranged for the children of the colony a cur-

riculum which had few equals and no superiors. It was concerned to a large extent with the every-day occupations seen about them, gardening, carpentry and the care of animals; and even the more formal materials of instruction were never permitted to pass out of touch with reality.

Having built and equipped such a school, having provided admirable teachers and an unsurpassed curriculum, Mr. Fels invited the Education Committee of the County Council to take over and incorporate it in their system, and to give assurance that its excellencies would be maintained. Needless to say there was no place for it in the system.

Of more importance so far as concerns ultimate results was the co-operation of Mr. Fels with Miss Margaret McMillan, in her efforts to improve the physical conditions of childhood. This original and energetic reformer, devoted to the cause of poor children, feeling always the futility of instructing minds housed in bodies unfed, unclean and often diseased, has given her life to arousing the nation's interest in its children. She has

worked with teachers, with authorities, with politicians, on the platform, at conferences, everywhere that opportunity presented itself, with unsurpassed zeal, and in the end with astonishing success. Mr. Fels met her as she was leaving Bradford, after achieving for that city the proud distinction of incorporating into the local educational system provision for the hygienic needs of children. In conversation at the reception given to mark her departure, Mr. Fels discovered that here was something of unlimited importance for the well-being of the future generation, consistent with his own most intimate convictions, and worthy of every degree of support that it could receive. He offered at once to give financial support to Miss McMillan if she would conceive and carry out a scheme of hygienic centers of larger scope than Bradford had been able to allow her. Miss McMillan came to London and soon afterwards at his home in Bickley the offer was renewed, made definite, and attached to a plan with which Miss McMillan intended to approach the education authority. This was in May, 1904. In Novem-

ber of the same year they went together to interview the Education Committee of the London County Council, and made an offer of £5,000 to assist in carrying out a plan of health centers. The Committee was, of course, conservative, and treated the innovation with the usual degree of suspicion. As very often happened when Mr. Fels was present, the interview became somewhat stormy. He usually succeeded in expressing his opinion of men and things. The central idea in the plan was the establishment and equipment of centers in the various districts of London for the hygienic inspection and treatment of school-children. These centers would, of course, necessitate the installation of baths. The Committee was sufficiently magnanimous to be willing to accept the money without the plan. Asked what they could do with £5,000, they agreed that they might be able to establish two centers. Miss McMillan knew that with this money she could establish fifty. After this interview, Mr. Fels told her that he could see little prospect of success in dealing with the authorities, and that it would be better for her to do her work alone,

with his support. With a view to carrying out the plan Miss McMillan began to work for medical inspection in the schools, feeling that the whole movement toward the physical betterment of children would have to be of a piece. She prepared a *precis*, secured the supporting signatures of the most enlightened medical men of London, as Sir Victor Horsley, Sir Lauder Brunton, Mr. Forbes Winslow, Sir J. Crichton Browne. She secured also the support of the then president of the National Union of Teachers. Armed with this document she went to the House of Commons and interviewed her friend, Mr. Jowett. Her plan contained three provisions—compulsory inspection, an annual report, and a supervisory board at Whitehall. Neither from Mr. Jowett, nor afterwards from Mr. Birrell, was much encouragement received. Not daunted, however, she again interviewed Mr. Jowett together with Mr. Illingworth, Mr. Birrell's secretary, gave them more details, and told them the cost. Thereupon Mr. Birrell received a deputation introduced by Mr. Keir Hardie and supported by several eminent medical men.

Medical inspection was embodied in the Education Bill of 1906, and on July 16th, the clauses referring to it were carried in the House. The Bill was dropped in August but the clauses providing for medical inspection were inserted in its successor and carried in the Education Act of 1907.

Having progressed so far, Miss McMillan turned to the pursuit of her main objective, the establishment of health centers. She obtained permission of the London County Council to use a single small room in Bow, and supported by Mr. Fels, established the first school clinic. Two physicians, Dr. Eder and Dr. Tribe, attended, each, one afternoon per week. The education authority, however, being still distrustful and unsympathetic, sent few patients. The treatment therefore turned out to be too expensive, amounting to 7s. 6d. per child. As there was a hospital rate of 5s. per child which the Council could use, the clinic was considered a failure. Miss McMillan, still determined, decided to drop all connection with the school authorities and proceed on her own lines. She went to Deptford and organized

a private clinic, attended by two physicians, a dentist and a nurse. Not having to wait for the County Council to send patients the clinic was at once filled. From then, to the present, children have continued to pour in, and the treatment per child has been found to amount to 2s. 6d., half the hospital rate. This aroused the much belated interest of the Education Committee and in 1911 it agreed to assist with a grant for dental treatment. This was followed in 1912 by an additional grant for eye and ear treatment. Miss McMillan has published two reports, showing methods, results and cost. Through these the Deptford experiment has become known throughout the world, and the school clinic will soon be everywhere an established part of the educational machinery. Holding firmly to her original idea of hygienic as well as medical treatment, Miss McMillan has widened the scope of the clinic to include remedial drill, and camps for boys and girls. In 1912 she opened a baby clinic.

In this way Mr. Fels placed his resources at the service of originality and devotion.

While increasingly absorbed in other reforms, his interest in the Deptford experiment continued to the end. Just before leaving England on his last journey, while on a visit to the clinic, he happened to see some vacant land close by. He wrote to the County Council and secured the use of it to Miss McMillan.

It is needless to describe the ways in which Mr. Fels gave encouragement and assistance to the cause of woman's suffrage. It is of more importance to make clear his mode of thinking and the motives which originated his action. With him the movement was a factor which made toward freedom, and just as he endeavored to show men workers how to use political for the attainment of economic freedom, so he saw the suffrage as a necessary instrument by which women workers could secure for themselves a tolerable place in the world.

The whole course of history from savagery to the present day displays women, in the mass, as sunk in more or less profound servitude. So far from being the cherished object of man's solicitous protection, as he always likes to make



her believe, the facts show that she has in the main been his willing or unwilling slave. It is part of the masculine constitution to be inherently disinclined to work. His permanent desire is to utilize or exploit some force or thing already in existence, without aiding its creation. The savage hunter after days of rest would go into the forest and kill his animal. He would thereupon leave it to be brought in and prepared by his women. There is evidence to show that all the main activities which originated civilization, as the domestication of plants and animals, the utilization of fire, the cultivation of the soil, the arts of weaving and pottery, were all feminine achievements. Man was largely concerned with war and the chase. This primitive psychology has been maintained to the present day. Man by nature inclines to the *coup*, the stroke, the momentary use of his strong right arm, and later, to the direction of work and the exploitation of all who can be made to work for him. The hard and patient labor has always fallen to the lot of woman.

The step is a short one from the savage

household to the modern office in which women do the drudgery, while man is the office manager. The pretense that women's sphere does not intersect that of productive labor is historically and actually absurd. Instead of woman endeavoring to enter into the occupations of man, it is more correct to say that man has, under the modern circumstances of great populations, industrially organized communities, and the general absence of wars, gradually occupied the sphere which historically belongs to woman. A few months of war have demonstrated how unessential man is in the main life-maintaining functions of society. It is now discovered that women can even make munitions of war. Man is, as always, the fighting, dominating drone. It is a pity that there is no trade union of housewives, to make articulate their position, work and requirements. It would at once be discovered, that instead of being outside the economic sphere, she is the larger half; if there were no other reason, because she is almost the sole disbursive agent of all income. Apart from household activity, which is taken for

granted, and unconsidered, women constitute an increasingly larger proportion of productive labor, in industry; this labor is allotted to her as a class, and always distinguished by being underpaid. Wherever found, from the sweated shirtmaker, through the textile trades, through laundresses, domestic servants, waitresses, to clerks, inspectresses, and professional women, the rule is the same; the work of quality and quantity equal to that performed by men receives, when carried on by women, a lower scale of pay. Here then is a basis for a demand for the suffrage. The business of government is to redress grievances. Women are forced into a class distinction by the conditions of industry and by the inherent tendency of man to exploit them. The one effective mode of righting the balance is to have a voice in the conduct of affairs.

There seems to be a difficulty even among suffragists in recognizing the woman worker. There are some who advocate a measure of suffrage that would leave her out altogether. It is not likely to be successful, because it would then include the women who neither need nor

want the suffrage. It is a curious fact that in the upper ranges of the social scale what amounts to a different female species is encountered. The unproductive and parasitic woman, guarded from every semblance of work, must be protected from the contamination of a political campaign. No one can suppose that the cherished occupier of a rich man's seraglio is a fit recipient of the vote or anything else, except contempt. Her part in political life consists in petty intrigue. Every one knows that the people of the upper class are not vote casters. They are vote getters.

The objection frequently made to the extension of suffrage to the women is, that it would align sex against sex and therefore engender antagonism. The obvious reply is that sex antagonism is already, and has always been in existence, and is an essential part of the masculine attitude. The suffrage would assist to diminish, if not to destroy, this antagonism, as an analysis of its cause must show. There is first of all the essentially masculine love of domination. Most men feel that it somehow disgraces them to work under women,

and the feeling is strong, even if unconscious, that the admission of women to a voice in administration would intrench upon the most cherished of man's prerogatives, that of "bossing" somebody. In the second place, the current of masculine opinion inevitably sets against anything that might assist women to economic independence. Man's judgment is never quite free from considerations that pertain to the marriage market, and he always desires that his own great desirability should be supplemented by conditions which make it difficult for woman to earn her own living. The plain fact is that man fears a free and equal choice in the matter of mating, and this fact seems to be the hidden core behind most of the clap-trap about the protection of women. Apart from the hot-house product already mentioned, which indeed requires no consideration, no one ever hears of woman, woman of the people, being protected from anything whatever. It is upon her particularly that the most brutal and even abhorrent facts of life are allowed to pour unrestrained. Her rôle is rather that of protector than protected. In

what way can the woman of the working-class household supplement her husband's earnings, and at the same time keep the household going? The answer is by sweated home industry, by taking in washing or by going out charring; the most arduous and least remunerative of occupations. The only protection exercised toward these women is the protection from their rights, and the opportunity to secure for themselves a chance in the world. There is then, a real and profound sex antagonism, which the suffrage movement is endeavoring to surmount. The cry that emancipation is prejudicial to the home merely calls in question man's right to say anything about the home. To the vast majority it is merely a place for his rest, feeding and comfort. Its essential meaning seldom penetrates to the masculine consciousness, and this obtuseness is as marked in cabinet ministers as in navvies.

The greatest of all difficulties that the movement faces is the tendency to read the fatuous ineptitude of upper-class women into all ranks of society. Men in authority, because their experience has never taught them

otherwise, firmly believe that woman is constitutionally incapable of grasping and handling the exigencies of administration. It is a pity that they cannot one and all board for a week in a typical working-class household. They would find innumerable cases where the man would hesitate to declare, except very privately, that he is the head, in spite of the occasional use of his strong right arm. As a matter of fact it requires a better grasp and a nicer balance of judgment to carry on a household, and bring up a considerable family of children on a pound a week, than have been displayed for many years at the Local Government Board or the Home Office.

Here then was Joseph Fels' case for the suffrage. His creed contained but one article, "Freedom and equal opportunity for all." If a citizen's work constitutes citizenship he could see no reason why sex should debar from a voice in the conditions of that work. But he had another reason as well; it was his confidence in the penetrative insight and grasp of the essential, which characterizes every activity that woman undertakes. The natural conser-

vators and disbursers of all wealth would not be long in applying their intuitive and acquired knowledge to the resources of the community. It is difficult to conceive a state, in the conduct of which women play their appropriate part, allowing the sources of all production to remain monopolized and exploited for the private benefit of a comparatively few individuals, while the mass of the people are held in servile, patronized, inspected and regulated bondage. His faith was strong that woman would soon penetrate the screen of pretense to the injustice which lies behind.



## XV

### Later Activities

CLOSELY connected with his zeal for education, was the deep interest he took in boys' and girls' clubs. Here, too, he felt was creative work, the turning of leisure to an unconscious educational purpose. Of the various ways in which he gave expression to his interest, there is no space to speak; but one story we are able, through the Hon. Lily Montague, to reproduce.

“Mr. Joseph Fels first influenced the life of the West Central Girls' Club when he appeared in the character of a fairy godfather at our Anniversary Celebration in 1910. On this occasion he was present when Miss Montague made an appeal for building an adequate home for the many girls and women who come to London to learn English, or are orphaned and seek a home rather than the ordinary lodging house. Slips were handed to all the large audience who filled the New Theater, but only

one slip was filled in with any substantial promise. Miss Montague and all her friends read this slip over and over again before they understood that £1000 had been offered, and then a little later Mr. Fels himself was able to make the meaning of the promise clear. He was not interested in mere working machines, he wanted human beings. He was very glad for Jewish working girls to have a home, but insisted that some sort of garden should be provided. It was therefore through Mr. Fels that the roof-garden was made at the Emily Harris Home, and on summer afternoons and hot evenings, girls of all nationalities are reaping the advantage of his great thoughtfulness.

“After Mr. Fels had once become interested in the Club and Home, he remained in touch with the workers and members. On several occasions, he invited parties of girls to visit his country house and gave them delightful afternoons. His visitors always felt at home at Bickley and they always considered that their host was the youngest of the party.

“It was Mr. Fels’ pleasure to invite men and women of knowledge and culture who

would interest the girls and enlarge their outlook on life, and he himself did not lose any opportunity of giving them some understanding of the great land problem. So long as the West Central Club and the Emily Harris Home exist, the name of Joseph Fels will be remembered not as that of a mere benefactor but as that of a real and understanding friend."

In other more important ways did Mr. Fels manifest an interest in the affairs of his race. The treatment of the Jews in Russia was a matter of intense and recurring concern, and he took a large part in efforts to alleviate their condition. This work brought him into association with Mr. Zangwill in whom he found that combination of dreamer and worker which always made to him an irresistible appeal. Mr. Fels was from the outset interested in the Jewish Territorial Movement, but rather as an outlet for his own economic plans than as an end in itself. This close connection with movements towards Jewish colonization makes his attitude and conclusions of sufficient value to record.

Probably the most distinctive Jewish product of this generation is the Zionist Movement. It is rooted in the profoundest of racial sentiments and its motive has existed ever since the great dispersion. That Jews will some day gather from the ends of the earth to their ancient home, with institutions and customs safely guarded through all the ages, with blood kept pure and racial unity intact, that political and religious freedom would be again achieved, is a dream that lies near the heart of every true son of Israel. It has, in this day, flowered out into definitely conceived plan and intent, with a great organization and an immense aggregation of capital. The only bar to the realization of the great hope has seemed to be that Palestine lay in the possession of the Turk. It is within the world of possibility that the present war will remove this disability and it will be seen how much of seriousness underlies the movement

It is not surprising that Zionism, powerful as it is in its appeal, has failed to command the assent of numbers of the Jewish community. A large section, feeling with no less intensity

the national ambition, believed that the associations of Palestine would be but poor compensation for what they considered its lack of productiveness. If the chief object is the attainment of political and religious liberty, the ability to practice customs and develop institutions distinctively Jewish, this after all could be best realized in a region sufficiently favored by nature not to render prosperity impossible. Even so, the difficulty is sufficiently great as the habitable world has been swallowed by the voracious nations of modern Europe. Notwithstanding the difficulty, the movement which represents this attitude, the Jewish Territorial Organization known as the ITO, has explored a number of regions and investigated political possibilities in a practical way. Missions of scientific experts were sent out to report upon Cyrenaica and Angola. The result was discouraging. These regions did not appear to the ITO leaders much better than Palestine.

Mr. Fels' knowledge of artificially produced colonies was probably more extensive and profound than that of any other man of

the generation. It had been secured through much disappointment to expectation and much sacrifice of money. He was aware that a mere aggregation of families does not constitute a community, as it does not imply the presence of cohesive forces which are, in the main, of natural origin and slow growth. If, however, these factors are implicit he conceived it possible to stimulate a rapid development and thus give that adjustment of thought and activity that would unify a group into a community. There must be present, he always believed, some common participation in an ethical, or spiritual, or intellectual interest. The great difficulty in economically initiated colonies which he had helped to establish both in America and in England, was to bring people together for extra-economic purposes. Even for the small group of families of a score or more at Mayland, he established school, amusement and reading rooms, and provided as well as he could addresses and series of lectures on a great variety of topics. This side of community life can never be forced. It can only be made easy of exercise in its incipient stages

if some disposition is already present. If it continued permanently absent, Mr. Fels was aware that, however prosperous the members of the group might be, it was still merely an aggregation and not a community. It is certain that a colony of Jews would not fail through lack of spiritual cohesion. This is indeed the most powerful factor that would be involved, and has seemed to supporters of the Zionist movement an adequate basis for colonization. Mr. Fels shared the opinion of Mr. Zangwill, that conditions entailing permanent poverty would ultimately result in failure, however close might be the communism of political and spiritual purpose. Such a colony would probably appeal only to members of the race dwelling in countries of extreme oppression, and even there, under the most ill-favored conditions. The Jew, after all, is no more called upon to renounce worldly prosperity than other races, and Mr. Fels was quite aware that he would refuse to do so. For Jewish colonization then, the economic question is of paramount importance, and the one regarding which the makers of colonies seem

most ignorant. It is within the memory of some that a band of enthusiastic Australian socialists conceived the idea of realizing their Utopia in South America. With their own ship and an abundance of goods they crossed the ocean and founded "New Australia" in the garden land of Paraguay. It is part of the irony of fate that the inspiration of economic idealism should plant their community in a region where there could be no market facilities for two generations. Twelve miles of road through a swamp have been their undoing. What they produced they could not place upon the market.

To the same country came a band of Germans headed by Dr. Foerster, brother-in-law of Nietzsche, to found a "New Germany," and the colony seeking the same perfection of internal organization was planted in a remote region with impossible communications. There can be no escape from the economic world with hope of permanent survival. Any colonist must feel in time that he has some right to material prosperity and will inevitably



go in search of it. His knowledge of all these and other experiments in colonization made it seem to Mr. Fels, as to Mr. Zangwill, that their chief concern was to find for Jewish colonies places well favored by nature, with adequate means of communication.

But Mr. Fels' insight carried him even further. Given a colony of the most perfect spiritual communism and endowed with an adequate supply of natural resources available for production and exchange, there was still lacking an element of assurance that the colony would subserve its noble purpose. Mere freedom from external oppression is no guarantee against internal tyranny, and Mr. Fels could not see that servitude of Jew to Jew was much better than servitude of Jew to Gentile. That his race contains some proportion of voracious members, he did not doubt; in fact he was acquainted with some of them. It was therefore his desire that the economy of the colonies should from the start provide adequate protection against monopolistic slavery. The utter simplicity and effectiveness of what he

urged may be seen in the following quotation by Mrs. Lona Ingham Robinson:

“Suppose a few hundred people obtain access to a fertile, uninhabited island and set out to colonize it. They recognize that all sites or selections cannot possess equal advantages, that some will be wooded, some not, some high, some low, near water or otherwise, some near centers of trade, some far out, some large, some small and so on. They inspect and make a plot of the grounds and each family or adult person makes a selection with the full understanding that while the whole island belongs to all, the various locations must necessarily vary in desirability or become more valuable with the increase of people. So the colonists equalize their holdings something like this:

“The least desirable or perhaps the smallest lot or site in use will be taken as a basis to compute all the others by. Recognizing that the occupant of the least advantageous site has left all the better or bigger locations for the others, or has had it left to him by others, while the whole is as much his as theirs, it is agreed that he shall occupy his holding free.

All the others, having better locations, agree now to pay annually into the collective fund sums equal to the advantage, expressed in money, their sites have over the poorest site in use. This collective fund would represent all the various advantages in excess of the poorest lot in use.

“Now that these various inequalities are taken off, paid into the public fund, the colonists all stand practically alike in their holdings. They have paid all the excess values into the treasury. When this fund is straight-way used for public purposes, roads, schools, fire protection, town hall, library, etc., in which all share alike, they have worked out triumphantly the problem of equal rights to the use of the island. As years go on and increase of population and trade increase the value of all their holdings, their public fund grows larger just in proportion as they need more improvements. So their land values being sufficient for their expenses, no other taxes are thought of. Whatever private means the colonists brought with them or earned by labor afterward are neither listed nor rated. Every one

has the worth of what he was assessed, for the use of his location. This assessment is what he pays all the other co-owners for exclusive use of his apportionment.”

Shortly after he made Mr. Zangwill's acquaintance, Mr. Fels became a member of the council of the "ITO" and thenceforward took an active interest in its plans. He was a frequent attendant at its council meetings and, as Mr. Zangwill gives testimony, of much aid by reason of the shrewd practicality of his judgments. As plan after plan was considered, and had to be placed on one side, Mr. Fels began to undertake some investigations on his own account. When he visited Diaz in 1907, one of his proposals was for a Jewish settlement in Mexico. He had inquiries made about South America. A letter of inquiry he wrote about the latter possibility is not without its interest.

“I may not before have mentioned to you that, being a Jew, I am greatly interested in the future of my people, and for several years I have been co-operating with such men as Israel Zangwill. . . . His organization has

been on the look-out for a country in which the oppressed Jews of Russia and other lands might be invited to settle, where a measure at least of autonomy might be had. Within the last month an expedition has been dispatched to investigate the Angola district on the West Coast of Africa. . . .

“My interest in this matter is very great, of course, and grows as I see the constant cruelties which are inflicted upon my people, defenseless as they are under the Russian Government. Whether or not autonomy could be gained by settlement in one or other of the South American countries is a matter about which I should like to consult with you. I believe, for instance, that Paraguay has only 700,000 population. That is a country about as large as Great Britain, and I believe a settlement of people could well be carried on in that country. Of course, I have in mind the right kind of landlords, and my interest is not un-mixed with my obsession about the Single Tax.”

It is interesting to note that he grew the more interested in the movement as its possi-

bilities verged more and more towards the historic birthplace of the Jews in Palestine. It is not, indeed, unlikely that he would, in the end, have become a Zionist. What is certain is this—that he had been gripped by the vision of a Jewish people with a cultural center of its own, standing to the West as Greece stood to the East two thousand years ago. To him the Jews were essentially a race of missionaries, born to preach by book and by example the gospel in which he himself believed. The state must in its constitution set out from a basis of economic justice, that is to say its economic philosophy would be the philosophy of Henry George. There appeared to him something almost of a poetic justice in the Jews thus giving to the world the example of freedom as in an earlier day they had given birth to religion. He worked steadily to promote the end in view. Friends were written to, his audiences, almost invariably, learned something of his thought, and Jewish Single Taxers would inevitably receive whatever he could procure of the literature of the subject. One of the last conversations he had was an expression of his

high hopes in this regard. It is now particularly interesting to note in one of his letters the expression of an anxiety that Mr. Louis Brandeis should assume the leadership of the American movement. Certainly the growing association with it of his wife would have met with his hearty approval, would have been, indeed, the realization of his own desire.

For it is clear that his previous attitude toward Zionism, especially as concerns the economic inadequacy of Palestine, was due to insufficient knowledge. In late years actual colonization on a considerable scale and in a completely scientific manner has been successfully initiated. There are some fourteen thousand agricultural colonists well established, and, until the war ended their export trade, as prosperous as could be expected. The soil gives a reasonable response as soon as scientific tillage is substituted for the abuse which passed amongst the Arabs as agriculture. The exported products meet a great demand in the world's markets, and there is every reason to believe that in the course of a generation or so Palestine may be remade into a garden.

Another factor in the movement would have been decisive with Mr. Fels. He had offered support on a large scale to the ITO on the single condition that the system of land tenure be in accordance with the principles of Henry George, which are also the principles of Moses and an integral part of the Jewish code. His rebuff was possibly due to the fact that some of the prominent supporters of the ITO were of the great Jewish landlord class in England, which made it difficult for the movement to be entirely democratic. Zionism, on the other hand, has affirmed its abhorrence of oligarchic control, and in the constitution of the National Fund, its agency for purchase and tenure of land, it has made clear its intention to base colonization on the principle of permanent state ownership of land, and the utilization of rentals as the source of revenue for the state. This frank adoption of single tax as an integral part of its plan and intent would have commended Zionism to Mr. Fels as worthy of his most zealous support as soon as the way was found open to realization.

The Jews were not the only persecuted



race in whom he felt deep interest. For injustice of any kind he had the very deepest abhorrence and that feeling, indeed, lay at the bottom of most of his activities. He took a large part in the famous McQueen case. During the latter's imprisonment he made it his care that Mrs. McQueen should not suffer. He obtained testimony in England from labor members of Parliament, trade union leaders, and business men as to Mr. McQueen's record in England. Wherever he was informed that Mr. McQueen had at any time been employed, he visited to obtain evidence. He searched the English police records. He wrote to many men of influence in the matter, members of the court of Pardons and the Governor of New Jersey. He offered to give Mr. McQueen employment on his release. He got H. G. Wells to visit McQueen and write up the case in "The Future in America." The recollection of the Rev. A. W. Wishart, who was mainly instrumental in securing Mr. McQueen's pardon, gives a characteristic picture of Mr. Fels. Mr. Wishart tells how he became interested in the case and wrote a pam-

phlet about it. "About this time," he continues, "I received a letter from Mr. Fels saying that he had read of the case in the London papers and wanted to know what he could do to help me. As I then had invested about \$150 or \$200 of my own money in the case, which I could ill afford, and as I saw other expenses ahead of me, I wrote to Mr. Fels that some financial help would be most timely, especially if I was to carry on the case any further. He sent me . . . a cheque. Very soon afterwards he wired me he was coming to Trenton to see me, which he did. He stayed at my house all night and we visited several judges of the Board of Pardons who were also on the Court of Errors and Appeals Bench. Mr. Fels also went with me to Paterson. It was a bitterly cold day, and we tramped all day long, visiting business men, everywhere meeting with rebuffs and sometimes almost with insults, because it was believed by the Paterson men that McQueen was a dangerous criminal, and that we might be in better business than in trying to secure his release from the penitentiary. Mr. Fels sent my brief on

the case to innumerable people, and wrote very many letters which tended to interest influential men in the case. Little by little friends sprang up on many sides. After two years of such battling, we succeeded in convincing the Board of Pardons that McQueen should be released."

Of his relations with an actual criminal a word may be told. Mr. Fels came in contact with a prisoner of gipsy blood who had spent many years of his life in prison. Kindly treatment soon won his confidence and little by little he told Mr. Fels his story. The latter persuaded him to write it down. From the torn little bits of dirty paper, from an ill-written, ill-spelt and utterly disconnected narrative there was ultimately pieced together a condemnation of the conditions in a certain state penitentiary such as no words can describe. Horrified at this, Mr. Fels had a fair copy of the man's narrative made and sent it to the Governor of the State concerned. He received no reply. He wrote and urged that such a revelation suggested at least the need for an inquiry. To this response was made

that the Governor could take no steps in the matter. Mr. Fels was furious at this rebuff. It was, as he said, at least worth while to have the indictment investigated; it might happen to be true and the Governor would have the satisfaction of knowing that he had remedied an injustice. To this request, also, he received a curt refusal. He could stand it no longer. He wrote to the Governor, demanding an immediate inquiry at which a representative nominated by himself should be present; otherwise he threatened to publish the statement and the correspondence in every journal in the United States. Within a month the inquiry had been held to his satisfaction.

This unceasing hatred of injustice was shown in his ever-ready help to the Russian revolutionists. Time and again he was told of some escaped radical's distress; and his eager interest in the event and his anxiety to be of more than financial service were at least as much appreciated as his actual monetary aid. One instance of his sympathy in this connection is too remarkable to go unnoticed.

In 1907, a Congress of all the members of

the Social Democratic Party in the Russian Douma was arranged to meet at Vibourg in Finland. It was driven out by the authorities and endeavored to assemble in Sweden. This was forbidden on complaint from the Russian Government, and a similar prohibition came from other Continental countries. They were, therefore, driven to London. When they arrived, their funds were exhausted and so far from being able to carry on their conferences, the delegates, over a hundred in number, were in serious danger of starvation. Some one suggested an application to Mr. Fels who at once loaned them eighteen hundred pounds. The money was repaid in but small part, not only from the poverty of the delegates, but because so many of them were sacrificed later by the Russian authorities.

Yet these activities were but deviations. The Single Tax was, after all, the main object he had in view, and to that he endeavored to subordinate everything else. He watched the progress of the Fels Commission with the deepest anxiety. Once it was clear that the method was successful, he began to make simi-

lar plans for most of the countries in which he interested himself. To Canada he gave a dollar for every dollar raised by the Single Taxers in that country; to Norway, Sweden and Denmark, a kroner for every kroner raised by the Scandinavians. Similarly with Australia, New Zealand and Germany. Where the movement, as in France, Spain, China, seemed not sufficiently advanced to make this method advisable, he gave a direct subvention to the local or national groups concerned. In England, for the most part, his contributions were made directly through the United Committee. He realized that the hereditary political associations of the great landowners had made the English struggle unique and that the movement would probably be successful only by the steady permeation of the Liberal and Labor members of Parliament. Towards the close of his life, he began to be convinced of the need for the erection of some central body to unite in a single organization the varied activities in Europe. Had he lived, it is probable that he would have created a European Commission

of this kind; this idea is now being carried into effect.

It must not be imagined that Mr. Fels regarded his function in the movement as solely that of a creator of its endowments. He was, on the contrary, very active in the repression of any such view. The number of requests for his support must have been relatively enormous, but he constantly refused his assistance until he was given evidence of local activity. It seemed to him that his duty was rather to stimulate the Single Taxers themselves to action than to allow them to consider that any funds they deemed necessary would be at once forthcoming. If he had made any general criticism of the movement, he would have urged that its adherents had not shown themselves sufficiently capable of disinterested self-sacrifice. A movement, he said again and again, never advances very far until it can point to its martyrs. It was for that reason that he limited his subscriptions to what any State or district could itself raise. He was a stimulus to local exertion, a kind of economic gadfly

who stung men into activity. The friend who said that his "speeches made you feel how little you had done" exactly expressed what those speeches set out to achieve. That the Joseph Fels Commission was able to stem the tide of apathy which, at its inception, seemed to have overwhelmed the Single Tax movement, there can be no shadow of doubt. Both he and his coadjutors continually made it evident that they had no sort of sympathy for passive expressions of adherence. "The greatest thing," he once said, "is to contribute yourself; next, give your money." He himself fulfilled both those behests in spirit as well as in letter.

It was a sign of reawakening interest when on November 19th and 20th, 1910, the Commission was able to inaugurate the first Single Tax Conference. It was an interesting occasion. Mr. Fels himself was present and took an active part in the proceedings. The Commission reported on what it had done, and ably withstood the fires of its critics. To the latter Mr. Fels made a characteristic retort. There had been much agitation directed—as has been already noted—against the support given to



the Direct Legislation movement. "I want to say," he remarked, "that since my return to this country, and since I have been learning the reasons why certain things have been done, I am in perfect agreement with the work of the Commission."

The Conference was an interesting experiment in democratic organization. It was a purely informal gathering of some eighty people from fifteen States of the Union. There was no set program beforehand. Any one could introduce a resolution. Every type of Single Taxer, humble and representative, was present. Every one who had taken charge of any aspect of the movement, Mr. Lincoln Steffens, Mr. Bolton Hall, Mr. Daniel Kiefer, Mr. Louis F. Post, Mr. U'Ren, Mr. Fels himself, contributed an analysis of their experience. Mr. Fels also told something of the condition of things in Europe. He spoke of the budget of 1909. "The land clauses in the British budget were put there to stay. Nothing that any party can do will stop the movement in England. Had it not been for the land clauses in the budget, the Liberal party

would have gone down to defeat, and if these clauses are cut out of any future program the party will go down to defeat." He commented hopefully on the movement in Sweden and Denmark. "In Denmark," he said, "the question of the taxation of land values is better understood than anywhere in the world. One hundred and forty thousand small farmers in Denmark with an average of less than twenty acres apiece, are teaching our doctrines everywhere. In many of the public schools of Denmark you will see pictures of Henry George on the wall." He told of Spain and France, of what, under his inspiration, Dr. Macklin was doing in China. "I had," says a friend who was present, "a wonderful sense of his cosmopolitanism. His sympathy seemed so big that he took the world in his arms."

A year later the movement held its second congress in Chicago. In the meantime he had visited France and Germany and established definite working connections in both countries. It is of some special interest that in Germany he should have won the aid and friendship of William Schrameier who as governor of Kiau-

Chau, had been successful in raising the entire revenue of that colony by means of the Single Tax. In England he was mainly concerned in fighting the Insurance Act, to which he was very bitterly opposed. It seemed to him that the act marked the initiation of a dangerously paternalistic spirit in legislation. It penalized the trade-unions by putting the benefits they could offer against those to be offered by the great insurance companies. And he was in complete disagreement with the principle that "the contributions of the healthy must pay for the sickness of the unhealthy. It seems to me a better use of their savings to put them to some positive purpose."

In the early winter he came over to the United States and on November 23 he was in Chicago for the second conference of which he had been elected honorary president. Nearly two hundred people were present at its general sessions from twenty States in the Union, besides representatives from Great Britain and Canada. Much had happened since the previous conference. The Commission was able to report a preliminary victory in Oregon in

the passage of the amendment granting home rule in taxation to counties. Progress along similar lines, though without definite result, was reported in Missouri, Rhode Island, and Ohio, in all of which the Joseph Fels Fund had taken an active part. The American Economic League had been organized under the Commission which supplied material to more than 300, now 700, newspapers. *The Public* had been supported, literature had again been distributed on an enormous scale. The Commission, on the whole, had good reason to be satisfied with the progress of its efforts.

The Conference discussed every aspect of the movement. It had again to meet the criticism of the 'irreconcilables, who felt that the funds should be devoted to Single Tax alone; but they were unable to make any impression. Mr. Fels insisted that the propaganda should be such as the situation seemed to demand, and that to pin the movement down to any hard and fast lines of activity would be largely to render it ineffective. He told of his activities in Europe, and of a meeting he had held on the *Mauretania* which Mr. Croker, the well-

known Tammany "Boss" had attended. "I embarrassed Mr. Croker," he said, "by asking him why he had been one of the crowd that had killed Henry George. Croker answered, after some hesitation, 'If we hadn't killed him, he would have killed us.'"

The next two years were a time of incessant activity for Mr. Fels. He had become so identified with the movement that the demands made by it upon his time grew by leaps and bounds. He was being continually asked for opinion, criticism, suggestion. From every part of the world came invitation after invitation to take over the propaganda of the movement. In the summer of 1912, he paid a long visit to Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, in the winter to Canada. Everywhere he was speaking once, twice, sometimes three times daily, in theaters, churches, synagogues, clubs. He was drafting briefs of evidence for the Single Tax to municipal commissions on taxation. He was unceasing in his attention to the press. In 1913 he went to take part in the first Single Tax conference ever held in Spain, where, but a year before, there had been but three known

adherents. A characteristic letter of this year deserves to be quoted in full. The then Governor of Alabama, had written for his views on the revision of taxation and had expressed his own opinion in these terms: "Under the laws as they now exist in Alabama, nearly all personal property escapes taxation. I am inclined to believe that the remedy is an income tax." To Mr. Fels, of course, this was the rankest heresy, and he replied as follows:

"It was good to get your cordial and kindly letter of the 24th inst. and I am glad to hear directly from you of your familiarity with the economic philosophy of Henry George. I am glad to note it is your intention to appoint a voluntary commission for the purpose of revising your revenue system, it being your intention to consider carefully the question of personal property taxation.

"You tell me that under your present laws nearly all personal property escapes taxation. Why tax any personal property?"

"Now, my dear Governor, those things we want to get rid of, we tax. If the City Council of Montgomery should want to get rid of dogs,

they would put a tax on dogs so heavy that the dogs would disappear without much ceremony. In building houses, we should get rid of windows if a tax were laid on windows, as is now the case in Belgium I believe, and was, until sixty years ago, in England. There are still to be seen in England hundreds of cottages with but one window—a relic of that foolish taxation.

“So I am rather grieved that you should incline towards an income tax as any help whatever. If we should tax personal property of any kind, we make it more difficult for people to accumulate personal property, and the bigger the tax we put on a house, whether a dwelling, a factory, or a bank building, the fewer of them will be put up, and the less money will be invested in them, simply because of this taxation.

“On the other hand, if we should untax industry and business, by placing no tax at all on produce of labor, including buildings, we shall give the greatest impetus to industry. A question then arises, of course, as to where we shall get an income for state, county, and city

purposes. My answer to this is that we should find out the site-value of every piece of land in Alabama, based upon the market or fair price as between a willing buyer and a willing seller, and then place a tax upon this assessed land value. Of course, the thing could not be done in a year or ten years or twenty years, but it could be done gradually and certainly, with the greatest benefit to all those who are willing to work. It would ultimately destroy the speculator in land values, who is simply a parasite upon society.

“Please accept the enclosed copy of ‘Progress and Poverty.’ Its author seems to me perhaps the greatest of modern prophets.”

The early winter of 1913 Mr. Fels spent in England. There was much on his mind. The liberal Government had imprisoned Mr. Lansbury and the hunger strike had naturally not been without its effect on the latter's health. Mr. Fels decided to leave for America and persuaded Mr. Lansbury to accompany him. They left England on the 3rd of December on the *Mauretania*, where Mr. Fels held his usual meeting. Little was done in America until



midway in January when the fourth conference of the Fels Commission was held in Washington. The Conference met in a happy mood. "We meet," announced Mr. Kiefer, the Chairman of the Commission, "for the first time in the history of the movement with Single Tax on the statute-book of two States of the Union." Real advances had been made in Texas and Colorado and—even more significantly—in Pennsylvania and New York.

The conference had much business to transact, but Mr. Fels took very little part in its active discussions. So quiet and subdued was he that some delegates were actually unaware of his presence, until he was pointed out to them. His attitude was remarkably composed. There was about him a sense of repose, very rare in him, and this dimly seemed to reflect over the conference. When he did speak, it was of his eagerness to live to carry on his work; yet he urged that his hopes were now secure and that he was certain of the confirmation of his efforts. He told his friends that the great thing was an insistence on the spirit of society. "You are to look on its in-

stitutions as an expression of its soul," he asserted, "you are to make that soul manifest in all you think and feel and do." Once there came a flash of the old fighting spirit when Mr. Gompers, the president of the American Federation of Labor, spoke of the strength of the protected interests in America. "At this juncture," says the official report, "Mr. Fels presented Mr. Gompers with a leather-bound copy of 'Progress and Poverty,' the book costing 48 cents in England and 70 cents in the United States, an object lesson in Free Trade." But, for the rest, his friends noticed and wondered at that strange calm.

He returned to Philadelphia at the close of the Conference, staying as in the last few years he had always stayed, with two very dear friends, Mr. and Mrs. Earl Barnes. He was very occupied with business affairs, and grew more and more tired and depressed. But there seemed no premonition of serious illness.

By the tenth of February, 1914, when the business affairs that had caused him anxiety were finally completed, he was evidently far from well. He suffered much from fever and

it was very difficult, as always, to persuade him to keep his mind from business matters. By the nineteenth, it was obvious that he was in serious danger from pneumonia. He fought splendidly against the enervation caused by the fever and talked much of his plans and hopes. On the twenty-first he seemed much better. But as the night progressed he grew rapidly worse, and it was obvious that his strength was nearly exhausted. It was his will alone that kept him alive. Early in the morning he spoke to Mrs. Fels and tried to convey the thought that perhaps his death would be a gift of life to the movement; then he could face it fearlessly and gladly. Just as the first gleam of the sun heralded the day he passed. It seemed right and splendid that he should die thus, fronting the dawn.

## XVI

### Personal

**T**HE story of the life work of Joseph Fels cannot be concluded without an attempt to bring the vivid personality of the man before the reader. In stature he was short, five feet two, but so well proportioned that he never seemed small. His beard which he kept closely cut was grey, but the thick fringe of hair, for he was almost bald, kept its color of black. He always wore a soft hat.

On his way home from business, he could be seen daily turning the corner of the street and covering the short intervening space with his quick, decisive step, his head turned slightly to the left and a tendency to sway a bit to the left in walking. In his left hand he carried a small dispatch case filled with letters, and under his right arm he invariably carried a mass of papers. While he walked along he took











out his door key, and the door was opened almost without stopping. Once in the hall he laid all of his things on the table, hung up his coat and hat, cleared his throat and ran up the stairs into the study. A cheery "Howdy" to everyone, a quick peck of a kiss after carefully rubbing his mouth with his coat sleeve, for every woman in the room except his wife, whom he kissed with infinite tenderness, a pretended fight with the little boys if they were around, and an effect of clearing the room of any dead air or thoughts—and you have his entrance into the place where he lived. If it is near the dinner hour he tells you he is starved. He ate in moderation and the simplest table was always a sumptuous one to Joseph Fels. If urged to take more of something he liked he would say, "Lordy, son, there's no room but I'll take a little to fill in the cracks." If he came late as he did sometimes, his shy manner, as if he was almost expecting a scolding, sent everyone eagerly hurrying to wait on him.

Mr. Fels was restless and could never sit quietly. If there was reading aloud he would write letters at the desk; if there was talk he

would stand with his back to the fire or walk around the room. This cheerful, alert, joyous nature that loved to sing snatches of parodies or to quote "The bigger the rabbit the more whiter his tail," could sometimes swing to the other extreme and bring into the room or into the hearts of those who loved him a gloom that was like the blackness of night. Then he scarcely ate, his smile was forced, and when he conquered these depressions he came out of them tired, with a quiet sadness that finally merged into his usual sunny courageous nature.

Just as there were two sides to Joseph Fels' disposition so there were two sides in his reaction to people. He spared nothing of time, money or generous judgment in helping individuals. On the other hand if he felt a lack in a friend's attitude toward him or toward the cause for which he worked, he was capable of turning all his generous impulses into criticism and hurt feeling that no amount of reason could disperse. In business relations he liked to feel out his man, often holding him up in some deal to the penny, and then turning around and giving the man as a friend much of

everything he had to give. He once said, "I am two men. With my right hand I can skin a man for five cents while with my left hand I can give away five thousand dollars." He always wanted to avoid killing the divine spark in any human being. One morning a friend after having fed a number of tramps said to the next one, "I will give you your breakfast but you must promise not to tell any of your friends about it." Mr. Fels overheard the remark, and looking up timidly ventured, "How could you ask him to keep from his friends the one thing he could be generous enough to share?"

This two-sided nature manifested itself in many small acts. He had a mischievous boy's attitude in watching a dog chase a cat, and really enjoyed the perilous situation of the cat. On the other hand when as happened one evening he came home very late to dinner with no excuse, it was found that he had brought a little dog to a friend and had spent an hour in the east side of London finding milk and making the dog comfortable for the night. And when a little five year old friend was or-

dered to ride on account of illness, he started off at a brisk walk, with his left hand in his trousers pocket swinging his right, to the home of a neighbor he didn't know, and bought a donkey. How did he know there was a donkey there for sale? The touching part of this story is that as Joseph Fels came across the fields leading the donkey, followed by a tiny newborn one, he was greeted by shouts of laughter and asked, "But why did you buy two?" With a twinkle of his brown eyes and an attempt at raillery but with a seriousness that refused to be hidden he said, "I couldn't separate the mother and baby and so I bought them both."

His love for children was almost a passion and in his heart he really adopted many a lad. For the son of an Edinburgh friend he had a deep affection and of him he wrote, "I never before wanted to steal a sixteen-year-old boy until this one came along. It is a pleasure to look at the great, stout, manly lad." When another friend named a son for him he was deeply touched. And while his love for the other children of the same family was equally strong, there was a peculiar quality in his af-

fection for this child. The following letter shows how deeply affected he was by this demonstration of regard for him:

London, October 1, 1907.

Dear Joseph B——:

Here's to you, my jolly little chap, and may your shadows be few with untold quantities of sunshine always on tap for at least a century. You are here, my little lad, to be rubbed and scrubbed a few short baby years, to be petted and kissed and thrashed and all the balance. Then you'll be chucked on to your own responsibilities and you'll have to stand and take your lickings along with the pettings of a more or less careless world. . . .

And, dear little boy, you've got my name as part of yours. You are beginning its use. I've got a considerable distance on the way to finishing with it, so take care that you are good to Joseph and love people. Just love 'em as much as I do.

Your

UNCLE JOE.

In the Fels family there were seven children, Abraham, Barbara, Bettie, Joseph, Maurice, Samuel and Rosena. With his two unmarried sisters, Barbara and Rosena, and his

brother Maurice, Joseph spent a great deal of his time. For them he had a deep affection and when in Philadelphia he would allow nothing to prevent his spending his Friday evenings with them. During the last seven years of his life he passed the months of his stay in America in the home of his friend Earl Barnes. There he felt that he received peculiar stimulation to thought and action along the lines he was so devotedly following.

Much of the freedom which Mr. Fels enjoyed during the last decade of his life, a necessary condition of his social work, was due to the fact that his brother Samuel carried so large a share of the business responsibility. As each of the brothers possessed remarkable independence of character there was necessarily a divergence of views. Notwithstanding this, there was a deep groundwork of family affection, and Mr. Fels was always conscious of the sterling character of his younger brother. In a letter dated 30th May, 1909, he writes, "We are truly glad Sam is to be with us soon, three weeks from now. I do want to get at close quarters with Sam. He deserves to know me

as I am and I'll be glad to have him *know* how greatly I respect and love him."

The scope and multiplicity of his activities which included the management of more than a score of business enterprises, participation in, and often the responsible direction of, many social and political movements, were made possible through the skill and tireless energy of Mr. Walter Coates, who, through twenty years of public and private work, was his close companion and devoted friend.

For one to think that Joseph Fels took up the work of shaping the social mind to the doctrines of Single Tax easily and lightly is a mistake. No one ever put more labor, more heartache or more courage into preparing himself for propagandist work. Not trained to speak and coming to it late in life, he found it, indeed, uphill work. He was never unconscious of the struggle before him to influence opinion through personal appeal; he took it seriously but with a humorous sense of his dependence upon others for help. In writing to a friend who had many times given him assistance, he said, "The Lord knows how I wish you were

here. I want you, 'ma honey,' and I want you bad; the wherefore at this particular juncture being that I am invited to talk to a meeting about farm colonies and small holdings to be convened by the Lord Provost at Glasgow Friday of next week. I will press Mollie and Walt into service, though they are just common garden folk. They can't help me to lie with the same smoothness of diction as you."

One night at the dinner table a lady, a stranger to Mr. Fels, in describing someone, said, "He is not of our kind." Mr. Fels had not taken part in the conversation, but from the other end of a long table he quietly inquired, "Isn't everyone of our kind?" It is creditable to the woman that this gentle rebuff made her his friend. Totally unconscious of convention, he cut straight through to the hearts of people. One cannot treat humanity as he did without often causing embarrassment to those who are near and dear. If he conversed with the butler at his friend's dinner table, it was because he felt intuitively that he was doing that man an injustice in being served by him, and unconsciously he tried to undo this



injustice by talking with him on terms of equality.

When he heard that the Crown Prince of Denmark was interested in land reform he tried to meet him. Owing to the red tape of the Chamberlain's office he did not succeed in securing an interview. But fate threw them both on the same ferry boat when he was leaving Copenhagen. Seeing the Crown Prince on the deck surrounded by those in attendance, Joseph Fels does not think of himself either brazenly or modestly, but thinking only of the work to help humanity, and knowing that the Crown Prince had expressed an interest in that work, he leaves his own group, walks straight through the royal party up to the Crown Prince of Denmark, holds out his hand and with a smile so winning that no one could see it and be unmoved, says, "How do you do, Crown Prince. I am Joseph Fels, interested in bringing the land and the people together." Amazement on the part of his own friends, consternation and surprise on the part of the Crown Prince's suite have no effect on either. Man meets man, and those who knew Joseph Fels are glad

that the Crown Prince rose to his level, held out his hand, walked away with him for a two hours' conversation on problems bigger than the breaking of conventional forms. Joseph Fels' democracy was big enough to include all human beings whether kings or the men who do the menial work of the world.

The strength of Mr. Fels' personality was his naïve unconsciousness. His emotions were those of a child. Criticism hurt him only when it was personal. It usually stirred the fight in him, and in wordy conflicts he was rarely unsuccessful because he was fortified by an idea. His egoism was a delight to those who were big enough to understand him; it was simply the honesty of the child nature of the man. His was a natural reaction to the forces with which the conventional world brought him in conflict. To those most intimately connected with him credit must be given for affording free play to this striking personality. The little mannerisms in speech, whether merely ungrammatical or verging on explosive abuse were by-products of the man's nature, and were not tampered with by those who prac-

ticed correct grammar and elegant diction. He was surrounded by such friends who appreciated and loved his individual traits as parts of a big personality. Joseph Fels was not the kind of man who could be made over into the polite, urbane, self-effacing man who operated from behind breastworks. He was dynamic, out in the open, fighting with every emotion that caught him, but always with a heart tender, true and direct.

This account of Joseph Fels can be appropriately closed by a description of his speech at Balliol College, Oxford, written by Miss Margaret McMillan. It was a dramatic moment in which the most progressive of moderns stated his case in the home and atmosphere of age-long conservatism.

“He arrived in a motor car—an eager, imperious little man in a soft felt hat and rather worn over-coat. But I did not see the arrival and caught my first glimpse of him at the end of shadowy cloisters, and in a soft cool twilight that seemed remote indeed from the outer street in the heat of late August noon.

“Dim was the old College, and peopled with

shades. Here walked the dead; luminous-eyed men who wrote saintly hymns, scholars and statesmen and at least one immortal poet. The winding corridors and stairs, the doorways with their worn steps, and the long aisles under heavy roofs of darkened stone were haunted by these. And what stillness everywhere, a busy kind of hush as if the air was full of mysteries, veiled life.

“Suddenly at the end of a corridor the small, eager figure of Joseph Fels appeared, his coat swinging wide, his soft hat drawn down over his face at a impudent tilt. It was a surprise. For though it was known that he was coming to address the summer students of the University Extension movement, the news never reached me. Few of the men and women now busy and happy with their tutors knew anything of Joseph Fels, save that he was a rich man who spent his money freely in rather unusual ways. Later they would gather for tea in the grounds of Balliol College and hear what he had to say.

“Still Oxford is hospitable in its way. Who would not wish to do the honors of such

a place as this world-famed center of life and learning. A young undergraduate chaperoned the guest. We walked through many halls, went into the vast kitchens of Wolsey's College, looked down Addison's walk and peered into stately rooms hung with portraits, and smaller chambers where the great ones of the world had lived. As the sun sank low in the west we went back to the grounds of Balliol College, where the ghosts gave place to the work-a-day life of the world.

"A large number of men and women were gathered from every part of England. They represented almost every class, engineers, wagon-makers, factory hands from Lancashire, 'waivers' from Bradford, arsenal workers and at least one navy. Casual laborers too, railway men, clerks, one or two titled women, and mingled with these, scholars, tutors, and literary stars. A brilliant young leader-writer of the *Morning Post*, an Archbishop's son in a 'blazer' and one dean of College. A very motley gathering certainly. It included some of the best of England's scholars and leaders of thought. There was also a sprinkling of

elementary school-teachers. A clever, robust-looking Yorkshire mill-girl who wrote very good essays sat in the foreground with a group of her girl friends, talking to a brilliant young tutor.

“The little American was the focus of all attention and interest for a moment as he came in, his face pale, with the strange pallor of the Eastern. His manner was nervous, though rather jocular, for he was not at all unconscious of the elements of power as well as prestige in the men and women before him, as well as of the historic site. As he took off his hat he showed a typically Jewish head, wide and rounded. Time and again that figure has appeared in gatherings at critical moments. Modern? No. He stood in the midst of the big crowd scattered around the lawn and on the slopes, under the dark walls, the type of the wandering race that has suffered in many lands ere there was any thought of Balliol College, and had heard the law given on Sinai.

“Everyone expected him to be modern, however. The chairman introduced him briefly as an American, a business man who

lived in England during part of every year, and announced his subject (though everyone knew it and smiled a little over it) as 'The Land.' 'You're quite right there,' said Mr. Fels, 'I've only one subject, I've only one lecture. The Gospel isn't long, it's short. But you can say it over a great many times without getting to the end of it. Yes, I'm going to talk to you about the land—this earth you're standing on. Who does it belong to? Who made it? Who's got a right to it? That's what I am going to talk about here, that's what I am talking about all the time.'

"The whole company looked a little bored, though amused. The smart factory girl smiled, becoming conscious of the speaker's deficiencies, his accent and his unceremonious way of speaking. The students in the Economics classes (there were a great many of them) fresh from their books brightened for a moment and then grew dull. A chill wind went round the whole assembly and not even the courteous intent look on the Balliol men's faces tempered it in the least. On the contrary the careful politeness emphasized the

chill. A great many young students thought they knew what their teachers were thinking, and threw them half-apologetic and deferential glances. The Jew, under his well-defined surface manners, was perfectly conscious of all this and it angered him. He began to speak rapidly, with new emphasis. He also used the unscholarly word 'damn.' The Yorkshire girl, fresh from studies that rendered her a little intolerant, could hardly conceal her indignation. Then suddenly the speaker, fighting thus for a moment with his audience, appeared to transfer his scene of operations. It was as if a rider dragged at his horse's heels vaulted into the saddle. He got hold of the reins of his own anger, his own ruffled temper. He vaulted into a new attitude and found his place. All was shown somehow at once in his face, in his voice, which lost its fretted tones, and very soon, in his speech. 'Learning itself—I make claim to none and am an ignorant man by comparison with many of you—must flourish best at last on a soil that is free from evil undergrowths. But are these conditions secured here or even in new countries? You know very



well that the poor come to these colleges only by reason of an agitation raised in very modern days, and even now by the will of those who have secured every privilege by the initial privilege of land-owning. Below every movement that calls itself progressive but puts off the consideration of the evil of private monopoly in land values, there is a moral evil that poisons everything. To postpone the removal of this is to postpone every other reform or vitiate it. Yes, this is what I have come here to say.' He paused for a moment, and a look of infinite gentleness, sympathy and humility came to his face.

"The audience was graver now though a movement of resentment flowed into it.

"Now the voice gathered strength, but it was a new kind of strength. Ever more detached, it seemed yet nearer and more intimate. It took no account of the differences of those before him, still less of their feeling or relation to him. Where now, was the rich man, the millionaire? Through the calm, sun-bathed space between the college walls, and over the green shaven mound, it rose and fell—

the Voice as of one crying in the wilderness. With passionate faith, in perfect self-surrender, in quiet acceptance of all labor and loss and all suffering, and with a hope that bore up the soul to fair and cloudless heights, it beat against every heart as at a heavy door. And when the speaker ended at last,—falling back in his rôle of diffident, half-jocular millionaire philanthropist, as suddenly as a bird falls into its nest on the earth, there was deep silence for a moment, a silence far more charged with meaning than was the so-called debate that followed. Looking spent, and very white and small he sat down.

“Did one hear that Voice again? Yes, indeed, though not on that day nor for a few months later. In the evening, he was, I remember, a little subdued, and had nothing to say about the University, nothing about his critics and antagonists in the debate.

“But I did hear the Voice again. It was after the news came of his death in Philadelphia. They say he was carried into a great hall and lay in the midst of a great multitude. Many wept, and they praised him. Love

was round him in death like a sun-lit sea about a storm-rent battleship. Silent he lay, yet not silent. Again we saw the dim cloisters, the smooth lawn of Balliol, and the modern students of many social orders. And his words rang out now, but like a strain of music. Strong words and brave, words that will not die, nor be forgotten. For they tell of that which abides amid all passing shadows, of something that does not yield to doubt or fear, or earthly powers, and which however baffled or delayed cannot fail at last."









