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HENRY GEORGE AND HIS LAND THEORIES.
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The fifth article of the amendments to the Constitution of the United States, and the first article of the Constitution of the State of New York, distinctly say: "Nor shall private property be taken for public use without compensation." Every one knows, from illustrations every day occurring, that by "private property" the constitutions mean private property in land as well as in houses. It is necessary to make this observation, for recent writers and speakers have argued that because the term land is not mentioned in the articles quoted, as well as in some of the works of standard authors defending the rights of property, they cannot be interpreted to include land. The Constitution of the State of New York, in the seventh section of the first article, prescribes even the manner in which the State must proceed in order legally to acquire title to land owned by a private citizen but deemed necessary for public use.

One would naturally suppose, then, that in a great country like ours, where good land is so cheap that it may be had almost for nothing, and so abundant that there is enough to give every adult American one hundred and sixty acres; in a country in which there are no feudal privileges, no laws of entail or of primogeniture, and in which we have tried to make all men equal, so far as equality is possible, by universal suffrage, an attempt at agrarian revolution would fail to get any decent support. In the congested cities of Europe, in the nations of class-privilege and limited suffrage, in municipalities where even honest and industrious labor often fails to find either employment or fair wages, we can understand the discontent of the peasants and laboring classes. But that Americans, natives of the soil, should preach a crusade against our republican rights of property, is matter for serious reflection.

The theory of Mr. George is essentially anti-American. It is contrary to the letter and the spirit of all our institutions. We have grown to be a great people by individual enterprise and exertion. It needs no proof that Individualism and not Socialism or Communism, decentralization and not centralization, are at the bottom of our political and material growth and prosperity.

We have called it the theory of Mr. George, but it is really not his except by adoption. He has merely naturalized it. He has taken it from Herbert Spencer, the English philosopher, although in other forms it is as old as the first heresies. We need not delay in making extracts from the writings of Mr. Spencer to show that Mr. George has only copied the Englishman's views and given them a new dress in The Land

Question and Progress and Poverty. Mr. George admits this himself in the former of these two works.* We do not know but that Mr. George has borrowed also from a Canadian writer, a certain William Brown, who in 1881 published at Montreal The Land Catechism: Is Rent Just? In this work the same ideas and the same arguments are found as in Progress and Poverty; and as both books appeared about the same time, it is hard to say whether Brown borrowed from George, or George from Brown, or both from Spencer. The theory of land-nationalization, of the destruction of private property in land, and of making the state the only landlord, never grew naturally out of American soil. We incline to think, therefore, that the germ of it was wafted either by an eastern gale from England or a blizzard from Canada, till it unfortunately found a resting-place in the enterprising brain of Mr. George.f

* The Land Question, p. 44. New York : Lovell.

It would be more correct to say that Fichte, the German pantheist, is the modern father of George's theory in his work. Materials for the Justification of the French Revolution, Fichte defines property as George does.

The syllogism—and Mr. George is fond of syllogisms—which underlies the whole of his book on Progress and Poverty is the following: "The cause of poverty should be abolished; but the cause of poverty is private property in land; therefore private property in land should be abolished." We shall say nothing to the major of this syllogism, except that the reformer who undertakes to abolish the cause of poverty has a very hard task before him. So many are poor from their own fault, so many remain poor even when helped, and so many will remain poor in spite of every assistance given, that it is impossible to abolish the evil. A greater than Mr. George has said: "The poor you have always with you"; and history shows that poverty has always existed. We fear Mr. George will never abolish poverty until he succeeds in abolishing the freedom of the human will and preventing men from squandering their earnings upon their passions. Can it be that Mr. George sincerely believes that, after centuries of unsuccessful effort on the part of creeds and civilizations to abolish poverty, he alone has found the solution of the problem by an English patent with an American stamp on its back?

But we dismiss the major premise. The minor is the back bone of Mr. George's syllogism. Let us not be accused of misrepresenting him. Here are his words: "If private property in land be just, then is the remedy I propose a false one; if, on the contrary, private property in land be unjust, then is the remedy the true one." These are his words in the seventh book of Progress and Poverty, in a chapter of which the heading is: "The Injustice of Private Property in Land." Again in the same chapter, after a lengthy attempt to prove his thesis, he writes:

"Whatever may be said for the institution of private property in land, it is therefore plain that it cannot be defended on the score of justice." . . . "There is on earth no power which can rightfully make a grant of exclusive ownership in land." "Though the sovereign people of the State of New York consent to the landed possessions of the Astors, the puniest infant that comes wailing into the world in the squalidest room of the most miserable tenement-house becomes at that moment seized of an equal right with the millionaires; and it is robbed if the right is denied." . . . "The wide-spreading social evils which everywhere oppress men amid an advancing civilization spring from a great primary wrong—the appropriation, as the exclusive property of some men, of the land on which and from which all must live. From this fundamental injustice flow all the injustices which distort and endanger modern development, which condemn the producer of wealth to poverty and pamper the non-producer in luxury, which rear the tenement-house with the palace, plant the brothel behind the church, and compel us to build prisons as we open new schools."

No one would believe it, unless he had read it, that Mr. George thus holds that not only is private property in land robbery, but even the cause of other crimes—the creator of the brothel and the jail! And yet the criminal owner of a farm and the thieving lot-owner hold on to their dishonest possessions, and will not yield them voluntarily to the state. And the industrious and sober but wicked mechanic and laborer continue to economize in whiskey and tobacco in order to be able to commit the crime of owning their own lots, and thus helping to send some one into a brothel or a jail! Thus we have Mr. George's doctrine in his own words. Before analyzing his arguments in its favor let us free the question from wordy ambiguity.

There was a sect in the very early ages of Christianity called the "Apostolicals," of whom St. Augustine writes in his work on Heresies, heresy No. 40. They held a doctrine very much like that of Mr. George, and denied the right of any man to own property. Prudhomme, the French Communist, adopted their principles when he said that "property is theft." Mr. Geoige does not say that all property is theft; the only dishonest possession, according to him, is that of "private property in land."

Now, men may differ about the origin of titles to hold land. Some trace them to the law of nature, others to the law of nations, and others to the law of the state. But although orthodox writers may differ as to the origin of titles to private ownership, all admit the right itself; and whether the title comes from the law of the state or from the law of nations, in the last analysis it is sanctioned by the law of nature, for neither the state nor the law of nations could make that which is intrinsically unjust, just. We have been unable to find any orthodox writer on law or theology who denies the justice of private ownership of land. But Mr. George, from his words quoted above, denies that even the state can give valid title: "There is on earth no power which can

rightfully make a grant of exclusive ownership in land." Thus, then, even the grants of land made by the state to soldiers after a just war are all invalid. If the United States government had conceded to General Grant a farm in recompense for his services in saving the Union, the act would be invalid and the title vend, according to Mr. George's theory.

Orthodox writers also teach that while private property in land is just, so also is ownership by a corporation or by the state. The state is an owner, and so may be the individual or the corporation. But the right of the individual primordially and aboriginally precedes the right of the state. Adam was the first owner of property; he had logical and real rights as an individual, even before he became the "covenanted head" of the race. For some time he was alone in the world. When Eve was formed to be his wife she and Adam were the only property owners on this earth. After they had children, and these children begot others, quarrels about persons and property arose, and then the families united and made the state to be, as it were, a policeman to keep order and protect rights. The state, then, in the form of its organization, is the creature of the family. Its rights are therefore limited by the rights of families or of the individuals who compose them. It is true that the authority of the state is from God, and that the state has the right of eminent domain, in virtue of which it can abridge or take away class privileges, or curtail private ownership for the benefit of the whole community. How far this right of eminent domain may extend we are not going to discuss. It fluctuates, like the mercury in a barometer, in different political systems. The opinion of Americans as to the extent of eminent domain is expressed by the article of the Constitution already quoted and by other laws. But the right of a corporation to own property—the right of the municipality of New York, for instance, to own the Central Park, and the right of the state to own certain territory—in no way collides with the right of the individual to own his lot or his farm. If Mr. George had simply taught that if we wish to be perfect we should "sell all we possess and give to the poor"; if he had simply argued in favor of the superior advantages of a common to a private ownership, no one would accuse him of holding unsound opinions. As far as orthodox theologians are concerned, they would denounce as strongly the teaching that would deny the right of a state or of a community to hold land, or the writer who would insist that private ownership is the only one that is valid, as they do now the theory that private ownership is unjust. Communism in its best form has always flourished in the Catholic Church alongside of private ownership. Mr. George will labor long before he can establish such perfect forms of the holding of property in common as have existed, and still exist, in the monastic institutions of Christianity.

The right of private property is limited by the state's eminent domain, by the necessities of other men, as well as by the universal law of charity, that makes all things common in case of extreme necessity. Common sense and reason limit the

extent of private ownership, even when acquired by priority of occupation. We are not going to discuss the limits of ownership, because the question is not pertinent to the subject. The justice of private ownership is one thing, the limits of it another, and while the former is certain the latter is disputable.

If Mr. George's purpose were merely to improve the condition of the laboring classes by obtaining for them better wages or shorter hours where needed, or to limit the power of corporations or curtail the influence of monopolies, no Catholic theologian would have spilled a drop of ink in trying to injure his cause. But he says that private property in land is the cause of poverty and is unjust.

We freely admit that poverty might, indeed, be a consequence of land-monopoly used contrary to the laws of justice and charity; but private ownership itself is naturally a means to wealth. If we were to argue from history it might be shown that common ownership has produced as much poverty as private ownership. The wretched and impoverished condition of the ancient Gauls and Germans, as described by Caesar* and Tacitus,^t is inferentially attributed by those writers to the holding of land in common. Tenure in common killed individual exertion and destroyed the progress to which private ownership stimulates. When everybody owned the acre, every one shirked the labor of improvement and threw the responsibility on his neighbor's shoulders.

* De Bello Gallico, vi. ch. 22.

t Grrmania, ch. a6.

Nor does the history of the people of God favor Mr. George's theory. We are willing to give him all the advantage he thinks he finds in the texts of the Bible that "God hath given the earth to the sons of men," and that "the Lord's is the earth and the fulness thereof," and "you shall not sell the land for ever, for the land is mine, saith the Lord." If he is going to quote Scripture for us in defence of his proposition that "private property in land is unjust," he ought to state at the same lime that his interpretation of these texts is contrary to all Christian and Hebrew teaching, for both recognize the justice of private ownership in land. All our Hebrews, even the most orthodox rabbis, like to own town lots, and if they own them they keep them, or sell them, or transmit them to their heirs with calm consciences in spite of the text, "You shall not sell the land forever." Surely the whole Christian Church and the whole Synagogue are as good interpreters of the Bible as Mr. George. The Lord is the absolute owner of the earth. Who denies it? God is the absolute owner of every human being as well as of the earth, and yet Mr. George derives the right of a man to property from "the right of a man to himself, to the use of his own powers."^{*} He surely does not mean by this, however, that a man has an absolute right to himself—the right to commit suicide, for

instance? The absolute dominion of God over the earth is not contradictory to private ownership of land by a human being, any more than the state's right of eminent domain is irreconcilable with the citizen's right to his lot or to his farm. As to God, we are all tenants at will, not only as to ownership of property but also as to ownership of our lives. When we claim the justice of private ownership in land, we do not mean that the owner can keep it in spite of God's will, but that he can sell it, transmit it to his heirs, and exclude other men from its possession. God, of course, has given the earth to the sons of men, but he has not specified the manner in which they must own it. Some of them own it in common, others individually, but in both cases with a just and valid title. The law of nature is equally indifferent to communal or to private ownership.¹ Where does Mr. George find a text that forbids private property in land, and prescribes that the community can be the sole honest owner?

* Progress and Poverty, p. jco. Appleton. 1882.

t This is what St. Thomas means when he says : "If you consider this field absolutely, there is no reason in it why it should belong to one man rather than to another; but if you consider it in relation to the need of cultivation and of pacific use of the field, in this regard it is opportune that it should belong to one and not to another" (2a, 2ae, quaest. 57, art. iii) As it is not easy in an English translation to give all the shades of meaning of the Angelic Doctor, we quote the original text: "Si enim consideretur iste ager absolute, non habet unde magis sit ius latus quam illius; sed si consideretur per respectum ad opportunitatem colendi, et ad pacificum usum agri, secundum hoc habet quamdam commensurationem ad hoc quod sit unum et non alterius."

Jewish legislation on this subject was special and national, and was never intended to be universal. When the Israelites conquered the promised land—a land specially donated to them by the Supreme Owner, God—Josue divided the whole country into twelve provinces, giving one to each tribe. No tribe could encroach on the land of another. Then each family got a share by a subdivision, and the families were forbidden to alienate for ever the portion of land assigned to them. What was this but a law of entail, to which Mr. George is opposed? The Jews by a special law were obliged to celebrate the Jubilee year, which was every fiftieth. This Jubilee year was one of privileges; in it slaves were set free, and property sold within the last fifty years reverted to the original possessor. The right to sell land was permitted to the Jews, and they could give title only for fifty years. Such sale did not injure the possessor, because he knew in disposing of it that he could sell or buy only for a fixed period.

This special Hebrew land legislation was in order to keep the tribes separate; for the priestly and levitical functions belonged exclusively to the tribe of Levi, and the Messias was to come from the tribe of Juda. After the captivity of Babylon this land-

law ceased to bind, because as only the tribes of Juda and Benjamin, with a few representatives from the other tribes, came back, its reason of existence ceased. The King of the Jews was God himself. Their form of government was a theocracy, special and isolated. To argue from the Hebrew land-laws to those that should bind the rest of mankind is as absurd as to teach that the rules of a Catholic monastery or convent should govern the outside world. A man cannot justly buy what the seller does not justly own. Now, Abraham bought a burying-ground for ever for four hundred sides from Ephron, "and the field was made sure to Abraham, and the cave that was in it, for a possession to bury in "(Gen. xxiii. 20). By the Mosaic law lands always passed to the children, or, if there were none, to the next of kin, thus showing that private ownership was recognized (Numbers xxvii.) Even King Achab had not the power to take away Naboth's vineyard without his consent (III. Kings xxi. 2). According to Mr. George, as no individual's title to real estate is valid, neither can any man dispose of it by will; for the community, not the children or next of kin, is the true heir and owner.

The first Christians were of Hebrew race. They sold and bought lands. They were private owners. Do the champions of the George theory who quote Scripture forget that in Acts v. 3-4 St. Peter reproaches Ananias, the converted Jew, with his lie in these words: "Why hath Satan tempted thy heart, that thou shouldst lie to the Holy Ghost, and by fraud keep part of the price of the land? Whilst it remained, did it not remain to thee? and after it was sold, was it not in thy power?" When the champions of Mr. George say that Scripture favors his theory they are certainly following in the footsteps of Ananias.

But let us come to Mr. George's arguments from reason. Here is his bulwark:

"The laws of nature are the decrees of the Creator. There is written in them no recognition of any right save that of labor; and in them is written broadly and clearly the equal right of all men to the use and enjoyment of nature—to apply to her by their exertions and to receive and possess her reward. Hence, as nature gives only to labor, the exertion of labor in production is the only title to exclusive possession."*

* Progress and Poverty, p. 302.

This is Fichte's argument long before George used it.

Mr. George is fond of syllogisms, so let us put his argument in the form of a syllogism. Is not this a fair one from his words: "The only title to exclusive possession is that which nature gives"; but nature gives such title "only to labor"; therefore "labor in production is the only title to exclusive possession"? Of course the reader sees at a glance that there is more in the conclusion of this syllogism than in the premises. That more was put there by Mr. George, not by us. But let it stand. Now for an analysis of

it. The major of this syllogism may be admitted; but the minor is false, for, in the first place, it denies the validity of title derived from priority of occupation. Of this title Mr. George says that it is "the most absurd ground on which land-ownership can be defended." * Mr. George, as proofs of this dogmatic assertion, says:

t This is the syllogism which our American Aristotle, Mr. George, pretended to take from the words of the archbishop's pastoral, quoted in this article:

"The results of human exertion are property, and may rightfully be the object of individual ownership.

"Land is property.

"Therefore land is rightfully the object of individual ownership." (See Standard of January 8, 1887.)

Now, as the pastoral does not say that the results of human exertion alone are property, but distinctly claims that the things themselves, "a farm, etc.,," as well as the improvements o» it, are property, how can Mr. George acquit himself of the charge of false statement?

"Has the first comer at a banquet the right to turn back all the chairs and claim that none of the other guests shall partake of the food provided, except as they make terms with him?" "Does the first passenger who enters a railroad-car obtain the right to scatter his baggage over all the seats and compel the passengers who come in after him to stand up ?" t

This idea is found in St. Basil's sermon on Naboth's vineyard. This is an unlucky illustration for Mr. George. It proves against his theory instead of for it. Undoubtedly the man who takes a seat at a banquet or in a railroad-train cannot exclude others from the other seats, but he can exclude from the seat which he occupies, because it is his. If Mr. George should take the seat appointed for him at a banquet, or if places have not been appointed but left to be taken on the principle that "the first come should be the first served," and he should take one, would he not consider it injustice for some one to come in and order him out of his chair? When he enters a railroad-car he takes an unoccupied seat, he claims a right to that particular seat by virtue of prior occupation, and he would consider himself unjustly treated if some one else should come in and try to oust him. And if all the seats are preoccupied he has to stand up. His payment for a seat in general does not entitle him to this or that particular seat.

The very fact that the prior occupation of the seat is felt to give title to its possessor,

and that the community respects such prior occupation, shows that the title of prior occupation is founded in nature. We do not claim that prior occupation gives title to the whole earth, but it does give title to that part of it in which a man fixes his residence, or which provides for his necessary support; and from that part he can exclude others, as the preoccupant could from the chair at a public restaurant or the seat in a railroad-car. The universal consent of mankind, based on natural inclination, gives title to priority of occupation. If two boys should go to a blackthorn hedge—we use this illustration, for Mr. George is very fond of the Irish, especially at election time—to cut sticks, the one who outruns the other, and takes hold of the best cane for his purpose, feels that he has a right to it in virtue of prior occupation; and the other boy respects the right: or if, on account of greater strength and evil inclination, he should undertake to get possession of it, both feel that right is being violated. Nature tells the aggressor that he is violating the right acquired by prior occupation; and the aggrieved feels that he does no wrong by defending his right to it, even by force. If a party of men should sail away on the ocean and discover land without an owner, like Pitcairn Island when the mutineers of the Bounty found it, they would feel that they had a right. They would divide it, and respect each other's rights to it after the division.* If Mr. George should find gold-dust in the dried-up bed of a stream which belonged to no one, would he not appropriate it to himself and claim it by the right of prior occupation? He could not claim it as the result of labor, for he accidentally found it. All the labor consisted in picking it up. Peace and good order require that the right of the prior occupant should, with proper restrictions, be recognized. If not, every one would be fighting for the best place. And order is the first law of nature as well as of heaven. Order and peace, therefore, legitimate title acquired by priority of occupation.

* Progress and Poverty, p. 309.

t Idem.

Here is another syllogism taken from Mr. George's reasoning: "The recognition of private property in land is a wrong, if there can be no exclusive possession and enjoyment of anything not the product of labor; but there can be no exclusive possession and enjoyment of anything not the product of labor; therefore the recognition of private property in land is wrong." This is but the former syllogism in a new dress. We answer it in these calm and dignified words of the highest ecclesiastical judicial authority in the State of New York: The right of property is

"the moral faculty of claiming an object as one's own, and of disposing both of the object and its utility according to one's own good will, without any rightful interference on the part of others. . . . Undoubtedly God made the earth for the use of all mankind; but whether the possession thereof was to be in common or by individual ownership was left for reason to determine. Such determination, judging from the

facts of history, the sanction of law, from the teaching of the wisest and the actions of the best and bravest of mankind, has been and is that man can by lawful acts become possessed of the right of ownership in property, and not merely in its use. The reason is because a man is strictly entitled to that of which he is the producing cause, to the improvement he brings about in it, and the enjoyment of both. But it is clear that in a farm, for instance, which one has by patient toil improved in value; in a block of marble out of which one has chiselled a perfect statue, he cannot fully enjoy the improvement he has caused unless he have also the right to own the object thus improved."

* Mr. George draws the following false conclusion from title derived from priority of occupation: "Then by priority of occupation one could acquire and could transmit to whom he pleased not merely the exclusive right to one hundred and sixty acres or to six hundred and forty acres, but to a whole township, a whole State, a whole continent" (Progress and Poverty, p. 310). How much land an individual may occupy and own is a debatable question, but there is no dispute among orthodox writers that he can own some part of the earth. Limitation of a right does not mean its destruction. Common sense and the necessities of our fellow-men limit occupation. No one claims that a man may occupy a whole continent; but every one should admit that he may justly own a portion of it. How much? That depends. Grant to the individual the ownership of a single lot on the continent, and you give up Mr. George's theory that "private property in land is unjust." Just as the individual may acquire title by prior occupation, so may the state by prior occupation. Thus if the agent of a state, seeking new discoveries for her, should find an island not owned by others, he claims it as the property of his government, and no individual can acquire right or title in it without the consent of the state; for the right of the state is as sacred as the right of the individual. The same argument holds good for both the individual and the state. But in all cases authority is from God. As St. Paul says, " All power is from God."

Mr. George tries to depreciate the importance of this official utterance by insinuating that it has no more weight than the utterance of a "butler" or a "butcher-boy." * Mr. George is not a Catholic. We do not know that he is even a believer in the divinity of Christ. But by his own testimony he has been paying court to cardinals and bishops, and enjoying their hospitality. Why not respect one of their body? No Catholic can sympathize with Mr. George's attack upon a bishop who forbore to speak till the election for mayor was over, and then only discharged an official duty in defending the truth. Mr. George's abuse or insult does not disprove the logic of these words:

"But it is clear that in a farm, for instance, which one has by patient toil improved in value; in a block of marble out of which one has chiselled a perfect statue, he cannot

fully enjoy the improvement he has caused unless he have also the right to own the object thus improved."

* See the Standard—Mr. George's organ—of January 8, 1887.

Moreover, if we accept Mr. George's proposition that there can be no property except what is the "fruit of human industry" or the "product of human exertion," mark the consequences that follow. How can we get title to property in cattle in that case? Man never produced horses, cows, nor asses; will he on that account be denied the right to own them? How can a man become the owner of chickens or ducks, since he cannot produce them or the eggs from which they are hatched? How can he become an owner of eggs since he cannot "produce" them?

But even accepting the theory that labor put in concrete form on material things gives the only title to ownership, still private ownership in land is just. If I clear a field, fence it in, build a house on it, I have put my labor in a concrete form. A barren and useless spot that had belonged to nobody has been converted by my industry into a productive one. Now, if you deprive me of this field, am I not deprived of "the product of human exertion"?

You tell me I did not produce the field. But neither has the workman produced the raw material out of which he has made the tool. The iron or the tree is as much a gift of nature as land. The clay that is used to make bricks is a part of the soil. Land requires improvement to be useful to man: it must be ploughed, harrowed, manured, just as the iron must pass through the foundry or wood through the sawmill to be fit for use. Thus, then, the same argument that gives title to the maker of the tool gives title to the cultivator of the farm. In both cases the improvement carries with it the right to the thing improved. They are inseparable in the concrete.

Again, if land cannot justly belong to a private owner, neither can it be owned by a corporation or by a state. You say that land is common property and belongs to the whole human race; that every child born into the world has a right to live on the land. Then what right has a state to put up a barrier, and mark out a frontier, and claim exclusive ownership of a fixed portion of the earth? What right have the Irish to demand that their own country shall be governed by themselves if they must concede an equal right to their land to the English, the Scotch, and for that matter to the whole human race? Mr. George's theory is thus directly against "Home Rule" and nationalism. If every tramp, as you say, has a right to the Astors' city lots, then the Manitoba peasant or Sitting Bull's Indians have as much right to the City Hall Park as the municipality of New York, and it is injustice to exclude them from its ownership. The Rhine, according to your theory, is unjustly a limit to French or German nationality and ownership; and if the inhabitants of Africa should find their land

unable to support them, they have a right to immigrate hither in a body and take as much of American soil as they may need for their support, without asking permission from the courtesy or the charity of the state or of the American people. In fact, it would be injustice to oppose them, for what right have we to exclude them from "the common gift of the Creator"? Thus every argument against the private ownership of the individual tells equally against ownership by corporations, municipalities, or states; for the unorganized human race, according to this theory, owns all the land in common. If it is necessary to produce the earth in order to own it, one might say that Holland and our "Harlem Flats" are privileged property. They are the product of human exertion and "free dumps." Every seller of a lot on "Harlem Flats" could put up a sign as an incentive to buyers: "This lot is guaranteed by Henry George, for it is the product of human exertion." Happy inhabitants of "Harlem Flats"!

You grant a man the right to his house, but not to the lot on which it stands; but the foundation of the house is often built six or seven feet into the ground. Must we for the future build our houses on stilts, to keep the improvement separate from the thing improved? How can a man separate his property, the house, from the product of nature, the lot? Or must every man build a house of such a character as to be able to carry it off on his back? You concede that he may own the bricks with which he built it, but deny that he can own the portion of earth out of which they were made. How can he separate his property from that of the community in this case? He can sell the house but not the lot; yet in the very sale of the house he gives to the buyer the right to exclude others from the land on which it is built. Suppose the community should insist on its rights to use its property, the ground on which the house is erected, how could the community do it without invading the individual's right to the house? What absurdities!

In logic he that proves too much proves nothing. Every argument used by Mr. George against the right of private property in land tells equally against the right to hold all other kinds of property. Thus on page 306 of *Progress and Poverty* Mr. George writes:

"The recognition of individual ownership of land is the denial of the natural rights of other individuals—it is a wrong which must show itself in the inequitable division of wealth. For as labor cannot produce without the use of land, the denial of the equal right to the use of land is necessarily the denial of the right of labor to its own produce," etc.

Now, every word of this applies with greater force to those kinds of property the justice of which is acknowledged. Substitute the words "raw material" and "machinery" for "land" in the whole paragraph, and you have the same argument, or

rather the same tirade, against property. The unequal division of the raw material, the unequal division of the ownership of machinery, may as well be charged with being the cause of poverty as the unequal distribution of land. In fact, there is greater inequality, and therefore greater injustice if inequality be injustice, in wealth derived from manufactures, greater inequality in the ownership of stocks and bonds, than in the ownership of land. If Mr. George, when he becomes ruler of America, is going to rob the Astors of their real estate and give it to be the common property of tramps and loungers, the Astors had better sell their land at once, and invest the money in factories, stocks, bonds, or books, so as to own a kind of property that Mr. George will recognize as just and entirely exempt from taxation. Let them invest in English consols or French rentes, and escape paying anything to the support of our government.

Mr. George recognizes property in improvements but not to the land improved. But when the improvements become indistinguishable from the land, then "the title to the improvements becomes blended with the title to the land; the individual right is lost in the common right."^{*} In such a case he would not even give compensation for all the individual's labor and industry. But is not this self-contradictory? On the one hand he lays down the universal principle that man has a right to the "product of his own industry." Yet when that product is identified with the land, so as to be indistinguishable from it, he denies the right either to the product or to compensation for it. Thus a man might till a farm for fifty years and enhance its value one hundred percent; yet because the improvements on it were of such a character as to be inseparable and indistinguishable from it, the laborer could claim no compensation for his work! Are the farmers and laborers going to accept any such nonsense as this? Why should the impossibility of separating an improvement from the thing improved work forfeiture of the improvement or of compensation for years of patient toil and industry? Can a man be the laborer's friend who tells him that all his sweat on his farm will go for naught, because the farm absorbs and appropriates it? The individual, forsooth, must heroically sacrifice the reward of labor for the benefit of a dreamer's theory! Is not this sanctioning the very thing which Irish peasants formerly considered one of their greatest grievances—namely, that they received no compensation for the improvement made on their farms, because the improvement was absorbed by the farm? Again, while Mr. George denies the right to private ownership of land, he exaggerates the right of the individual to other kinds of property. He says "that which a man makes or produces is his own, as against all the world—to enjoy or to destroy, to use, to exchange, or to give." * Thus he gives to man the absolute dominion of the Creator over the work of his own hands, an unlimited and unrestricted right "to enjoy or to destroy" what he has made. The baker, therefore, who burns up all the loaves of bread in his bakery; the butcher who throws all the beefsteaks in his shop into the furnace; the drunken laborer who takes his week's earnings and squanders them in the

rum-shop, violates no right of others. He has a right to destroy his property, even though his neighbors or his wife and children should be starving. They have no right even to the crumbs that fall from his table. What right have they to the products of another's industry? This absolute dominion over the products of human industry is denied by all orthodox writers. As in every product of human industry there is an element not the product of human industry—the raw material created by Him who created man himself—man has no right to destroy it when the rights of others or the necessities of others stand in the way. When man is about to destroy the work of his hands, say a loaf of bread, God cries to him: "Hold! You formed the loaf, but I created the substances out of which it is formed, and I want them to be used for the benefit of other creatures like yourself. Your rights are limited. The very instruments by which you formed this loaf, those hands of yours, belong to me as their Creator, and to my other creatures, your brethren." Nay, more, Mr. George's theory leads logically to child-murder. What is more of a man's production than his children? He produces them by generation, and according to Henry George you can "enjoy" or "destroy" what you "produce." Here is the old despotism of pagan Roman fathers over the life and death of their children again revived.

* Progress and Poverty, p. 308.

And now a word in reference to the "unearned increment" of land.^f What is the meaning of "unearned increment," as applied to land? It is the appreciation of land in value, owing to the growth of the community, or its necessities or sentiments. Now, we affirm that the "unearned increment" may be the rightful property of the individual owner. Even by Mr. George's standard of ownership the community cannot justly claim the "unearned increment." The whole community did not produce it by labor, nor is its value the "product of the industry" of the community. It is often a mere accidental appreciation due to sentiment rather than to the growth or the necessity of the multitude. I buy a vacant lot cheap, hoping that the city or town will grow so fast that in a few years my lot will double its value. The city grows, and the value of the lot increases; or the city does not grow, but certain people take a fancy to the lot on account of its position, and again its value increases. But I have bought the lot subject also to risk. The city may not grow towards my lot, or some champion of the George theories may own the neighboring lot, build a hall on it for a noisy socialistic club, and then nobody wants my lot. It depreciates in value. So there is an "unearned decrement" as well as an "unearned increment" possible to the private owner. Now, the "unearned decrement" may not be the community's fault, therefore I cannot force the community to pay me for my loss. Neither, then, shall I yield the "unearned increment" to the community, the product of my foresight, my careful calculation, the interest on my capital, the necessary appanage of my land and corollary of my wise calculation. If the "unearned increment" belongs to the

community, why not make the community pay indemnity for the "unearned decrement"? The latter action by the community would give great satisfaction to every fool who made a bad investment in real estate. By what title can the community confiscate the increase of value on my lot, since the community is not always the producer of this increase, and, even where it is so, is not the necessary cause but only the accidental occasion of it? Does the mere accident of the growth of the town up to my lot, or the building of a railroad-station near my farm, give title to the community or to the railroad company to confiscate the fruit of my industry and of my foresight?

* Progress and Poverty, p. 300.

t This idea and thej words are taken by Mr. George from John Stuart Mill, the English sceptic.

And if you confiscate the " unearned increment " of land, why not confiscate the "unearned increment" of all other property which rises and falls in value according to the growth, necessities, or sentiments of the community? The panic in stocks last December lowered the price of sealskin sacques; the coal-strike at Weehawken has raised the price of coal—must the furriers of New York charge the community for the "unearned decrement" of their furs, and the coal-dealers forfeit the "unearned increment "of their coal-supply, in consequence of these accidents? Is it not rational that the owner should enjoy the benefit, since he has also to suffer the loss, if there be any, from his venture? The fact is, the "increment" or "decrement" is inseparable from the thing owned. If you admit the right of private ownership in land you cannot deny its logical consequence, that the increment belongs to him who owns the land. To take it away without just compensation would be as unjust as to take away the land itself without just compensation.

Besides, if you confiscate the "increment," to whom will you give it? You answer, "To the community." To what community? To the city, excluding the rest of the state? or to the state, excluding the city? or to both together? Which has the right to it? The growth of the city is caused by the growth of the state, and the growth of the state is the growth of the whole world, of the whole human race. Then, as your claim to the "increment" is logically because of an increase of the community—that is, of the whole human race, whose increase has increased the value—the "increment" must be taken from me for the benefit of the whole human race! And who will divide it? Who will distribute it? Oh! says Mr. George after Mr. Spencer, nationalize the land, let the state be the only landlord and rentcollector, and let the state—that is to say, the Republican or the Democratic legislature, or the board of aldermen, as the case may be—appoint the rent-collectors to take the "increment" and apply it where it will do the most good ! * What a scramble for the office of rent-collectors to manage the "boodle"!

* The state has a right to limit the "increment," as it has to regulate interest upon money loaned, and as it has to limit ownership or privilege. Again we observe that a right to limit a right is not a right to destroy a right. Distinguish always between what a man is bound to do in justice and what he is bound to do in charity.

We have already used a blackthorn stick as an illustration. It recalls associations with a people and a race fighting gallantly for private ownership of land, for the rights of farmers and laborers against a privileged class, by invoking the state's overdominion and natural justice against land monopolists whose titles are derived chiefly from the state or from unjust dispossession of the original owners of the soil. The issue in Ireland is not being fought on a Henry George platform. The Irish peasant is fighting for private property in land. He wants to own a bit of the land himself instead of seeing it all in the hands of a monopoly. The exaggerated utterances of some Irishmen merely emphasize the power of the state against uncharitable or unjust privilege detrimental to the commonweal. Although the holding of property in common was general in Ireland, especially when she was filled with monasteries and convents, the Irish never denied the justice of private property in land. The Irish missionaries, from the sixth to the ninth century, who traversed Europe, denouncing vice and injustice, and building monasteries, those great communes of Christianity, never attacked the right of the individual to hold property in land. Both Columba and Columbanus acknowledged the justice of such tenure. It is too late in the day, therefore, to try to make the Irish race apostles of theft and robbery. They are too sensible and thrifty to allow themselves to be poisoned by the quack remedy for all social evils of an English metaphysician like Herbert Spencer or an American politician like Mr. Henry George. "Non tali auxilio nee defensoribus is/is."

But let us return to the blackthorn. It grew near a little Irish churchyard where the bones of the owner's ancestors lie buried. No human hand ever planted the hedge on which it bloomed. It was a spontaneous product of nature, and belonged to the community until he took a fancy to it. By "human exertion," a hand, and an American jack-knife he cut it down. He was the first occupier, and therefore the owner. He improved it with the knife and a generous supply of sweet-oil. He brought it to this country. It cost him nothing originally; now it has an "unearned increment" to him that cannot be computed. He would not give it for love nor sell it for money. Persons who have seen it say it is a beauty. Some who were born near the place where it grew have offered him ten dollars for it. One man whose cradle was rocked near it offered him fifteen dollars for it, but he has declined the offer. This stick, remember, is a natural product of the soil, having had roots deeply imbedded in it, drawing all its strength and beauty from it—in short, a gift of nature to man, and therefore belonging

to the same category of property as land itself. Now, the cane in the hedge was not and never can be private property, according to Mr. George, because it was not "the result of human exertion." The improvement, however, made by the possessor's jack-knife is his property, as it is the "product of labor." But how can he own the improvement without owning the whole stick? Is he a thief for having appropriated to his own use what belonged to the whole Irish nation, or rather to the whole human race, every member of which had originally as much right to it as he? If he is, and he should want to make restitution, how can he do so unless he give up his improvement, which is his property by the Georgian standard? And if he give up that improvement, must the Irish nation or the whole human race pay him for it, or rest under the charge of having appropriated his improvement without title? Then as to the "unearned increment"—how much is it? Is it the value the possessor sets on the stick, or is it the ten dollars minus or plus the cost of transportation from Ireland, or the fifteen dollars that the patriotic and loving Irishman was willing to give for it? And if the community confiscates this "unearned increment," which community must get it? Is it the Irish community to which the natural cane belonged, or the American community in which the improved stick is doing efficient service, or is it the whole human race, the "great community," whose growth grows with the growth of the Irish and the American community? Or must the "unearned increment" be divided pro rata—one part to Ireland, which has a right to the natural product, and the other to America, in which the "unearned increment" of the stick is so great? Or shall he follow the law of nature, of common sense, and the opinion of all civilized peoples by keeping the stick and its value for the very same reasons which justify the private owner in keeping his lot and its value? Certainly, it "Cants suits pro Martino vetiatur," as the proverb has it, land or a stick ought to do a similar service for its possessor.

We have avoided going into any side-issues on this question, and have kept to the one point that private property in land is just, and to its logical consequence, that the "unearned increment" belongs to the individual. It is unfortunate that Mr. George and his champions have ceased to argue these points, and instead have taken to abusing the archbishop and to trying to prejudice the laboring classes against the Catholic Church.

What has Mr. Henry George ever done for the poor that he should pose as their champion? He has helped to make them unhappy and turbulent, while the Catholic Church has ever been working for their welfare. When they had no position in the state she gave them every chance in the church. Even in the ages of caste and feudal privilege she, with true democratic spirit, made them cardinals, and even popes. Has

Mr. George ever built an orphan asylum or an institution of beneficence, or is he trying to build one? No; but he is enraged because the blow of a crosier has left a black cross on his visionary theory, and, like a vain girl whose new bonnet had been sat upon, he goes around crying and abusing the archbishop because he did not at once accept his crude theories as a substitute for the Gospel of Christ in alleviating human misery.