GEORGE and DEMOCRACY

ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

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GEORGE and DEMOCRACY.

Mr. President, Gentlemen of the Society of Alumni of Georgetown College:

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

In thanking my brother Alumni for the great honor they have conferred on me in selecting me to deliver the address on this occasion, I find myself sadly wanting in power of expression. For me, then, let brevity be the soul of gratitude. I know of no better or completer expression of my feelings than a plain "I thank you——."

The time is rife with social problems, and the world is jostled by social reformers. The dismal science of political economy has been arrayed in fashionable garments, and the drawing-room vies with the workshop in the discussion of her mysterious ways. The old order no longer satisfies, and perhaps with reason. Doctrines and theories that would have filled the conditions of a hundred years ago are essentially inapplicable to the advanced enlightenment of to-day, and modern thought is busy with a thousand schemes of social reform. But, while honesty and philanthropy conduct the efforts of some, too many of these would-be teachers are prompted by motives that are anything but noble or disinterested. They show us so many paths, that we hesitate, and know not which to take. But the broadest, most inviting and most dangerous

road of all is populous with thoughtless travelers, and it becomes your duty and mine to write the sign-board "Danger" at its head, and to lead if possible to safer ways.

Of all his blatant brethren, I consider Henry George the most dangerous to society—not so much on account of the peculiarity of his doctrines, but more especially for the reason that he invests them with a charm, an eloquence and an appearance of logic that are too apt to deceive. With specious arguments and impassioned rhetoric, he sits, like a modern Moses, on the mountain top of popular clamor, boldly dictating from his home-made tablets the decalogue of his new-found faith and uttering anathema upon all who refuse to cross his treacherous river or seek the pleasures of his phantom land of promise—and unfortunately, his following is large and eager, and made up of the very people we all want to assist. But let me suggest here that nor he nor his theories, nor his following are accidental. They are as much a natural product of the society of to-day as the injustices he inveighs against and we can no more brush him aside with a sneer than he can remodel the world with a sermon. To give him the credit of honesty, he and all of us are seeking justice, and all our errors are in a measure sanctified by the greatness of the object sought. It will not do to plead the law against him. Existing social laws, no matter of how long duration, must have no weight in the deliberation except in so far as they reflect the growth of individual and social conditions. For the law itself is a result and not a reason of society. Man finds justice first, and then fashions the law to make

justice effective. The weapon is not the wielder, and laws are never a reason unto themselves. Because a thing is legal therefore, is no argument that it is right. For example, our ideas of social orthodoxy to-day would have been extremely heterodox two hundred years ago. Feudal tenures and the duties of serfs would ill apply to the consideration of American politics of now, and who knows but that when the angel of Progress shall have safely guided us through another century of prosperity, she will find it necessary to re-write our declaration of independence making freedom more free, and dependence more detestable. Let us therefore give error the credit of honesty, peel it of its rind and find, if possible, whether it possesses one seed of justice, and if so, graft the seed on the trunk of the true tree and haply the hybrid will be that other apple, the taste of which will bring back something of the paradise that we have lost.

It is not necessary to have our attention called to the terrible miseries that follow in the wake of social injustices. We see them and deplore them as much as Henry George himself. We see the many, striking with the steel of labor, a few sparks of comfort from the adamant fate,—while the bowels of the mountains give up their riches unasked into the delicate palms of the idle few. We see the strong grow stronger, and the weak weaker; the rich grow richer and the poor poorer; virtue and worth unrewarded while crime and immodesty fill the seats of government and walk bejewelled through the perfumed halls of plenty. It is not necessary to tell us that Dives is eternal and that his offended nostrils to-day, as well as yesterday, avoid in vain the stench of Lazarus at his door.

It is not necessary to tell us that the same sun of progress that has shone upon the purple of the master, has also dried the leper's sores, and given strength to his shrivelled muscles,—until now, instead of wallowing for an accidental crumb, he stands erect, threatening the quiet of the feast within and swollen with the drunkenness of a terrible revenge. Let Dives beware for there is no logic, no leaven of reason in the nascent manhood of this awful pauper. His not to bandy words—his not to juggle with theories, his not to contract for so many loaves for the future as a compensation for so many crumbs in the past. The steam of the meats is in his nostril, the ruddy glare of the wine has made him drunk already. Crime for crime, injustice for injustice, plenty for misery—this is all he knows or cares to know. The picture is not overdrawn. The socialist, the anarchist, the nihilist of to-day is the rising figure of Lazarus of yesterday. It is not enough to throttle the impudent beggar—he must be made impossible. The sins that made him possible must be washed away in the river of true progress. The drunken revel within must give place to decent feasting.

A wrong exists—a remedy is to be sought. The discussion then of the remedy for the confessed injustices of society—whether such a remedy is possible, and, if so, what and how much it should be, is the practical part of social or political reform. And let us not lose sight of the fact that we are talking to no sect—that no particular faith is to be called on to assist in the argument. Christians, Jews, Gentiles, unbelievers, evolutionists, agnostics, the devotees of all the isms that weed like choke the gar-

den of thought, all these are to be addressed—and no argument that is not universal to these will be sufficient.

Mr. George's theory, as I have said, is most alluring, and therefore, most dangerous. The traveller in the desert, parched with thirst and faltering with fatigue, is only too anxious to believe that the intangible mirage is truly a fertile oasis, springing with bubbling waters, and shaded with refreshing trees, but it is a mirage in spite of his thirst, and the promise of rest can never be accomplished. It is beautiful to the sight—it invites to quick and adequate relief and full and bountiful repose, but it will fade into thin air when he approaches it and will leave him panting and unsatisfied on the burning sands of a fruitless journey. "A lie that is all a lie may be easily met and vanquished, but a lie that is half the truth is a harder matter to deal with."

Now, Mr. President, let me state as concisely as possible the two fundamental propositions on which is built Mr. George's system of social philosophy as explained in his book on Progress and Poverty.

The first is that "labor produces wealth," and the second that "the land belongs to the people."

These are approached and sustained by a number of correlative propositions, but stripped of all verbiage, his system is reducible to these, and if they be accepted as proven, his conclusions are logical and unavoidable. I propose to examine them in turn; to show first the disastrous results that would ensue from their adoption, and then, in the light of dispassionate reason to prove, if possible, their inherent fallacy; and, finally, as far as is in my power to suggest a means whereby at least a partial and perhaps

a practical remedy for the injustices of society may be accomplished.

Now, as to the first proposition: If, as is claimed, labor produces wealth—if, in the full sense in which it is announced, there is no increase of product in the world but that which owes its creation to labor—then it is an easy, logical conclusion that labor rightfully owns this wealth, this increase, this product, and that any other ownership is robbery. According to this theory, under the laws of to-day, all accumulations, of whatever nature, not held by the laborer, would be theft, and all property not enjoyed by him would be legitimized robbery. If this is truth, then why blame labor for taking what is its own? If society, through all time, has by iniquitous laws robbed labor of its natural rights, then all hail to the blessed philosopher who exposes the iniquity and points the way to tardy restitution. If it is true that wealth belongs to labor, then the ways and the means of recovering the long-withheld patrimony must sink into insignificance when we contemplate the enormity and antiquity of the theft. Then is there a reason for the defiant communistic cry: "Give us back our own—peaceably, if you will, but give it back, or we will take it." Such would be the necessary and logical result of the adoption of his theory that labor produces wealth. How impractical such a result would be I leave to your imagination. How the ill-gotten wealth would be given back, and to whom and in what proportions; how long the redistribution would remain undisturbed: how future greed and future passions and future strifes could be prevented from again creating new robberies and new accumulations

in the hands of the few to the detriment of the many, are questions that the most ardent communist scorns to discuss. He sees a chance for at least one dividend, on which he can himself fatten, and perhaps in his heart he says that, as posterity has done nothing for him, he is not obliged to fashion any system of social philosophy long enough to reach posterity. But, whether the theory is practical or not, is it reasonable or true? Let us see.

With the honesty of a philosopher, Mr. George commences his work with a philosopher's promise. He says: "Before proceeding further in our inquiry, let us make sure of the meaning of our terms, for indistinctness in their use must inevitably produce ambiguity and indeterminateness in reasoning." Nothing could be fairer than this, and nothing could be fairer than his other promise that, if he fails to prove his first proposition, he is willing to let his whole system go by the board. Now, how does he proceed to prove it?

He says: "I am aware that the theorem that wages are drawn from capital is one of the most fundamental and apparently best settled of current political economy, and that it has been accepted as axiomatic by all the great thinkers who have devoted their powers to the elucidation of the science. Nevertheless, I think it can be demonstrated to be a fundamental error. This demonstration I am about to attempt. The proposition I shall endeavor to prove is:

"'That wages, instead of being drawn from capital, are in reality drawn from the product of the labor for which they are paid.'"

In order to prove this proposition, he sees the

necessity of defining capital in a satisfactory way, and, in order to define capital, he becomes obliged to define the larger idea, wealth. Let us follow him in these definitions. "Capital," he says, "is wealth in course of exchange." In another place: "All capital is wealth, but all wealth is not capital. Capital is only a part of wealth—that part, namely, which is devoted to the aid of production." This definition of capital, I imagine, may be accepted as complete and clear, but, by the way, how can he confess that capital assists in production, and in the same breath claim that labor is the only producer? But what is wealth, according to Mr. George? What is the greater that contains the lesser? For on this definition hangs the integrity of his argument. Here are his own words: "Wealth, as alone the term can be used in political economy, consists of natural products that have been secured, moved, combined, or in other ways modified by human exertion, so as to fit them for the gratification of human desires." In other words, according to him, nothing is wealth that has not already been produced. If this is true, then is his system true, for he will have succeeded in proving that labor does not depend upon the employment of capital, but that all wealth is produced by labor, and that, therefore, all wealth belongs to labor. But is it true?

His reason for thus limiting the idea of wealth as a term of political economy is that "many things that have an exchange value, and are commonly spoken of as wealth, insomuch as they represent as between individuals or between sets of individuals, the power of obtaining wealth—are not truly wealth

inasmuch as their increase or decrease does not affect the sum of wealth." And he instances as examples of such false wealth, bonds, mortgages, promissory notes, bank bills or other stipulations for the transfer of wealth, slaves, lands or other natural opportunities, and then with these examples and these alone, he airily concludes that their presence or absence could not increase or decrease actual wealth, and that, therefore, mind you, only such things can be wealth, the production of which increases and the destruction of which decreases the aggregate of wealth. *Parturiunt montes nascetur rediculus mus!* If it will do him any good, I will accept his conclusion. But let us go back and examine this wonderful process of reasoning. Stated concisely, "the power of obtaining wealth is not truly wealth for the reason that its increase or decrease does not affect the sum of wealth—" But he has not proved that it does not. Has he defined what that power of obtaining wealth consists of? Is the power of obtaining wealth confined to bonds, mortgages, promissory notes, bank bills, slaves, lands or other natural opportunities? Of all these examples that he has cited, the only one that is really a power of obtaining wealth is slaves, and that is a criminal one. Bonds, mortgages, notes and bills are not a power of obtaining wealth; they are merely certificates of power already obtained. Lands are not a power of obtaining wealth; they are themselves the wealth obtained, and still with all the air of victory, with examples which are not examples at all, he concludes with a proposition which no sane man will deny. But the power of obtaining wealth, when that power is understood,

does in effect by its development increase and by its destruction decrease the aggregate of wealth,—and it must therefore, out of his own mouth be wealth—even for purposes of political economy.

Let us see.

Whatever man owns or possesses, he owns and possesses as a man, not merely as an animal. In order, therefore, to arrive at a proper philosophical understanding of the nature, scope and extent of possessions that are applicable to man, it will be necessary to have a very clear idea of what the term man means. He is a very complex being, and must be defined comprehensively or not at all. He not only walks, works and moves with his body, but he loves and suffers with his heart,—and soars to success or grovels to failure with his brain. His threefold nature is interdependent—while he tarries on the earth his intellectual, his moral and his physical are necessary to make him entire. Ownership therefore to him may mean ownership in one or all of these capacities. What his mind owns, it owns; what his heart owns, it owns; what his body owns, it owns; but what man owns is man's. The term wealth, therefore, as applicable to man's ownership, must for purposes of philosophy be susceptible of a sufficiently wide definition to cover all man's capacities. There are mental gifts and gifts to the heart as well as material gifts to the body. There are mental products and products of the heart as well as the tangible products of mere hand labor. Shall the meaning of the term wealth then be restricted to merely those products that labor has already created out of nature, or shall it imply further in the words that Mr. George has quoted

and dismissed without comment that "the first laborers were supplied by Providence with the capital necessary to set them to work?"

Let us take for instance, the original man, the father of all.—No rule can be true of the many to-day that was not possible in the person of that solitary sire of mankind. Nothing can come of nothing. If he was not wealthy, then is wealth impossible. God did not create him poor. Nor is it enough to say that God gave him labor, and that labor —gave him riches. God did not give him labor even. Labor had no existence until the first human thought, prompted by the first human desire, resulted in the first human act. The unused muscle was given but not the blow. The power was given but not the act. The act was man's creation. Labor is man's creation, but the power to labor, the intelligence to direct that labor, as well as the object of labor, was a heritage from God himself. Man's original wealth was mind, heart and muscle, and subsequently produced wealth depended on one of these no more than on another. Man stood in all his glorious nakedness and gazed upon the spreading valleys and the fading hills. No enemy to say to him nay, the world was his. The winding rivers springing from his feet sought out no lands but his; the trees, the fruits, the flowers, the life of all, was his and made for him. The eyes that saw were his, the mind that knew was his, the swelling thews were his, the greed to take and taste was his—he was rich; and when he moved and labored and garnered up his store, his wealth was capital—so much as had been used. Wealth then is something more than the natural product that

has already been secured, moved, combined, separarated or in other ways modified by human exertion. It is also, and primarily, the God-given power to secure, move, combine, separate, or in other ways modify Nature by human exertion. It is not only a new wealth that has been produced by man in one or more of his capacities, but it is also man's original wealth of mind, ambition, will, power, greed, inventive genius, health, muscle, everything that causes, modifies and improves labor in its impact on nature. It is not only the thing possessed, but it is also the means possessed of acquiring that thing. You do not yet possess the gold that lies hidden in the undiscovered vein, but your knowledge will find the vein and dig the gold ; that knowledge is wealth. You do not yet possess the venison for your mountain camp, but your skill in shooting makes you sure of such possession—that skill is wealth. Wealth then in its entire philosophical sense means more than Mr. George defines it. He has the right of course to distinguish its meaning—to say that there is one kind of wealth and another kind of wealth—but he has no right to say that for purposes of political economy, wealth can mean no more than material wealth already produced by human exertion, any more than I have a right to say that for the same purpose wealth can mean no more than golden dollars. Wealth is something capable of possession by man in his three-fold nature—of head, heart and body. The possession may be limited to one or may belong to all of these, and the wealth of the mind or the wealth of the heart is just as capable of producing new or added wealth as labor.

And this brings me to a further consideration of the word Capital. If wealth means more than he has defined it, and I think I have proved that it does, then by his own terms must capital mean more than he uses it to mean, in its relation to labor. Capital being wealth in course of exchange, or in other words that part of wealth which is devoted to the aid of production, is with these limits co-extensive and parallel with the widest sense of wealth itself. If wealth may pertain to man's mind and heart and their products as well as to his physical nature and its products, viz: material wealth produced; so also must capital be capable of a similar sub-division. If material wealth in course of exchange is capital, then is mental wealth when exercised in aid of production equally capital, and then, also the gifts of the heart, which are charity and brotherly love, when used for the amelioration of mankind are capital indeed. Unused power is wealth, used power is capital. The distinction applies to power as well as to material possessions. And this wealth of mind and heart, which is unused power, and this capital of mind and heart which is used power, are just as instrumental in increasing aggregate material wealth when assisted by labor, as material wealth itself, when similarly assisted. The development and encouragement of these forms of wealth and proper use of these forms of capital increase the aggregate riches of a people as really as the development of a material wealth does, and their decrease or destruction means a corresponding decrease in the aggregate of such people's prosperity.

Now, let us return to Mr. George's proposition, which he promised to prove with so much ease;

viz., that "wages, instead of being drawn from capital, are in reality drawn from the product of the labor for which they are paid." By wages he means the reward earned by labor, whether that labor was hired by another or not. Let us first weigh the meaning of the words of this proposition, and afterwards, in the light of discovery, apply it to his philosophy. What is the meaning of the product of the labor for which wages are paid? What is the product of labor? Mr. George has already defined it to be wealth. Using the word wealth, then, instead of the phrase "the product of labor," his proposition may be more concisely stated thus: "Wages, instead of being drawn from capital, are in reality drawn from wealth." His fervid philosophy abhors the idea that the reward of labor should depend in any way on the amount of capital employed, but is perfectly willing that it should be drawn from wealth. Wealth may pay labor its earnings, but capital must not. Even now, by his own confession, is he again convicted, for as soon as wealth pays it is active, and he himself defines active wealth to be capital. It is not enough to say that labor preceded this product in time, and that, therefore, labor produced it logically. The element of time is not always necessary to the idea of cause and effect. Frequently a logical effect precedes its cause in time. The possibility of the product was essential to the employment of the labor, and to that extent the product was an active agent in causing the labor, and was therefore capital. Nor is it enough to say that, because the wages are not paid to labor from an employer's hand, that they are any the

less drawn from capital. One man "acts many parts," even in political economy, and the laborer may supply his own capital, as well as the capitalist may supply his own labor. And as far as labor is concerned, it makes no difference whether the capital that employs it has already been produced or is yet to be created.

Let me then restate once more his proposition, using his own ideas, with better words, and it will have been reduced to the following absurdity: "Wages, instead of being drawn from capital, are in reality drawn from capital." Most lame and impotent conclusion!

And this brings me to the first of his fundamental propositions that I have promised to refute, in the sense in which he means it—viz., that labor produces wealth. This is the sentence that will open wide the rusty doors of past injustice and expose to the hungry gaze of poor humanity the exhaustless gardens of plenty, whose trees bear jewels, and whose walks are bordered with precious stones. "Labor produces wealth." So it does, but to produce as an agent or to create as a cause are two distinct ideas, and no reason can be a sufficient reason to Mr. George's logical mind that is not a complete one. Unless he leaves his vicious circle and goes with me to discover what produces labor, I care not how often he proclaims that labor produces wealth. Labor itself is not the primal producer—it is the instrument—it is not the employer, it is the agent. The original wealth of power, which, when actively engaged becomes the original capital power, whether represented in the person of one man or a million, whether exemplified by Robinson Crusoe

on his solitary island or by society at large, calls on labor to execute its work, and from that moment, labor is its agent; but, though an agent, it should not be a slave. In the history of the world, it has often been taken captive and enslaved, and even to-day, there are iniquitous powers at work endeavoring to debase it; but the shackles are not to be broken by a sophism, and the sufferer is not to be lifted to his feet by a period. The dignity of labor is not lessened a jot by the assertion of a truth, nor is it increased an inch by the blare of sophistry. The doctrine after all that labor depends on capital, should rob labor of nothing of its due reward, for Mr. George himself asserts that land (meaning by land, Nature and her forces) and labor and capital are all necessary to production. Without the gifts of Nature, labor would be impossible—without the power and impulse to labor, labor would be impossible—without labor, production would be impossible—without production, reward would be impossible. Everything, therefore, that makes a reward possible should own so much of the reward as depended on its instrumentality. But given the capital, given the labor, given the land, given the reward, who is to distribute the reward, for it has become between him and me not only a question of reward, but a question of the distribution of the reward. Now, if we had a representative of the original giver of wealth always with us, parcelling out justice and restricting the encroachments of one producer on the other, keeping as it were a vice-deal counting-house on earth, there would be no necessity for a George, and no reason for his eloquence, but we have not such, and we must perforce

do the best we can with the means we have at our command. That capital should appropriate the due reward of labor or that labor should claim the just return to capital, is of course no more unjust than that the land should swallow the product of both It would be manifestly unjust that the feast should be spread and never tasted, and it would be equally unfair that a few should claim all the seats at the banquet, refusing admission to the many who are starving outside. And yet, there must be early comers and late comers. One must sit at the head and the many must be ranged at the side, while perhaps there is small space for a multitude who clamor for admission. Still, there is meat for all, and drink for all, and place for all if Decency and not Gluttony presides. But the tiger has eaten his fill, and woe to the prowling wolf that dares to lap the mangled carcass. Power breeds lust of power. "Homo homini lupus" is still a truism. Man stands erect and reads the stars, but his feet are glued to earth. He is half goat, and no picture is complete that does not paint the hairy leg and cloven foot. But the question reverts:—Who is to distribute justice, who is to order the feast?

Let me answer this as best I may after I have considered Mr. George's second doctrine of the common ownership of land. But first, as I often will have occasion to use the word progress in the course of my remarks, let me devote a moment to its proper definition. Progress, as it may be properly defined, means an advance toward something better, but considered with regard to man in his social relations, the term must be more fully explained. Man as I have said

before, is a threefold being, exhibiting an intellectual, a moral and a physical aspect, and when developed and improved to the fullest possible extent, must be equally developed and improved in all and not one or two of these capacities. Now, society being merely an aggregation of individuals, can be subject to no laws that do not find their origin in the person of its members. Social progress therefore, must deal not only with material inventions, and the added tangible wealth of a people, but must refer with equal meaning to a proper development of the common intellect, and a proper training of the common conscience. The original wealth of power that I have already alluded to is a possession of society, as well as of individuals, and it will be strengthened or lessened in its capacity of creating new wealth in proportion to the amount or lack of mental and moral development in the people at large. But progress is possible only to those who are susceptible of improvement. It cannot deal with perfection. Man's very needs and infirmities are necessary to its existence. To those then who wish to point out the path to progress, the study and knowledge of man's weaknesses as well as the declaration of his rights, will be necessary. The student of political economy must study the patient as well as the cure. To him, the knowledge of "the science of human character," to borrow a happy phrase of Mr. Mallock's, will be essential to a proper understanding of the science of social economy. With this knowledge, he will discover that the principles that underlie human character and govern human conduct are themselves the cause of human misery; that men will not all be saints, and that mankind

therefore, will not be sanctified,—that no graduated stick can measure all men's statures alike, and that no patent theory of economics can make all men equally happy. He will know that as long as men are men, despotism will be possible, and power will be unjust. He will know that all the books and essays and speeches of all the reformers in the world can never make a Utopia,—that man himself is the sole reason for man's inhumanity to man. And now I think I hear the Georgeites exclaim in holy horror:—"Monstrous conclusion that makes poverty a necessity. Could God, the God of Mercy and Justice, allow such a fate to overtake his helpless creatures? No," they say, "poverty is rather the result of rich men's crimes—it is the effect of long ages of selfish laws instituted by a greedy and powerful few, and when we have destroyed these laws and taken back by force what has always of right belonged to us, we will have attained our millenium, and will have justified the eternal will of the great Author of Good." If these enthusiasts were as honest with us as we are with them in the use of phrases, it would not be long before they discovered that we are both treading the same path but that what is an impassable barrier to us in our journey towards reform, seems to their nervous and emotional souls nothing more substantial than a denser atmosphere through which they may push on to Utopia without let or hindrance. It is true that much of poverty is due to the wickedness of the rich, and is the result of unjust laws of long standing—true that these laws should be abrogated or modified—but it is not therefore true that such a consummation would

change the laws of human character or that thereafter, poverty would be a thing unknown. Nor is it true that we blaspheme when we attribute to the agency of the principles that govern human conduct, the countless ills of suffering humanity. When God breathed his breath into chaos, all nature obeyed except the pigmy, man. To him was given the glorious right of disobedience. The Godlike gift of free will that makes us little less than the angels, plunges us at the same time into the necessary strifes of human nature. Rob us of the power to be unjust and selfish, and we will crawl on the belly of instinct, instead of walking erect with the defiance of intelligence.

And now let me turn to the consideration of Mr. George's other proposition, his proposed remedy for the poverty of the world, his social panacea, the nationalization of the land. "This," he says, "is the remedy for the unjust and unequal distribution of wealth apparent in modern civilization, and for all the evils which flow from it. We must make land 'common property.'" He justifies this proposition by the theory that God gave the land to all men in common. Let us examine this theory. If God gave the land to all men in common, he did so literally and not partially. Caucasians, Africans, Indians, Chinamen—all alike without regard to geographical limits should have an equal right under this theory, to all the land of earth. A particular number of people calling themselves a nation would have no more right under this theory as against the rest of the world, to a particular portion of the land in common, than any one individual of such a people would have to any sub-

division of such a particular portion. I imagine, however, it would startle the wildest communist into a smile of derision to be told that the wooly inhabitant of Central Africa had a natual right to a numerical proportion of our own fair land. And still, unless the doctrine means this, it means nothing for purposes of argument. If it means less—if it means that God gave certain countries to certain peoples, guaranteeing to each the common property of each, it immediately recognizes the principle of the right of adverse possession and the other principle of the right of property by prior occupation. These principles, once acknowledged and accepted, as a foundation for any system of political economy, must be universal in their applicability, or they are essentially useless for the purpose of any application whatever. If, by them, Mr. George justifies a nation in the possession of its national lands, as against all comers, by them also may I justify an individual in the possession of his property in land as against all other claimants. But Mr. George replies, perhaps, that he needs the assistance of no principle for the justification of his plan. He claims that he has proven that private property in land is the sole cause of poverty, and that, therefore, private property in land should be abolished. He has "examined all other remedies," he says, "which are currently relied on, or proposed for the relief of poverty and the better distribution of wealth, and has found them all inefficacious or impracticable." How inefficacious and impracticable his own remedy is, the civilized world has not yet seen fit to demonstrate, but how destructive its adoption would be to all progress,

and to all civilization I think can be easily shown. He says:

"Let us abandon all attempt to get rid of the evils of land monopoly by restricting land ownership. An equal distribution of land is impossible, and anything short of that would only be a mitigation, not a cure. Nor is any remedy worth considering that does not fall in with the natural direction of social development, and swim, so to speak, with the current of the times."

Mark his enthusiasm. No remedy to him is worthy of consideration that is not a complete and perfect one. A mitigation of the evil to him is worse than nothing. Poverty is not only to be mitigated, but it is to be abolished. Considering the stubborn knack that mankind has of squandering in riotous dissipation the substance that should buy the necessary bread and meat of life; considering that ignorance and crime have always had something to do with the causing of poverty until Mr. George evolved his book, his remedy is truly a royal one. It accomplishes more in one day than Christianity has been able to accomplish in eighteen hundred years. Verily, he is a "Daniel come to judgment;" and mark how he calls on the principles of progress and social development to sustain his remedy. "That concentration," he says, "is the order of development there can be no mistaking —the concentration of people in large cities, the concentration of handicrafts in large factories, the concentration of transportation by railroad and steamship lines, and of agricultural operations in large fields. The most trivial businesses are being concentrated in the same way—errands are run and

carpet sacks are carried by corporations. All the currents of the time run to concentration. To successfully resist it we must throttle steam and discharge electricity from human service." Now what does the sentence that "concentration is the order of development" mean? It means that development or progress uses methods of concentration as its most important factor. It means that the practice of concentration is necessary to the greatest possible development. But what is the nature of the development he refers to, and what is the immediate purpose of the concentration? Progress, as I have already intimated, presupposes weaknesses and inequalities in men, and the development, therefore, of men, must necessarily be an unequal one Where some have achieved success, others will have failed. But the goal is the same to all. Many seek the same reward, when one alone can win it. Strife and struggle, therefore, are necessary elements of the idea of progress. But the sum of progress, the aggregation of individual developments, these form the progress of the State. So, also, the sum of individual wealth forms the common wealth of the State. Now the custom of concentration has been found to be a most successful method of achieving wealth on the part of individuals and corporations. It has been discovered to be a most effectual weapon in the struggle of development. Cease to struggle, and development will be impossible—cease to develop, and the weapon will be useless. The usefulness of this weapon—concentration—has appeared to Mr. George—he has marked with jealous eye the success of individuals who have employed it, and he proposes to prevent

their success in the future by permitting its use to the State alone. He talks thus in effect to the members of Society—"You have been struggling for ages amongst yourselves for a prize, and it has been achieved by those few of you who have used the weapon concentration. Now I will take this weapon from you and give it to the State. The State will fight with it and will win with it, and you few rich men can amass no more." It is strange that so clear a brain can sometimes think so grossly! Who and what is the State in this struggle towards development, and with whom is it to struggle? Is it an entity distinct entirely from its component parts? Does it itself propose to take a hand in the strife of its members? Does self-inflicted discipline mean battle, and does suicide mean victory? To think of a State existing regardless of the struggling members that compose it would be just as reasonable as to think of a bar of iron existing without the moving atoms that go to make it up.

Again, a casual study of the science of human character will prove that man does nothing without a prospect of reward. Genius and intellectual power demand a reward as well as labor, and are paralyzed without the hope of it. Without an incentive to work, stagnation comes. These are undeniable truths. When, therefore, there is the promise of the greatest number and the greatest variety of the best kind of rewards, there will also be the greatest activity, the most effective employment of all of man's functions, and *pari passu*, the greatest progress. Now, as land is the greatest tangible gift of nature obtainable by man, man will always seek its possession as his best material re-

ward, and will be satisfied with nothing less than absolute ownership. Deny him this, and he will not work; deny him this, and progress will stand still, to move no more. Deny him this, and it would not be necessary for Mr. George to "throttle steam and discharge electricity from human service." The fires would have gone out in the furnace, and the rusted wires would throb no more with messages of prosperity.

I have dwelt on these ideas at this point for the purpose of showing what fallacies and absurd conclusions a careless use of terms may lead us into.

But, after all, Mr. George sees fit to modify the statement of his doctrine. "It is not necessary," he says, "to confiscate land; it is only necessary to confiscate rent." And, to do this, he proposes to abolish all taxation, save that upon land values. "Let the individuals who now hold it," he says, "still retain, if they want to, possession of what they are pleased to call their land. Let them buy and sell and bequeath and devise it. We may safely leave them the shell, if we take the kernel." This confession is enough. No man could afford to hold it, and therefore no man would. The State at large would have become the sole and universal landlord; and, without entering into the discussion of whether the State, in the person of its agents and commissioners, would deal any more leniently with its tenants than the present owners of land, I will be content to ask one or two questions. Are these nationalized lands to be thrown open to the people to be roamed over and occupied at will without rent? If so, then is the red Indian abreast of us in civilization. Or is a rent to be fixed

and charged? The State could fix no appropriate rent for any parcel of land without first ascertaining the value and productiveness of such parcel. Rich and productive parcels therefore, could be held in tenancy only by rich tenants, while the poor and unproductive lands would fall to the share of the poor already. Poverty could not thus put on the robes of riches. Further, if the tenancy of rich lands were still desirable, capital would vie with capital for its possession. The use of lands then, instead of the lands themselves, would be bought and sold in the market to the highest bidder, and the reform would be a reform only in name.

And yet, after all is said, why is the world studying this problem with so much sincerity? Why has the book on Progress and Poverty been read with so much avidity and in so many tongues? Why is it becoming a more settled belief every day that there is something radically wrong in the present method of the tenure of land? Why, in a word, is George's doctrine strong? To be honest, because, after all, there is a grain of truth in it. He has led us up to the Sesame of his philosophy by an eloquent and truthful portrayal of the ills that follow from land monopoly. He has asked us to consider what would be the consequences if one man or one corporation should hold and own all the lands of a State. He has proved beyond a doubt that the accumulation of immense tracts of land in the hands of a few, means poverty and misery and despair on the part of the many. But he has not proved that because much land should not be held, therefore no land should be held. He has not proved that because a man should not own a principality

that therefore he should not own an acre. He has not proved that because there should be no waste in the offering of rewards to progress that therefore there should be no reward at all to progress. He has found a key to the garden gate, and with it he presumes to open the massive front door. "*Qui trop embrasse mal etreint*" But, though we cannot see the logic of his conclusion, though his remedy is impracticable and self-destructive, we can nevertheless thoroughly sympathize with him in his description of the ills that need the remedy. The King or Kaiser who under the guise of divine right, claims as his own the land over which he rules, who rewards his favorites with the lands he has confiscated from his less fortunate subjects, whose hunters trample the corn of the helpless farmer to make a royal holiday, commits a sin whose heinousness is only equalled by its audacity—and the wonder grows that mankind should have suffered the persecution so long. The monopolist who by virtue of his power accumulates without limit the best and fairest lands of the country that has enriched him, holding them by caprice, and using them or not as his own sweet will may dictate, is guilty of an injustice equal in nature, though less in extent, to that of his prototype, the despot. And still, men have always known the injustice. But man does not suffer without remonstrance. For every cruel blow, there is a cry of pain : for every wanton insult, there must be a flush of indignation. It does not require the promulgation of a theory to teach the squalid slave the manifest injustice of his condition : he knew it by instinct. The same humanity that made one man his master made the

slave aware in his heart of the awful crime that made that master possible; and the people to-day, knowing the sins that have helped to cause their misery demand and expect a competent remedy.

But, before proposing any particular cure for the injustices of land holdings, let me here return, as I have promised, to the consideration of the remedy to be applied to the differences existing between labor and capital in general. And here, I use these terms labor and capital as they are generally and popularly used. In reality, there is no conflict between labor and capital. Many laborers who receive the earnings of their toil are to some extent capitalists, and every capitalist when actively engaged in production or exchange is to some extent a laborer. Mr. George himself does not deny this evident proposition. Capital and labor being both necessary to production, can have no conflict in the production. The issue then is not to find a remedy for any struggle going on between labor and capital—none such exists—but to find a remedy for the struggle going on between some laborers and some capitalists. This, instead of being a question of phantom philosophy, is a practical proposition of how to limit the encroachments of certain capitalists, and how correspondingly to better the condition of certain laborers. It is a question of how most practically to distribute justice to the various producers of wealth. It is a live question, capable of being handled in a practical way by practical men whether or not they have had the good fortune to read Smith, Mill, Spencer or George. It is not a conflict of ideas, it is a conflict of men. False systems of philosophy in the past could not have created it and true or

false systems of philosophy in the present can not cure it. And, if this is a conflict of men, the cause of the injustices that grow out of the conflict must be in men themselves. Man must be unjust before he commits injustice. Make him perfect and injustice will be impossible. Make him better only and injustice will be lessened. But man cannot be made perfect. "The just man falls seven times a day" means that no man is absolutely just. And this is the inherent fallacy of Mr. George's doctrine that he proposes to abolish when he can only mitigate the evil. He talks of progress, which means a bettering of condition, and in the same breath, he talks of a mere phase of progress which to him means a perfecting of condition, and the inconsistency is not apparent to his prophetic soul.

If we are seeking for a remedy that will completely abolish injustice, our first success is failure. We have lived and will live forever on the borders of a dead sea and the fair fruits that tempt us will turn to ashes if we taste them. But if a wrong exists, can it not be righted? You might as well ask, if a soul exists, must it not be saved? The same inscrutable fate that makes man the arbiter of his own eternal destiny, makes him also, within the social limit, the victim of his own mistakes and weaknesses. The universal law of compensation applies to society as well as to physics. A jet of water forced into the air again of necessity seeks the earth; a band of rubber pulled beyond its power of tension will break, perforce. Sysiphus sweated an eternal life pushing a stone towards the summit of a mountain, and his punishment was as endless as the law of gravitation. What, then, it

will be asked, is the use of discussion? If a remorseless fate dooms mankind to incurable misfortunes—if riots, revolutions and wars are as natural as thunderstorms and earthquakes—why try to accomplish impossibilities? Shall we, like the Mahometan, stolidly accept our destiny, or shall we wear out our ineffectual lives in futile efforts to do what cannot be done? Let us do neither; for something can be done by him who knows the difficulty of the task. The man who knows his weakness is equally conscious of his strength, and to the people who will not strive to overstep the limits of reason will be given the knowledge of true reform and the reward of true progress. Icarus fell to an ignominious death for flying too near the sun, but less ambitious sailors of the winds will some day make the busy heavens populous. Let us first discover what we cannot do, and it will be made clear to us what we can. We cannot change the laws that govern human nature. We cannot make men angels. We cannot expect progress when we destroy the very rules of progress; but, knowing that man is capable of improvement, knowing that there are such things as good and evil, we can improve as far as possible; we can punish for misdeeds and reward for good. That it is possible for communities to live together in a spirit of charity and self-denial is proven by numberless instances; so it is at least possible that the great community, the people, may in a degree be educated to a higher idea of what is right and a deeper abhorrence of what is wrong.

I believe it has been demonstrated by actual experiment that an infant abandoned to solitude without

guidance and companionship will grow up an untamed beast. Strength to battle with his new-found kindred will be given him,—talons will lengthen on his finger tips to tear his uncooked meat, and hair will protect his unconventional form from heat and cold, but the gentle reason of his sire will have no reflex in the savage eye, and the sweet morality of his unknown mother will be powerless to stay the murderous arm. In one short life the teachings of untold generations would have vanished as the breath from a looking glass; and if it were ordained that this new-made savage should rear anew a race of men, time would have to be retold and progress would have to reconstruct her weary masonry. Poor human nature, lifted through eternal darkness, to a glimpse of right, is again hurled in one short moment to a fathomless abyss of savagery. Constant care, then, constant teaching, constant training, these are the price of progress. Develop the common mind, train the common conscience and the struggle for bread will mean something more than dissension. The old and fretful Lear, cursing poor Cordelia, gave Goneril and Regan, not only his kingdom but his happiness, and perhaps, unless we teach our people morals as well as manners, we may find ourselves blindly masquerading as impotent reformers and bellowing useless curses against the roar of the resistless storm of anarchy. Without religion, the daughter of the heart, ruin comes again. The vines of morality must be planted if we hope to gather grapes, not thistles. But here the social reformer and political economist have no place. The teachers of a higher philosophy have planted this vineyard

and will claim the right to work it through all time. But when the grapes of the heart are garnered and the wine of justice has been drunk, we will be strong to make smooth the rough places and to build our roads eternal. Morality will have taken Freedom's hand and these two white-winged angels will have guided us to higher plains and nobler walks where dissension finds no place. Then to the people who by experience have learned the difference between wheat and chaff will be given the true talisman. Such a people, knowing justice, will be competent themselves to administer it. Democracy will have struck the rock with the wand of political liberty, and the waters of reform will flow to slake the thirst of suffering humanity. Such a people may agree with Mr. George that labor owns its own reward ; that most wealth is robbery, and most poverty undeserved ; that there is something radically wrong in the social structure and that a remedy is necessary; but such a people, undisturbed by the ineffectual bark of alien malcontents, and calm in the knowledge that only the just deserve justice, knowing no master but themselves, obeying no political law they do not make themselves, will guard in safety the honest holder of a fruitful acre, with as jealous care as it will guard the common laborer who earns his token wages. Such a people will legislate and not theorize. Our own fair land made light by the torch of accomplished liberty, needs no self-appointed teacher—she may smile at the unsolicited advice of envy, and her ruddy cheek need not blanch at the lurid threats of imported socialism. She will guarantee to any of her citizens the right to

agitate on any question if they do so peaceably, but she will reserve to herself the privilege of rejecting the proffered remedies. And I have the utmost confidence in the final common sense of the American people. We give the largest liberty of speech and action to the vendors of variegated vagaries, but we draw the line at danger. We made and are still making our own laws, and when we are ready to try old notions in new dresses, we will do so very quietly and without the necessity of the trial by blood.

I will follow Mr. George no longer. Whether I have succeeded well or ill in exposing the fallacy and danger of his theories, I will rest content with my own conclusion, that labor after all depends on capital for its employment; that the injustices apparent in society are the result of the principles that govern human conduct; that human conduct can be improved only after a study of the science of human character; that this science will teach us that the heart as well as the mind must be developed before a people can be prepared for the utmost remedy that is possible, and that this remedy, which is democracy purified by morality, is powerful to give us all the cure that is practicable. For reform has never and can never come through monarchy. I will be content with the conclusion, that salvation is possible only to those people who have learned to work out their own salvation; that after all, the remedy cannot be perfect; that it must be burdened with all the imperfections of human nature, and is effective or not according to the degree of education in the object itself.

And now, as a young man, let me address the

young men who are about to go out from the sacred halls of Alma Mater into the world to attack these living questions. To you will be given the task of proposing a remedy for the abuses of property in land. On you rests the burden and on you lies the responsibility of standing between the oppressed and the oppressor. Especially if your field of labor shall be the court or the halls of legislation, or if, perchance, you shall chose the noble profession of journalism, so powerful for good and so instrumental in moulding popular opinion and in directing popular conduct, you will see the injustice of monopoly in land as well as monopoly in other things ; and your attack will be not against the mere right of property in land, but against the right of unlimited property in land. You will teach your people that an individual or corporation has no more right to accumulate all the land of the State than the State has to aggrandize all the land of the world —that the sin of wealth is non-use and that the sin of capital is misuse, and that they themselves, the people, guided by reason, and uninfluenced by passion, have the right themselves to fix the limit—that organization and co-operation shall make them strong if justice and moderation shall guide their plans. You will teach them further that the granting of immense franchises should be accomplished by a sufficient return to the State, either in the way of purchase money or rent—that the importation of pauper labor is only in a degree removed from the importation of slave labor. These things and others will you teach them, as necessity demands. Then will you teach the world that the uneasy thrones of tyranny must crumble before the magic wand

of Democracy, and when in future ages the lesson shall have been learnt by heart, strife will have ceased and charity will ordain the councils of the nations, and the prophet will not have sung in vain :

"That the war drum throbs no longer, and the battle flags are furled,
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world."