

Mr. JOHN DILLON, M.P., ON PEOPLE AND LAND IN IRELAND

Two Million Acres crying for the Plough. Let the men Loose on the Land

Our readers will appreciate this passage from the fine speech by Mr. John Dillon, M.P., on the second reading of the Corn Production Bill, in the House of Commons on 25th April:—

In Ireland at least 2,000,000 acres of the finest land on this earth are crying out for the plough, while the people around are working on bogs and waste and rocky mountain sides, and they are not allowed to have that land. They want no bonus, and yet you will not continue Irish land purchase and allow the people to cultivate this land. I think it is deplorable that a scheme should be brought in for the encouragement of cultivation while the claims of the Irish people are not recognised. Ireland might be some remote country in the centre of Africa. It is quite impossible that this Bill can go through without these questions being raised, and when the time comes we must ask that some serious effort should be made to open these lands to the people who are there close at hand, who have in their hearts still in spite of the years they have spent in desperate poverty, struggling with these bogs which are unfit for human habitation and work, that peasant tradition which is a priceless possession to any nation, and which you under your land system have parted with and killed. Let those men loose on the grass lands of Ireland, and if you never give them a penny of bonus it would repay you in a double way, because they would be able to send you their surplus food. Even at the eleventh hour, if you are struck by wisdom and good statesmanship you will try to remove from their hearts the bitterness which has been engendered in them, and which has been worked into their blood by successive generations of parties of aggression. If you remove that from their hearts, they will, by preparing and growing food for your markets, flourish on the land, and they will rear up a fighting race who have never allowed anybody to surpass them in battle throughout the history of the world, and who are only estranged from your arms now because you have treated them in a way to which no free race ought to submit.

RUSSIAN PEASANT AND THE LAND

THE "TIMES" CORRESPONDENT

Odessa, April 29th.

A great mass meeting of peasants is announced to take place here at the end of May, when the spring agricultural operations will have been concluded. . . . Preparatory to the proposed mass meeting a congress of peasants from the Governments of Kherson, Bessarabia, and Podolia assembled here last week. The programme under consideration was of a varied character, including larger questions, such as the Constituent Assembly and the proposed Federated Republic, as well as the land question and the organisation of local self-government. The voice of the peasant delegates, however, was little heard. One of them shrewdly expressed the suspicion that the land thus freely tendered to them would hardly suffice for all. . . . The danger at present is not so much one of a conflict between peasants and landowners as the latter are now powerless, as of anarchy resulting from a conflict among the peasants themselves for the possession of the land, inasmuch as there is no competent authority to decide. The lines that have been successfully adopted in Ireland might be recommended as the best solution of the problem, but it is doubtful whether this would be feasible under existing conditions. The principle of compensation for the outgoing landlord has not been accepted by the agitators.

—*The Times, May 2nd.*

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THE JEW

At a meeting of the Jewish Association of Arts and Sciences, held at the Toynbee Hall, Commercial Street, London, E., on Sunday, May 20th, Mr. L. P. Jacobs delivered an address on "Social Justice and the Jew." It was a splendid gathering, and throughout the lecture and discussion, which followed, marked appreciation was shown of the points raised by the speakers. Mr. Alfred A. Wolmark, President of the Association, occupied the chair. In opening, the Chairman said they extended to Mr. Jacobs a very hearty welcome. It was the first occasion on which their Association, which was largely composed of artists, had ventured to discuss a subject of a political and economic character. How far an artist could venture into the field of economics he could not say; it was a subject new to him and to many members of the Association. He thought it was true to say that the disposition of artists generally towards anything of a political character was one of timidity; they had a fear that the heated atmosphere of political passion and strife might consume their sensitive souls. (Laughter.)

Mr. JACOBS said he wanted not so much to discuss politics—for he considered that the question of social justice meant something more than mere politics—as it was his desire to bring before the attention of the members the import of those fundamental principles which formed the basis of the Judaic conception of social justice. It was with considerable regret he had to confess, but honesty demanded it, that many Jews, actuated by the noblest promptings of nature, had shown a tendency in dealing with the maladjustments in society towards ameliorative measures of charity while neglecting, if not wholly ignoring, the dictates of justice. If there was anything which gave Judaism a distinguishing mark among the religions of the world it was its insistence on the primary importance of social justice as between man and man. In support of this view Mr. Jacobs quoted freely from the work of Dr. Felix Perles, the renowned Rabbinical scholar of Königsberg. Under the heading, "Social Justice in Ancient Judaism" in the JEWISH REVIEW, January, 1911, Dr. Perles maintained that the modern Jews, since their admission into the State, have devoted themselves with special zeal to social duties, and have in every way furthered social advancement by thorough-going theoretical research as much as by practical co-operation. Social justice has always been a characteristic of true Judaism, evinced at various times in varied surroundings and in divers ways. The laws of the Prophets and the Rabbinical writings have ever been a source of inspiration to the Jewish race in all their political activities. Social justice in ancient Judaism was not only one point, but composed the chief part of religious life; and the more profoundly religious knowledge penetrated, the more weight was laid upon this, until the prophets declared absolutely that religion and a knowledge of God were identical with social justice. Thus, already nineteen hundred years ago, Philo of Alexandria, who desired to prove the excellence of Judaism to educated heathens by showing the contrast between Judaism and heathenism, quoted to this end the social laws of the Bible in one of his writings to the Greeks. "Here you have," he tells them, "the fundamental ideas of Judaism. What can you, from the proud eminence of your culture, set up in comparison with it?" Philo was certainly the true son of his own age, and acted in harmony with the opinions of his readers when he named his work "On the Love of One's Neighbours." Had he entitled his work "On Justice," his heathen readers would not have understood him. They did not know that justice can mean something higher—a greater truth than that in their own law-books. Philo was, therefore, obliged, if he wished to prove the superiority of Jewish law, to praise its love of man. At the same time, he desired to refute the favourite accusation against the Jews that they hated their fellow-men.

But few of the great social reformers, however, were conscious of treading in the footsteps of Jewish pioneers. *It was reserved for one of the most modern and far-seeing political economists, Henry George, the author of PROGRESS AND POVERTY, to show the influence of ancient Judaism on the social education of humanity, and to recognise in Moses a hero whom the world must bless as a true deliverer.* It is inspiring, but yet humiliating, that Henry George, who was not a member of our faith, should see more clearly than any other the greatness of the social law in ancient Judaism, and that he should cite it as an example to be copied even in the present day. Many Jews who work unceasingly in all social tasks, and thereby feel themselves to be essentially modern, perhaps for this very reason refrain from studying the past of their own people. These same Jews are filled with surprise when they learn in a lecture, or read in a pamphlet, or, as probably happens very seldom, when they hear in a sermon that the archives of Judaism have a deep significance for our own times, and not merely for Divine worship, or archaeological research. The lecturer maintained that Dr. Perles had but emphasised a truth which would be self-evident to whoever would betake themselves to the writings of the Old Testament. The early Jewish lawgivers were not content to demand that justice should be done; they went further, and in this they have left upon the world the impress of their singular genius. They gave to the people the plan whereby the justice which they proclaimed could become manifest in social life. For, as Dr. Perles remarked, "More important and more drastic than all their detailed laws are the arrangements as to the Sabbatical and Jubilee years, in which we have marvellous preventive institutions for the avoidance of poverty. In every seventh year the earth had to lie entirely fallow; but since, through the cessation of agricultural labour, the poor man might easily fall into distress, he was allowed to have all produce that was growing on the land. At the same time all debts were to be released in that year, and it was expressly stated that loans were not to be refused because the year of release was approaching. What influence this law exercised on practical life can be gathered from the fact that the Hebrew language, which has a number of expressions for various degrees of poverty, has no word for beggar. The lowest grade of social abasement, in which a person is entirely dependent on strangers, seems to have been an unknown phenomenon in ancient Israel.

After the Sabbatical year, the most important institution of its kind was the Jubilee year. In every fiftieth year all plots of land sold or mortgaged since the last Jubilee year had to be returned free of charge to the original owner or his heirs. Thus lasting poverty was to be rendered as impossible as the retention of immense landed property by any one person. At every purchase of land thought had to be given to this ordinance. The purchase money was determined by the number of harvests which could be garnered before the next Jubilee year. *The ground itself, then, was not considered as a proper object of sale, but the fruit of the ground, or rather, the result of man's labour on the soil.* Very striking are the reasons for this. "This land shall not be sold for ever; for the land is mine, for ye are strangers and sojourners with Me." (Leviticus xxv. 23.) As above stated, just as the freedom of the individual was a fundamental principle of ancient Jewish legislation, we now find that *freedom of the land proclaimed which, on all sides to-day, by Tolstoy as well as by Henry George, is declared to be a fundamental condition of solving social questions.* Buhl rightly remarks on this ordinance of the Jubilee year: "Herein lies the social equality of all Israelites regarding both their personal and their material conditions, for they all stand in a like relation to God."

In our own time the right of the people to the free use of land is supported by many of the greatest thinkers: Ruskin, Carlyle, Emerson, John Stuart Mill, Thorold

Rodgers, Henry George, Tolstoy, and many others, insisting upon the principle, that as no man made the land, it is the original inheritance of the whole species. This ethical right of the community to the land, Mr. Jacobs held to be the keystone of the economic doctrines of Henry George, who was the only economist in modern times who translated into economic language the spirit of the Mosaic Law.

What, then, briefly stated, was the message of Henry George, which is to-day drawing under its banner such ardent and growing bands of men of every faith and race throughout the civilised world? The simple proposition that the earth, like the air, sun, and water, is the gift of God to all men present and to be, to which each has an equal right for his sustenance, use, and enjoyment. How do we know that each has this equal right? Because without the use of the earth no human being could exist, and as it is impossible to think otherwise than that each has an equal right to existence, it follows that each has an equal right to the use of the earth. Therefore, the granting of ownership of land to any individual is an unjustifiable breach of the moral law. Similarly, deductions by way of tax or otherwise from the result of man's labour are likewise an infraction of the moral right of the labourer to the product of his labour. In other words, the land is held "in usufruct" by the community, and in trust for the generations of men born and unborn. Wealth in every case results from the application of man's labour to land, and belongs inviolably to the individual who created it. Man did not create the earth—God created it; therefore no man-made law can justly make it man's. What a man produces belongs wholly to him; *his labour is his title deed.* Is it, then, necessary that each should have an equal portion of land in order that the rights of all may be secured? Not at all. That end may be accomplished by taking the value of land which arises from the existence of organised society, and which crystallises itself in the form of rent, for communal purposes.

If land is communal property, it necessarily follows that the rent of the land is communal property, and this communally created fund would be taken to defray the cost of communal services, leaving untaxed and "undiminished in the hands of each individual the values arising from his individual services" or labour. Think what this would mean. Instead of a man having to pay rent to the privileged few landowners—in most cases artificially enhanced owing to such enormous quantities of land, urban and rural, being held cut of use or under-utilised—he would not only in most cases pay a smaller contribution for this privilege of using or occupying such land as he required, but he would be freed from all other taxation—notably Customs duties and rates on houses and improvements—which to-day make such a serious deduction from his earnings by increasing the cost of living, make the nominally high wage-rate such a mockery and delusion. But it is in the indirect and hidden, rather than in the direct and obvious, effects of the changed system that the greatest benefits would arise. First, it would set in operation an economic force which would cause idle or inadequately-used land—and in the earlier stages the best and most accessible—to be cultivated or built upon. If every landowner had to pay a tax according to its full value, and not according to the use or misuse to which he puts his land, he would, perforce, have to put it to its full use or part with it to one who would. Secondly, it would involve such a cheapening in the cost of production that an enormous stimulus would be given to the creation of wealth—that is, commodities, houses, machinery, factories, railways, money, and so forth. This in its train would cause an *increased demand for labour and skill* of all kinds. Wages would thus be maintained at a high level, and with the abolition of taxes now levied on the necessaries of life, the cost of living would be much reduced. Thus the working

class, who form the base of the social structure, would secure a double advantage, instead of being under a double disadvantage, as we hold is the position to-day. Critics of this theory are ready enough to speak of the "vested rights" of the comparatively few landowners. If our claim is founded on justice, what is to be said of the "vested wrongs" of the many?

But faith in these economic or fiscal results—all-important as they are—does not by any means account for the fire which burns in the breast of every true Georgian, or for the tenacity with which, through good or ill report, he holds to his creed—a tenacity which has impressed the lecturer as peculiarly like that of the Jew to his creed. The inspiration behind the single-tax movement resides in the profound conviction that, through this economic amelioration, through this widening of opportunity, by the juster distribution of wealth and the greater diffusion of population throughout this and every other country—and by these agencies alone—can the hydra-headed social problem be hopefully and successfully attacked, and the road be cleared for that higher and happier civilisation of which the Prophets have sung, and for which ministers of religion, statesmen, and philanthropists are labouring so painfully. The soil must be sweet if the plant is to flourish and bloom. *The physical basis must be sound if the moral and spiritual life is to issue from it.*

Henry George's followers, Mr. Jacobs continued, were encouraged by the growing favour with which their basic principle is being adopted throughout the civilised world. Be that, however, as it may, the call to hasten the reign of social justice should be an inspiring and compelling one to every man and woman with a true Jewish heart.

It was because he felt this to be so that he hoped to arouse the interest of the Jewish Association of Arts and Sciences in the single-tax movement and to invite them to investigate its validity and merit. The question he wished to ask his audience was this: Could any sincere Jew who looked around at the moral degradation in modern life say that all this was inevitable in a world created by a wise and beneficent God? To do so would be surely to blaspheme the Creator, whom they—the People of the Book—have held up through the ages as a just and beneficent God. What, then, is the solution of this riddle of riddles? Is it Socialism? Is it Protection? Is it Free Trade? If not, what school of political or social science is showing the way to "The Promised Land"? And if none, what were the Jews doing towards helping to find it and enforce it?

Professor Huxley, in two of his essays, wrote thus:—

In the eighth century B.C., in the heart of a world of idolatrous polytheists, the Hebrew prophets put forth a conception of religion which appears to me to be as wonderful an inspiration of genius as the art of Phidias or the science of Aristotle. "And what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God"? If any so-called religion takes away from this great saying of Micah (ch. vi. v. 8), I think it wantonly mutilates, while if it adds thereto I think it obscures the perfect ideal of religion."

"To do justly" was the dominant note of Judaism, Mr. Jacobs declared. Monotheism was not enough in itself to compel his allegiance to Judaism, indeed were it not that Judaism stands for social justice as a basic principle, he doubted very much if he could still remain loyal to the Jewish faith. He was in entire agreement with Henry George when he said:—

"That justice is the highest quality in the moral hierarchy I do not say; but that it is the first. That which is above justice must be based on justice, and include justice, and be reached through justice. It is not by accident that, in the Hebraic religious development which through Christianity we have inherited, the

declaration, "The Lord thy God is a just God," preceded the sweeter revelation of a God of Love. Until the eternal justice is perceived, the eternal love must be hidden. As the individual must be just before he can be truly generous, so must human society be based upon justice before it can be based on benevolence."

Concluding, Mr. Jacobs appealed to every Jew to take his place in the ranks of the Georgians, there to work for real uplifting of human-kind. After this war men in every country shall be prepared for bold action in the reforming of their respective laws. Here is the opportunity to re-echo the principles laid down by our fathers and sustained in the economic proposals of Henry George. In this work, he assured them, they would be following the noble example of other Jews, who not only worked for these principles, but died for them. Max Hirsch and Joseph Fels, who, after long years of labour, bore final testimony with their lives. In this they followed their leader, who said:—

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

An interesting discussion followed in which Messrs Lithwite Winer, Verinder, Frank Smith, and Miss Lapin took part.

The Chairman, in moving the vote of thanks, said that he had gained much from the lecture and discussion. It made him feel that the artist had, after all, an interest in economics.

"THE PANACEA FOR POVERTY IS FREEDOM"

WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON ON HENRY GEORGE'S
TEACHING (Boston, May 15th, 1907)

It is the custom of the world to discredit reformers by the epithet of "visionary," a term freely applied to Henry George. That these disturbers of the established order are men of vision is undoubted; else posterity would not populate the pedestals of Christendom with their statues. But that they were possessed with a baseless hallucination is untrue. Because of their practical forecast their historic preservation has been secured.

Henry George was a seer, not an idle dreamer. When the doubters and opponents of his theories assumed that he believed the single tax to be the complete solvent for poverty, and that its adoption would mark the arrival of the millennium, they failed to understand the thinker and the facts. In recently arranging my accumulated letters I came upon the first one written to me by the author of PROGRESS AND POVERTY. In writing to him of my new-born interest in the land question and THE STANDARD, I was led to use the common qualification that I failed to see how the single tax could be a panacea for poverty.

I have often quoted from memory his noble reply, and am sure that his exact words will be of interest now to all who cherish his memory and faith:—

New York, Jan. 14, 1888.

Wm. Lloyd Garrison.

My Dear Sir,—I am glad to get your words of sympathy and cheer. If I can have your permission I would like to publish them in THE STANDARD. If not, can you send me a few lines for publication?