

I'm lord of the fowl and the brute;
 I'll be lord, too, of each human soul;
 No person shall here set his foot
 But must pay me perpetual toll.

A vision of millions and fame!
 My wealth will grow faster and faster!
 I'll change this plain Robinson name,
 And call myself Vanderbilt-Astor!

(Great laughter.)

A BIT OF HISTORY AND ITS LESSON.

(For the Review.)

By WM. C. MINER.

In the various schemes of social reform now occupying public attention, and in the discussion of the same in the press and on the platform, no word by way of opposition is heard more frequently or uttered with greater confidence than this—to wit: “Confiscation.” Confiscation is an ugly word, and to a conservative mind seems to be conclusive opposition to all reform in the laws of land tenure in force at the present day. Nevertheless, while there is no legal recognition of this hateful idea in its general meaning, it often happens in our present social conditions that confiscation is practically an actual fact. A case in point is the following: On the thirtieth day of September, 1860, the Bradford Oil Company of Bradford County, Pennsylvania, bought of one James Hill a tract of land in said county containing about 100 acres. It was a rough, uninviting spot. A part of it was an old abandoned farm on which was one single building. A dilapidated affair originally designed for a stable for one cow, but for a considerable period unused for stabling purposes. On the date aforesaid the transaction was completed, the deed was signed by Hill to warrant and defend the title in the usual style and the cash paid by the Bradford Company. For the following twelve months the Bradford Company labored to establish its plant and machinery for boring and extracting oil from the ground purchased of Mr. James Hill and had so much succeeded that they had secured and sold in open market over \$500,000 dollars worth of oil. Of course the officers and stockholders of the Bradford Company were in great glee over their good luck. The retail price for oil in those days was 60 cents per gallon, so their prospects for future riches were gloriously rosy, and so continued for months afterwards. However, on one fateful day there appeared in the office of the company that unwelcome gentleman, the County Sheriff, with a writ of attachment in the interest of one Griffith Jones, who claimed by the precipts of the writ that the title to the land so occupied by the company and all the oil produced thus far from underneath its surface vested in him the said Jones by reason of the fact that on the day of the sale, to wit the 30th of September, 1860, the said Griffith Jones was the real owner, and not Hill at all. Of course, there was trouble in the camp of the company

forthwith, and the battle for the possession of land and all oil produced was on at once. It appeared in evidence that Hill had been the original owner of the tract, but that it being a rough bushy spot, and almost valueless for ordinary farming purposes, Hill had not cared enough about it to pay the taxes on it and that Jones' title was based on a tax deed. Hill had not cared to redeem the land at the proper time, and Jones had failed to get his deed recorded. For the company the problem was to prove Hill's title to be correct. Hill testified to the fact of occupancy at the date of sale and that although he had no cow in the old cow stable yet he had a small quantity of hay there with which he intended to feed his cow. With these facts, to wit: Hill's asserted occupancy, the intended cow, and the little mess of hay in the stable, the company's lawyers went to Court, and proceeded to clothe their whole case with the garments of legality with the result that the hay held the fort and the company was victorious for the time.

But the lawyers for Jones were resourceful, and the glittering prize of unnumbered barrels of oil and a great plant of boring derricks and oil machinery, all worth a huge pile of money, stimulated them to prolong the contest before the Courts and secure a reopening of the case, with the result that the victory of the company in the first trial was turned into a Waterloo defeat in the second. As has been shown, the date of the sale by Hill to the Bradford company was the 30th of September, 1860, yet at the second trial of the case the Jones lawyers were able to prove that notwithstanding Hill testified to occupancy by reason of the little pile of hay in the old cow stable on the day of sale, to wit the 30th of September, 1860, yet on the 29th day of September, 1860, the day before—Jones' cow—not Hill's, but Jones'—broke into the same cow stable and devoured the whole of that all important pile of hay, even to the last wisp, thus most effectually spoiling Hill's pretended title to the whole property, for not having any title to the land on the day of sale he could convey none. Then followed the court's decree that the land with all the oil produced and all buildings thereon, either actually or in cash value must be paid by the Bradford Company to Mr. Griffith Jones as the one man who owned the ground and all above it and all beneath its surface to the centre of the earth, all of which was very nice for Mr. Jones but not so nice for the company. Doubtless the officers and stockholders all thought that an injustice had been done them as it certainly had, for though Jones legal title to the whole property was sound, yet in fact and justice none of it belonged to him, for he had done absolutely nothing in the way of obtaining oil from beneath its surface. The company had borne the whole expense of time, labor and capital which would have been absolutely an impossibility for Jones individually, so that for Jones and by Jones it was as clear a case of confiscation as can be imagined, and if conservatism doubts it I am quite sure the company did not. Of course this is not an isolated case, for it is repeated in thousand of instances, with the resulting wearisome litigation and heart burnings as the fruits of long years of labor and economy are cruelly swept away in an hour. In our own little city I learn that such things are not unknown and in more than one instance to hold a house and home it must be paid for twice. Such is the condition, and such it must continue to be until that primal error, the right of private ownership of land is eliminated from our laws and from the public mind, and supplanted by the idea that every man and woman has an equal right to his native soil, and that we hold our lands and homesteads, not by right of private ownership, but by virtue of a lease; and that the lessor is Society to whom we must pay our rent and that God Almighty is the only landlord.