

sent social problem, which is called "obstruse, confused, inextricable and insoluble?" These abundant community-created values are diverted by act of legislation into private pockets; and their loss is made up by the legalized confiscation of individual-created values. Yet this pikestaff is invisible to the schoolmaster of the day.

(To be Concluded.)

THE ABOLITION OF POVERTY BY THE RESTORATION OF EQUAL RIGHTS TO THE USE OF THE EARTH.

AN APPEAL TO THE WHITE SLAVES OF LANDLORDISM.

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CHAPTER III.

PROPERTY AND SLAVERY.

Two classes of things are to-day made the subject of ownership, are alike and equally treated as property. The one class is everlasting and perpetual, the other ephemeral, transient and subject to deterioration and decay. The one endures through all generations, and all the men who ever have lived or ever shall live on the earth can neither add to nor take away the smallest part thereof; the other endures but for a time, and is increased or diminished

according to the industry of mankind. Progress in the industrial arts, in our methods of production, tends to make the one ever dearer, the other ever cheaper. The one includes the sources, forces and opportunities of Nature, the other is the production of human labor.

The sources, forces and opportunities of Nature are all included in the term Land. For it is through the land alone that we can avail ourselves of them. The control of the use of the land gives control of all the raw materials Nature supplies and can be induced to supply, of all the natural sources, forces and opportunities. On the land all men must live, from the land they must draw forth everything necessary to the maintenance of existence. The coal, iron-ore, and other mineral supplies within the bowels of the earth, springs and water-power, are all as much part of the land as are the fields and meadows of our country side and the building sites of the towns.

Our jurisprudence and lawyers, ignoring the real and natural distinction between the gratuitous offerings of Nature, and the productions of human labor, generally confuse the issue by including under the term land, or "real estate," houses and other improvements on or in the land. But houses and all other improvements, whether in town or in country, have to be produced by labor, and, though they may last somewhat longer than most other such products, are subject to the same law of production and decay. Though it may be impossible physically to separate them from the land, things that have been produced by human labor are not "land," as we are using the term, and as, in truth, the term is used in Political Economy and political controversy.

Both these kinds of things, essentially different though they are in their genesis and their nature, are today made by Society the subject of ownership. Land, the gratuitous offering of Nature, and wealth, the product of human industry, are equally and alike regarded and treated as private property. Learned folk say that it is quite impossible to discriminate, to draw any distinction between them; some even contend that any such distinction does not exist.

Upon what are rights of property based?

That which I produce by my labor is mine. This is a self-evident axiom, requiring no proof. Anything and everything produced by human labor we realise instinctively to be property. If in the midst of the most barren wilderness we find a house, an axe, or any other product of human activity, we do not doubt for a moment that it belongs or has belonged to somebody. We should regard it as wrong to take them away, because in doing so we should be taking part of the life of the man who had employed his time in producing them.

Property in things produced by human labor is unassailable; it needs no defence. But can the same be said of property in things that are not the result of human labor, of the gratuitous offerings of Nature, of property in land?

If all men have an equal right to life, then all men have an equal right to the use of the earth, then is the unequal division of property in land a gigantic wrong, a monstrous villany, an outrageous, fraudulent deception of the disinherited, landless masses of the people. But if only the rich have a right to live,

and the poor are on the earth only on suffrage, then is their ownership of the land justified; then we must regard the rich as superior beings, and the poor as necessary beasts of burden. Then is the word "right" an empty sound, and the commandment "Love thy neighbor as thyself," the most hypocritical phrase ever spoken on earth.

If we ask why land must be treated as private property, we are solemnly informed that only as private property will the land be put to good use. Under common ownership it is assumed the land can never be so well used as under private ownership. According to this view, however, the private ownership of land is not based upon Justice, but upon expediency. According to the supporters of private property in land, no principle based upon justice can be found in accordance with which the distribution of landed property can be carried out.

Is it not rather remarkable that there should be no principle based upon justice to guide us in the distribution of the most important property in the world? That our sense of right and wrong, our conscience, should just fail us when it is a question as to how the land should be distributed amongst those who have to live and work upon it? Our sense of right and wrong, our conscience, tells us definitely enough whether we have a right to the tiniest shred of paper or the smallest loaf of bread? Can it give us no clue to our right to land?

Even if it were true that as private property the land is better used, does that give us a right to make it private property? Does the bread in the baker's shop become the property of the starving because they can put it to the best use? Would not the millionaire's money be better used by the poor? But does that give them the right to take it? That the things of this world belong to those who can best use them, is the ruling principles of thieves and robbers. It undermines and overthrows all ideas of right and wrong. And this principle is the only one its defenders attempt to make use of to give a shadow of justification to private property in land.

But even this paltry excuse will not bear investigation. The assumption that under private ownership the land will be better used is based upon the fact that in countries and districts where there are still some surviving reminders of common ownership, the common property is for the most part badly used. They are apt to conceal the fact that such remnants of common property are mainly found in the most backward countries and for the most part consist of the least valuable land; that the use of such common or communal property is generally hampered by antiquated customs, which could be removed without making the land private property.

It is simply not true that the land is best used by its private owners. In every country agricultural industries are carried out by persons who are tenants. They cultivate their land quite as well, often much better than the cultivating owners. Certainly many countries have been ruined by the leasehold system, not through the laziness or incapacity of the leaseholders, but through the greed and avarice of the land owners, who drain the last drop of

blood out of their tenants. Where the tenant is assured of harvesting the full fruits of his labors, there the leased land is just as well used as that of the cultivating owners.

As a matter of fact, in many cases private ownership of land hinders the full use of the land. Throughout all Europe there are many thousand square miles of fertile land privately owned but purposely withheld from use. In every village there are many holdings either not used at all or not put to their fullest use. But those who want to see the worst examples of the misuse of the private ownership of land, must go to our towns, where there is the most pressing need for more dwelling houses, where thousands are forced to live in slums, because the use of the land as building sites is prevented by its private ownership.

The reason why the fable that land under private ownership is better and more fully used, found and still finds such ready acceptance, is that it sounded sweet in the ears of the rich and powerful, affording them a welcome pretext for enriching themselves at the cost and to the detriment of the masses of the people. Therefore they are very willing to accept without examination an assumption which excludes all conception of justice from the most important work with which our laws are concerned.

Of course, the majority of its defenders loudly assert that the private ownership of land serves as a safeguard and protection to honest industry. The farmer, they say, needs private ownership in order to assure to him the fruits of his labor. For the most part, they contend, land has been so improved by the work of its owner that we must make it his personal property. But this is topsy-turvy logic.

If I give the tailor cloth to make a coat, does the cloth become the rightful property of the tailor after he has made a coat of it? The right to life, and the right to the use of the earth are one and the same. Can our right to life be repudiated, or annulled, because someone else has drained a marshy meadow? The landowner has an undoubted right to the fruits of his work and to the increased value his labor has given to the land. But those who assert that to this end it is necessary to deny the equal rights of others, are either deceiving themselves or trying to deceive others.

No, not to protect industry, but to plunder industry, has private property in land been established. Land has no selling value unless it enables its owner to levy tribute on others for the permission to live, work or dwell on it. Those who most zealously defend private property in land are, in truth, not concerned about land as land, but about its rent, and the unearned income it can be made to yield.

We talk about buying and selling the earth as if it were the most legitimate business in the world. As a matter of fact, it means the buying and selling of the right, or rather legalised power, to plunder one's fellow-man,—a business carried on, not in accordance with the principles of common honesty, but with the principles of robbery.

As a glaring example we may point to the infamous building swindle so

long carried out in every one of our large towns. By the help and under cover of the robbing laws regulating property in land, year in year out, our workers have been plundered, their peaceful, industrious lives disturbed, and thousands of people, who by the toil of a life-time had earned every penny of their small fortunes, completely ruined in order to enrich a few cunning gamblers and speculators. In cold blood have our workers been sacrificed, in cold blood every moral commandment has been trampled under foot because our Jurists and Legislators will not allow themselves to realise that work gives a better right to property than the mere ownership of the land.

The man who counts upon a rise in the price of land seeks to get rich without working; in other words, he wants to fill his own pockets with other people's money, to be able to command their services without rendering them any counter service. But does the mere fact that he has bought and sold the land make it any better? Does the mere increase in rent make our dwellings more habitable, more comfortable, more healthy?

But has not the private ownership of land been established by wise and good men, by those who really desired to promote the well-being of the masses of the people? Has it not prevailed from time immemorial, with the willing consent of all great, noble and impartial minds?

Not a bit of it! The private ownership of land has not come to us from our Teutonic ancestors, whose force and strength and sense of justice enabled them to overthrow the most powerful empire the world has ever seen. It was moulded in the shambles of Roman slave-holders, made into law by a Parliament of slave-holders. It has never found acceptance in the heart of the people. It is based upon might, not upon right. It has been established by force, and maintained by trickery and fraud.

Our lawgivers may indignantly protest; perhaps they will tell us that they, at least, are concerned only with the well being of the people. And the rich will tell us that they are the most honest people on the face of the earth, and have never robbed anybody of a cent. Certainly, rich people do not steal; they only so arrange the laws that everything they desire comes to them legally. When rich people say—"The land must be private property," this really means—"the land must be our property." For wherever land is made private property, it will necessarily soon become the property of the rich, and to the poor will remain nothing but the air.

Owing to the insatiable greed of the possessing classes, the greater portion of the presumably free Swiss people consist of penniless vagabonds, of peasants overwhelmed with debt, and of factory hands. And the vast majority of the children born in Swiss soil have no rights in the soil of their native land, but only a right to the air.

You legislators, who talk so much about promoting the well-being of the people, how is it that your laws leave to the people nothing but the air? It is because you have yet found no means by which the air can be made the property of the rich? It is not to your disinterested generosity and unbending sense of right that we owe the fact that we dare still breathe without having to pay for the privilege.

You rich people who claim to be so honest, how is it that as far as possible you avoid paying the taxes legally imposed upon you? The sparrows on the roof tell one another that many of you do not pay one tenth of what is due. Do such doings betray the predisposition of honest folk, or the predisposition of thieves?

You trample upon every law in the way of your covetousness, which demands a sacrifice of your insatiable greed, but you brand as criminals the poor who, even though it be through ignorance, infringe your laws. Everything in the world you make your private property, and then you demand that those who have nothing regard your possessions as sacred.

The one law mercilessly enforced in our society to-day is the law that nobody shall steal. But as nearly everything belongs to the rich, this only means that nobody shall take anything from the rich. On March 9th of this year I read in a Zurich newspaper the following report from our Court of Law, which I cannot refrain from reproducing:—

"On December 23rd, 1908, a little dachs-hound ran out of a wood in the District of Kusnacht and ran after day laborer M. He took it home with him and during the first and second days of Christmas took it about with him, always by a leading string. In many neighboring places M. made enquiries as to who owned the dog. As he could not hear of any owner, he sold the dog to a hunter for the sum of 2 francs. The affair was talked about, and M. was summoned before the District Court of Meilen to answer a charge of concealing a find of the value of 30 francs. The Court condemned M. to 15 days imprisonment, to pay costs, and 10 francs damages."

Truly, it is no wonder that in our society the rich should prosper and the poor should perish. Where the law makes of right a wrong and of wrong a right; where the law falsifies the conception of property and sanctions robbery; where the few laws which impose sacrifice on the rich are publicly evaded and despised: there it is no wonder that the lot of the masses of the people should be so hard and oppressive. Protect property, protect the millions of the millionaires, this is the be all and end all, the alpha and the omega, of our law books.

Where the land is made private property, there must every protection of property resolve itself into a protection of the rich. Where all the land is owned, there the landless have to rely on the mercy, charity or favor of the landed for bread and for work. Property in land is not a particular form of property; it is a particular form of slavery.

He who owns the land practically owns the people who must live on and from it, in the town as well as in the country. For him they must work, to him they must give up an ever increasing portion and proportion of the fruits of their labor. To the rich the slavery involved in the private ownership of land is far more convenient and economical than the slavery based on the private property of men. Slaves had to be purchased with good hard cash; they had to be furnished with dwellings, had to be fed, looked after when ill, and the common humanity prevailing even in Slave States did not permit

their owners to allow them to die of hunger even when too old to work. Moreover overseers had to be appointed to drive them to work. Under the private ownership of land all this is no longer necessary. One need no longer hunt after slaves or buy them; they come of themselves, cap in hand, humbly begging for work. One needs no overseer, whip in hand, to drive them to work; the mere threat to send them away is far more effective than the whip. No dwelling places need be provided for them, nor need they be looked after when ill. Of course, occasionally they may become troublesome and go out on strike; but, as against this, they can be sent away when old and grey, or when business is bad. Finally, we can tell them that they are free men who are accorded the same rights as the rich, and can indignantly complain that the workers are not satisfied even with such equality of rights, but demand special privileges.

During labor troubles we often read in the papers the bitter complaints of the rich that the strikers will not respect the personal freedom of those willing to work. Is it not an outrage that the strikers with threats and force prevent others from working? Is this not a crime, a trespass against the equal personal freedom guaranteed by our laws?

You hypocrits! first take the beam out of your own eyes! You who by means of fraudulent property rights have defrauded the people of their inheritance, who by cunningly thought out forms of law cheat the masses with a solemn mockery of equality, first restore to the people their rights to the use of the earth, which you are withholding from them, then you may talk about trespasses against equal rights and equal freedom. When you respect the personal freedom of others in big things, when you no longer force the workers into slavery, then you may demand that they should respect the personal freedom of others in smaller things. Until then, you have no right to speak, no claim to be heard.

If the words right and wrong are not merely lies invented to deceive the ignorant and innocent, then it is certain that all must have an equal right to the use of the earth. Those who really believe that they should do to others as they would have others do to them, can never believe that some can make their exclusive property that which is necessary to the life of all. To represent the unequal division of land as right, is to make of right a wrong and of wrong a right, is to degrade ourselves by becoming accomplices in the worst fraud that iniquitous laws have ever legalised.

(To be Continued.)

COMPEL THE BEST USE OF LAND BY TAXATION.

Men who hold land and refuse to cultivate it or allow it to be cultivated, should be made to cultivate it or allow it to be cultivated by others. And the way to get action on them is to make them pay as much tax on it as the man pays who is cultivating his land and adding constantly to the value of the holdings of the land speculator.—*Will Manpin's Weekly*, Lincoln, Neb.