

EXTRACTS FROM TOLSTOY'S GREAT
ARGUMENT IN LONDON TIMES OF
AUG. 1ST.

People do not argue with the teaching of George, they simply do not know it. And it is impossible to do otherwise with his teaching, for he who becomes acquainted with it cannot but agree.

If people refer to this teaching they do so either in attributing to it that which it does not say, or in reasserting that which has been refuted by George, or else, above all, they reject it simply because it does not conform with those pedantic, arbitrary, superficial principles of so-called political economy which are recognized as indisputable truths.

Yet, notwithstanding this, the truth that land cannot be an object of property has become so elucidated by the very life of contemporary mankind that in order to retain a way of life in which private landed property is recognized there is only one means—not to think of it, to ignore the truth, and to occupy oneself with other absorbing business. So, indeed, do the men of our time.

The land question has at the present time reached such a state of ripeness as 50 years ago was reached by the question of serfdom. Exactly the same is being repeated. As at that time men searched for the means of remedying the general uneasiness and dissatisfaction which were felt in society, and applied all kinds of external governmental means, but nothing helped nor could help whilst there remained the ripening and unsolved question of personal slavery, so also now no external measures will help or can help until the ripe question of landed property be solved. As now measures are proposed for adding slices to the peasants' land, for the purchase of land by the aid of banks, etc., so then also palliative measures were proposed and enacted, material improvements, rules about three days labor, and so forth. Even as now the owners of land talk about the injustice of putting a stop to their criminal ownership, so then people talked about the unlawfulness of depriving owners of their serfs. As then the Church justified the serf right, so now that which occupies the place of the Church—Science—justifies landed property. Just as then slave owners, realizing their sin more or less, endeavored in various ways without undoing it to mitigate it and substituted the payment of ransom by the serfs for direct compulsory work for their masters and moderated their exactions from the peasants, so also now the more sensitive land owners, feeling their guilt, endeavor to redeem it by renting their land to the peasants on more lenient conditions, by selling it through the peasant banks, by arranging schools for the people, ridiculous houses of recreation, magic-lantern lectures and theatres.

Exactly the same also is the indifferent

attitude of the government to the question. And as then the question was solved, not by those who invented artful devices for the alleviation and improvement of the condition of peasant life, but by those who, recognizing the urgent necessity of the right solution, did not postpone it indefinitely, did not foresee special difficulties in it, but immediately, straight off, endeavored to arrest evil, and did not admit the idea that there could be conditions in which evil once recognized must continue, but took that course which under the existing conditions appeared the best—the same now also with the land question.

The question will be solved, not by those who will endeavor to mitigate the evil or to invent alleviations for the people or to postpone the task of the future, but by those, who will understand that, however one may mitigate a wrong, it remains a wrong, and that it is senseless to invent alleviations for a man we are torturing, and that one cannot postpone when people are suffering, but should immediately take the best way of solving the difficulty and immediately apply it in practice.

And I think that Henry George is right, that the removal of the sin of landed property is near, that the movement called forth by Henry George was the last birth-throe, and that the birth is on the point of taking place; the liberation of men from the sufferings they have so long borne must now be realized. Besides this, I think (and I would like to contribute to this, in however small a measure) that the removal of this great universal sin—a removal which will form an epoch in the history of mankind—is to be effected precisely by the Russian Slavonian people, who are, by their spiritual and economic character, predestined for the great universal task—that the Russian people should not become proletarians in imitation of the peoples of Europe and America, but, on the contrary, that they should solve the land question at home by the abolition of landed property, and show other nations the way to a rational, free and happy life, outside industrial, factory, or capitalistic coercion and slavery—that in this lies their great historical calling.

I would like to think that we Russian parasites, reared by and having received leisure for mental work through the people's labor, will understand our sin, and, independently of our personal advantage, in the name of the truth that condemns us, endeavor to undo it.

"No prophet of the nineteenth century is more worthy than Henry George of the honor done him by the New Age Press. The publication of the works of George will give a fillup to reading just in the direction needed, especially now that re-actionary fiscal proposals are before the country."

—London Daily News.