# The Battles for Land Reform in Rome and their Lessons

Being Chapter VI of "Bodenreform"
By Adolph Damashke

Translated from the German by
JOSEPH DANZIGER

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## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

In requesting English scholars to receive with indulgence this portion of a translation of Herr Damashke's "Bodenreform" I am somewhat in the position of Albinus, who, when appealing to his readers to pardon the imperfections of the Roman History, which he had written in indifferent Greek, was met by Cato with the rejoinder that he was not compelled to write it at all—that if the Amphictyonic Council had laid their commands upon him the case would have been different—but that it was quite out of place to ask the indulgence of his readers when his task had been self-imposed. I may state, however, that I did not undertake this task entirely on my own volition, but was urged thereto by Mr. Daniel Kiefer, the genial chairman of the Joseph Fels Fund of America, and with the hearty approval of Herr Damashke.

The translation has been prepared from the eighth edition, published this spring in Jena. In executing the translation I have endeavored to follow the original as closely as is consistent with a due regard to the difference of idiom. Many of our translations from the German are so literal as to produce the very order of the German sentence, so that they are, if not altogether unintelligible to the English reader, at least far from readable, while others deviate so entirely from the form of the original as to be no longer translations in the proper sense of the term. I have sought to pursue a middle course between a mere literal translation, which would be repulsive, and a

loose paraphrase which would be in the case of such a work peculiarly unsatisfactory. Those who are most conversant with the difficulties of such a task will probably be the most willing to show forbearance towards its shortcomings, and in particular towards the too numerous traces of the German idiom which I find it still to retain.

In his review of the economic development of the ancient world, Herr Damashke produces the evidence that it was neglect of their beneficent land laws that developed the canker of destruction, in "the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome." In a succeeding chapter, he reviews the history of the early Hohenzollern kings, and demonstrates that it was the wise and equitable though autocratic regulations of land ownership which laid the foundation for the marvelous growth of Berlin, from a village of 6,000 at the close of the Thirty Years War, to one of the great centers of population, commerce and culture, in the reign of the great Frederick.

Mention should also be made of his short biography of Henry George. To one who as a youth sat at the feet of the Master, this fine sympathetic analysis of his character, and of his works, from one who had never met him, is wonderfully touching, and may be recommended to all those blessed with a reading knowledge of German.

Berlin, March, 1913.

# THE BATTLES FOR LAND REFORM IN ROME AND THEIR LESSONS

## I.

### INEFFECTUAL STRUGGLES.

The earliest political battles in ancient Rome, which are at least partially illuminated by the light of historical research, were struggles over the division of the land. After the banishment of the kings, about the year 500 B. C., there arose the opposition between Patrician and Plebeian, essentially a struggle between economically opposed classes. Land which had been acquired by force of arms belonged, in all justice, to the entire community, but the Patricians claimed the right to its use. They divided amongst themselves the fields and meadows belonging to the Republic, securing it by lease, the nominal rent of which they soon conveniently forgot to pay.

Every war increased the number of slaves, and these were compelled to till the soil for the benefit of the Patricians. Naturally a small freeholder could not contend successfully against such competition. In order to render his military service, he was compelled to abandon his fields, while slaves were not subject to such duties, and slave-labor is of course

cheaper than the labor of free men. No wonder, then, that the small farmers were burdened with a heavy debt, and that the high rates of interest augmented this grievous burden.

At this time the Roman domains were not very extensive, and an unusually great loss of population was threatened in the year 494 B. C. when a colony of Plebeians seceded to the so-called Sacred Hill with a view to establishing a new community, whose inhabitants should possess equal rights to the land. But the wise Agrippa, by relating the fable of the Belly and the Members, effected a reconciliation, which modified the existing servitude for debt, and as a provision for future security, bestowed upon the people the office of the Tribunate. The Tribunes of the People were to be unassailable. They should protect every citizen against encroachments from any official. Their veto should prevent the passage of any law by the Senate, or any act of the executives, which they regarded as contrary to the interests of the people.

Spurius Cassius had rendered the highest services to Rome. He had renewed the alliance with the Italian Federation. In a dark hour he had relieved Rome from the dangers of a threatening foe. For these reasons he was elected Consul for a third time, in the year 486 B. C. In order to terminate the unequal economic conditions, he resolved to admin-

ister the state lands in a different manner than heretofore. When, after the conquest of the Hercaneans, additional state lands were to be divided, he submitted the proposal that a portion of these lands should be turned over to the Plebeians, and to the Italian citizens. The greater part, though, was to be conveyed to the Patricians; but only on the basis of a definite rental—a ground rent, in fact—and this was to be paid into the treasury, for the common good. He was successful in enacting his proposed law, but as the year of his office terminated the Patricians brought accusations against him, alleging that he had concerned himself with the people's interests merely because he strove to secure a royal crown for himself. Spurius Cassius was condemned to death, executed, and his house levelled with the ground. His law remained unfulfilled.

Followed then the struggles for the regulation of judicial decisions and the introduction of statute law, which resulted in the adoption of the Law of the Twelve Tables, in the year 450 B. C. A written law signified important progress, because heretofore the decisions of the judges were mainly influenced by the wishes of his wealthy and powerful adherents, of whose class he was a member. In economic legislation this law reduced the maximum rate of interest from 8 1-3 per cent to one half that, or 4 1-6 per cent. But this was in itself not sufficiently fundamental.

Soon after this there occurred the terrible invasion by the Gauls, and Rome was overwhelmed. The city was burned and only the Capitol was saved by the unconquerable heroism of Manlius. At length, the Gallic hordes having retired, Rome could once more be rebuilt. That such a peril could at all assail Rome was due no doubt to the disturbed social conditions, which destroyed the very marrow of Roman vigor. But this warning was also lost upon the Patricians.

As the poor inhabitants in town and country were rebuilding their houses and providing themselves with seed-corn and beasts of burden, the Patricians were bending their efforts in securing the greatest advantages from the necessities of the common people. Every day, one saw dragged away in fetters as slaves, Roman citizens who a short time before had been fighting in defense of the fatherland.

Then it was that Manlius, the savior of the Capitol, espoused the cause of the common people. One time he saw a former companion in arms, a man who had been an efficient captain of his army, being led away from the market-place in chains, by a usurer. He paid the debt of the poor man, and cried out: "So long as I possess one foot of land, no Roman citizen shall remain in slavery." He sold a great part of his estate, and with the proceeds set 400 citizens at liberty. Thus he gained the confidence and love of the common people; but, as is often the case, the hatred

of the rich grew even quicker and stronger. Manlius was accused of an attempt at securing the kingly crown and a conviction was forced upon him. He was declared guilty of high treason, was chained, led to that Capitol which in Rome's direst peril he had saved, and thence he was hurled from the Tarpeian Rock and to his death.

It is usually less dangerous to fight against an overwhelming foe with sword and shield than it is against the blind hatred of powerful fellow-citizens —a truth which is as applicable to conditions today as it was two thousand years ago.

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## II.

## CONQUEST AND DECLINE.

But the martyrdom of Manlius was not in vain. It created a lasting impression. His influence remained, and after two centuries rendered valuable service to the man who was enabled through reasonable and effective land laws to close the economic rift and thereby lay the foundation for Rome's mighty power.

In the year 376 B. C. the Tribune Licinius Stolo presented his celebrated laws. We know little of this man and of his brave and faithful friend Sextius, but their laws remain as a monument to those two equally

wise and persistent friends of the people. They advanced three proposals:

The first one required that one of the two highest officials; the Consuls, should be taken from the ranks of the Plebeians.

The second one proposed, that from all existing debts a certain proportion of the interest already paid should be credited to the capital. The remaining debt might be paid off in installments, which could be divided in three annual payments.

The third related to land. Nobody should have more than five hundred jugera* of the state lands in his possession. The possessor should turn over to the state one-tenth of all grain he raised, and one-twentieth of all fruits of the orchard. The state lands should be declared accessible to all citizens, Patricians and Plebeians alike. Land owners should be obligated to employ among their slaves a certain number of free laborers, the number of the latter being regulated in a definite proportion to the number of slaves employed.

The struggle over these laws lasted ten years, and was fought with the greatest bitterness. At first the two Tribunes stood alone. The other eight Tribunes sided with the Senate and voted against them, but Licinius and Sextius would not tolerate any illegal

* Mommsen estimates a jugerum at about five-eigths of an acre. (Trans.)

procedure. They were tireless in their efforts to enlighten the people, and every year more of their partisans were elected to the Tribunate. This quiet, firm policy of the leaders, and the patient endurance of the people, at length effected the passage of the Licinian Laws, in the year 367 B. C.

The essential result of these laws was to establish economic freedom. While they were assailed at first —in a fashion well known to us in our day—as "unpatriotic and dangerous to the state," etc., a Temple of Concord was later erected at the base of the Capitol in honor of their passage.

The influence of this economic reform is demonstrated by Rome's triumphant march across the world. The Samnites were overthrown, as were the Greek cities of southern Italy, and then came the mighty contest with Carthage. Though Hannibal advanced to the gates of Rome, the resistance of the Roman people could not be overcome. For two hundred years economic justice was the foundation of an unprecedented, flourishing national life.

"In the century following the Licinian Laws," says LaBoulaye, "Rome appears to have an inexhaustible military vigor. Varro, Plinius and others speak with regret of this beautiful period of the country's history, as of the time in which Italy's greatness consisted in the wealth of her land and the prosperity of her citizens. They always refer to the land laws of

Licinius with reverence, because these were the first to recognize economic evils and attempt their cure, and because they at least mitigated the development of those huge estates which later destroyed the inhabitants of Italy, and later still the civilization of the entire known world.

But the land reform laws of Licinius were gradually permitted to lapse. The enormous state lands Rome had acquired by conquest of all Italy (usually Rome took over one-third of the land belonging to the conquered countries) came mostly into the possession of the Optimates, as the new party was called, since the hereditary nobility, the Patricians, had lost their political special privileges. Furthermore, the ceaseless warfare had provided a great multitude of slaves. The conquered armies and the citizens of the conquered cities were nearly all condemned to slavery, and the officers of the armies and the wealthy merchants secured great numbers of these unfortunates for a ridiculous sum. In one year of warfare—167 B. C.—one hundred and fifty thousand slaves were brought to Rome from Greece. Nearly all of these were sent to the great estates as field laborers. In times of peace slave hunting, and the captives of pirate raids, provided certain of the great lords with the necessary supply of men. Asia was apparently inexhaustible. The little island of Delos was the central market, and twenty thousand slaves were

landed there on some mornings, and were sold before nightfall. These slaves were the cheapest sort of labor. Branded with an iron, and therefore always recognizable as a slave, their feet shackled with heavy chains, these unfortunates were compelled by the scourge of their overseers to labor every day in the fields of their lords. At night they were driven into horrible underground dungeons with tiny windows. The lives of these unfortunates were unspeakably hideous and as amongst these slaves were many educated and, in their home countries, prominent people, one may readily agree with Mommsen that, compared to their misery, all of the suffering resulting from negro slavery was as a drop compared to the entire ocean.

The small freeholder could not of course contend with the competition of the great landed estates, employing slave labor. The cheapness of corn raised by slaves made any competition impossible, and so the small farmers, one after the other were compelled to sell their lands. Where this was not done voluntarily, the small farmer suffered a thousand encroachments on the part of his rich neighbor, such as damages by cattle, etc., and finally the Optimates did not even hesitate at open violation of the law. Often wife and children were driven from some small farm, while the husband and father was on the frontier or in Africa or Spain, fighting in the field. What could the poor

man do about this when returning to his home, perhaps after many years, he found his wife and children gone, and without any clue as to what had become of them?

In one district where previously one hundred fifty free-holding families were securing a living, there now stood a single lordly estate, served by fifty slaves. In all Etruria there was not a single free farmer in the year 154 B. C.

One condition of great significance to the state, resulting from this decline of the people's vigor, was the insufficient number of men capable of bearing arms, even in times of peace. In the year 164 B. C. there were counted 337,000 citizens capable of military service. In the year 147 B. C. this number had diminished to 332,000, in the year 131 B. C. to 319,000.

A logical sequence of these economic ills was presently made manifest by moral degeneracy, devolving particularly amongst women and in the army. The cruelty with which Roman women treated their slaves is well known. The old Roman simplicity and discipline was abandoned by the majority. When Cato, the dreaded censor, attempted to limit the newly arisen extravagance by taxing articles of luxury, the women of the higher orders aroused such strenuous opposition, and were so threatening, that not only was the proposal for a tax on luxury withdrawn, but

they repealed the old law prohibiting the wearing of gold jewelry, colored clothing and gowns of silk. The women, in certain anticipation of their victory, had laid their heretofore prohibited jewelry in readiness and, after their victory, wore it in triumph throughout the city.

In the last Punic war the army had distinctly revealed its weakness. In camp, insubordination and profligacy had made their appearance, so that the war against the little tribe of Numantia in Spain lasted ten years, and could only be terminated by Scipio, the greatest of the generals. Likewise it became clearly evident that the slave establishments could not be maintained under previous conditions. In Sicily a slave made himself king, and for three years resisted the Roman army. After horrible cruelties on both sides, the war having been brought to a close, the Roman consul crucified 20,000 slaves in order to frighten the remainder into obedience. It was natural that in spite of this degeneration men arose in Rome who, recognizing the seriousness of the times, strove for a remedy. Amongst these belongs that most highly esteemed citizen of Rome, the destroyer of Carthage, Scipio Africanus. There assembled about him a circle of honest, influential men, amongst whom it was agreed that a fundamental land reform was the first essential to all progress. Cajus Laelius, Scipio's best friend, who was consul in the

year 140 B. C., advanced the proposal for assisting the downtrodden farmer class of Rome by means of a new distribution of the state lands. But when he saw the storm that his proposition created amongst the Optimates, he withdrew it. By thus withdrawing from the contest, Laelius was rewarded by the ruling powers with the title of "The Rational One." But there were many earnest men who regretted that the land reform was so lightly cast aside, and with the confidence of assistance from these men, a youth ventured to accomplish that which other men feared to undertake.

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## III.

## TIBERIUS GRACCHUS.

It was Tiberius Gracchus who, in the year 133 B. C., secured the election as Tribune, with the firm determination of accomplishing a solution of the land question. He belonged to one of the first families of Rome. His mother, Cornelia, was the daughter of that famous Scipio Africanus, who had overcome Hannibal. Her husband, Tiberius Gracchus, had been twice elected censor, had conquered one hundred cities in Spain, and what was more, had ruled them with such justice and intelligence that his name was for long after held in honor there.

Cornelia bore him twelve children, of whom, though nine died at an early age, there remained one daughter, Sempronia, and the two sons, Tiberius and Caius. After the death of her husband, Cornelia devoted herself entirely to the upbringing of her children. Once, when some distinguished women were priding themselves on their jewelry and asked of her that she, too, should show her treasures, she brought out her three children and said, "These are my jewels." When King Ptolemey of Egypt desired her for his wife she declined the tempting offer, because she feared her duties as queen would interfere with her duties as mother. Her daughter, Sempronia, married Scipio Africanus, the destroyer of Carthage and Numantia. Tiberius took a wife from the Claudius family. His brother, Caius, married a daughter of the high priest Mucianus.

Tiberius could therefore count on a great deal of assistance when, after his election as Tribune, he attempted carrying out the scheme of land reform. His celebrated law was essentially nothing more than a re-enactment of the Licinian Laws, which had never been legally repealed. Lands held under lease and for which taxes were being paid to the state, were therefore not in the least affected. Only those state lands which were being unjustly used without any payment were to be reclaimed. However, to conciliate the Optimates if possible, each one of them should

retain 500 jugera of the state lands for himself, and 250 jugera for each son, to an amount of not over 1,000 jugera.* This was to become his own property. A reasonable reimbursement should be paid for all improvements carried out by the previous possessors. The state lands which were reclaimed in this way should be given out to Roman citizens in parcels of thirty jugera each, not as private property, but in the form of inalienable and unmortgagable leases. A commission of three men should take over the business of investigating and establishing legally what was state land and what privately owned.

This proposition of Tiberius Gracchus was not only based on social justice and law, but must also be regarded as timely. No doubt Tiberius was prepared to bring about further improvements, after having carried this law into practical effect, but the majority of the Senate being composed of the Optimates, would give his measure no consideration. They regarded the proposal of Gracchus as a declaration of war.

They succeeded in winning over one of the associate tribunes, and this man, Octavius, who owned a great deal of land himself, raised an objection when Tiberius Gracchus attempted to have his bill enacted. According to the letter of the law, the bill was thereby defeated. Tiberius Gracchus on his part seized

* 1,000 jugera, equal to nearly one square mile.

upon a legal retaliation. He placed his seal on the public treasury and closed up the public offices and the courts of law. But what avail was this? The Senate could wait, and the year of his tribunate would eventually be terminated. With what glowing passion Tiberius Gracchus clung to his idea, and how well he understood making it a living issue in the minds of the people, is shown in the one important fragment that we have from his speeches. Plutarch quotes him: "The wild beasts have their caves and their nests, but for the men who fight and die for Italy there is nothing left but the air and the light of heaven. They wander about without wife and child. Are they not uttering empty lies, those officers of our armies, who encourage the soldiers to do battle, urging them to protect the graves of our ancestors and the altars of their homes? The soldiers fight and die to maintain luxury and wealth for others. They are called masters of the earth, yet cannot call a hovel their own!"

Gracchus was determined not to let the year of his tribunate pass over fruitlessly. He therefore brought his proposal to the assembly of the people for the second time. Octavius was an old friend of the Gracchi. Tiberius besought him entreatingly, to withdraw his veto, but in vain. Then Tiberius Gracchus overstepped the constitution, which provided that every official was irremovable, and could not be ac-

cused during his term of office. He presented himself to the people with the question whether one who had betrayed the people was worthy to occupy any longer the highest place of honor the people could bestow. Unanimous approval endorsed his words. At the command of Gracchus, Octavius was removed from his station as a tribune by the lictors, and the land laws were passed without further opposition. The members of the land commission were appointed, and consisted of Tiberius Gracchus, his brother Caius Gracchus, and his father-in-law, Appius Claudius.

About this time the last King of Pergamon died and his will named the Roman people as his heirs. Legally, the Senate should have passed upon this inheritance, but Tiberius proposed in the assembly of the people that the citizens should be equipped in their new land holdings out of the treasury of Pergamon. Houses and barns, farm machinery, draft animals and seed corn could thus be provided for. This proposal was also adopted.

The hatred of the Optimates waxed daily over this energetic progressive, and Tiberius well knew how the men of his class could hate. He therefore desired the tribunate for the second year, in order that he might carry out his reforms under the protection of this office. Amidst tremendous excitement election day arrived. When the first districts had cast their vote for Gracchus, the Optimates swarmed to the

voting place with noise and outcry, declaring the method of election illegal. They were successful in interrupting the voting and having its completion postponed till the next day. Tiberius did what he could to win the people over to himself. He presented himself, clad in mourning, and commended his young children to the protection of the people.

The next day the election was to be completed. It was the time of harvest. The small farmers of Rome, the staunchest, most faithful adherents of the Tribune, were busy in their fields, but this time, again, the first districts voted for Gracchus. Again the attempt to interfere with the election followed. The Senate gathered in the Temple of Truth. The most antagonistic of the Optimates had the floor, but the Consul Scevola, a moderate man and favorable to the reform, would not permit himself to be influenced by their clamor. Then someone rushed into the Temple and cried: "Just now Tiberius Gracchus has pointed to his head. Of course it is royal honors that he demands."

Then Scipio Nasica, an embittered opponent of Gracchus, called on his friends to arm themselves as they could and follow him. With staves and chair legs the dignified Senators dashed into the crowd, which timidly made way for them.

Tiberius stumbled; a blow from a staff struck him upon the temple, and with him 300 of his followers

were struck down. In the evening the dead were thrown in the Tiber. In vain Cornelia and Caius pleaded for the corpse of their son and brother.

The Senate—the Optimates having a majority—held fast to the assertion that a conspiracy had been attempted, with a view to conferring a kingly crown upon Gracchus, and that therefore his death was the deserved end of a traitor to the state.

Such a day had never been seen in Rome. Even the brother-in-law of the murdered man, Scipio Africanus, did not find the courage to openly attack this deed, in spite of his being lately returned from Spain as the conquering general. He contented himself with the equivocal comment: "If Tiberius really strove for kingly honors, his death was a deserved one."

Even though the man was killed, none dare touch his work. The reclaiming of the state lands, and their division in small parcels, actually began. During the following year the Consul P. Laenas made public boast that he was the first to remove the herders of slaves from the state lands and replace them with the free farmers. What blessings this piece of land reform occasioned may be estimated by this one fact: the number of citizens capable of bearing arms, instead of decreasing as heretofore, increased from the year 132 to 125 B. C., from 319,000 to 395,000.

It may be admitted that this work of reform injured individual rights and in some cases worked a hardship; but where is there a great reform which can be carried out without hardships for someone? The opposition grew as the distribution of the lands progressed. Particular difficulties were met when the state lands, which had been heretofore given to certain vassal communities, were demanded back for division.

With crafty cunning, the Optimates exaggerated every error made in this division, fresh difficulties were placed in the way, and public opinion was premeditatedly influenced.

The balance of power lay with Scipio Africanus, brother-in-law of the Gracchi, and leader of the Middle Party. This celebrated general devoted the entire force of his essentially aristocratic personality to the interests of the Optimates. He was offended at every clerical error made by the opposition. He did not realize what vital decisions were being dealt with. Suffice it to say, he was successful in revoking the judicial powers of the distribution committee which permitted it to decide what was state land and what was private land.

With this the land reform commission lost all effective power. The Popular Party was deeply embittered. On a certain day Scipio Africanus delivered an important speech. In the afternoon he withdrew

earlier than usual to his sleeping chamber. What occurred during the darkness of that night no one knows. The next morning Scipio Africanus was dead. Whether he had been strangled during the night by a partisan of the Gracchi, or whether his wife, herself a sister of the Gracchi, had a part in this deed, or whether on this day of most intense mental strain a stroke of apoplexy ended his life, we do not know, nor are we justified in ascribing the deed to anyone, either Optimates or men of the Popular Party. The ghastly face remained covered, and the flames that destroyed his body also obliterated forever the secret of his death.

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## IV.

## CAIUS GRACCHUS.

The best man of the Popular Party, Caius Gracchus, the younger brother of Tiberius, was sojourning far from Rome. The Senate had sent him to Sidonia as Questor, and as the term of his superior officer, the Consul, had been extended, it was thereby thought to hold the dreaded Questor safely at a distance.

But Caius Gracchus returned to Rome without having been relieved. The people received him with rejoicing, decided against the accusation that he had

left his post without permission, and in the year 123 B. C. elected him as Tribune.

Excelling his brother in talent, passion, and eloquence, he now headed the contest against the Optimates. His hatred of the party which had desolated his fatherland and murdered his brother, had expanded in him as a mighty passion. He went to his work systematically.

At first he had a law passed that every citizen who reported for that purpose might receive a certain quantity of corn from the public granary at a moderate price. By this means he wished to break the influence of the rich, who, previous to important elections, strove to purchase votes by gifts of money and corn. Then he attempted, by extraordinarily shrewd measures, to divide the party of the Optimates, in that he played the plutocrats against the aristocrats. He gave to the Equites, among whom were included all those in possession of a certain definite fortune, additional rights at the expense of the Senate. He introduced into the lately conquered province of Asia a new tax which was levied principally with a view to furthering the interests of the Equites. So he was indeed successful in checking the opposition of the Senate and the Optimates. At the termination of the year he was again elected Tribune, and the Popular Party seemed secure in its future. Under such a leader they must surely go forward.

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In the second year of his tribunate, Caius Gracchus ventured on the most dangerous question in the Roman politics of that time, and which was of the greatest significance for the future. In order to establish a Roman state on a broader and firmer foundation, he wished to confer the right of citizenship on the neighboring divisions of the republic, whose citizens had shared all the dangers of Roman wars. But here he met with most intense opposition in his own party.

The Optimates cunningly appreciated how well they could take advantage of this split. There is preserved a fragment of an address of the Consul of that time. He demeans himself to the lowest passions of the mob: "If you bestow the right of citizenship upon the Latins, do you believe that you will be able to occupy the same places you have now, in the popular gatherings, and in the theaters and the circus? In such an event the new citizens will take your places away from you, and there will be no places for you."

That was the sort of argument which would appeal to a certain class of the voters of the capitol. When it came to a vote, a Tribune dared for the first time to interpose his veto against a proposal of Caius Gracchus. Drusus it was who turned traitor to the people. It was an obvious enough game which the Senate and this man instituted.

Caius Gracchus was fully conscious of his responsibilities. His land reform measures were reasonable and moderate. Could not one utilize this to make the people suspicious? On every reform proposition, Drusus now made more radical demands than did Gracchus. He claimed that he was the real friend of the people. Caius had not gone nearly far enough! Why, Gracchus was a member of one of the aristocratic families, and therefore was not the right sort of man to represent the people!

According to the proposal of the Gracchi, every Roman citizen was charged a reasonable rental for his thirty jugera of state land, as ground rent.

Drusus voted for complete abolition of all rents.

Caius Gracchus proposed to establish colonies outside of Italy, for instance on the ruins of Carthage, in addition to the Italian colonies of Neptunia and Minervia.

"It would be much more to the interest of the people to establish twelve colonies of 3,000 colonists each," said Drusus, "therefore providing 36,000 new colonists at once, and within the borders of Italy." To all this the Senatorial party stood by and smiled amicably. They wanted the masses to realize that the Optimates were not opposed to anything that would help the poor people, if only the people would withdraw their support from Gracchus, whom they so cordially hated.

It was significant that at this time, being the end of the second year of his tribunate, Caius Gracchus was not in Rome. It had been decided by lot that he should establish the newly ordained colony across the sea, in the province which had formerly been Carthage. He was absent on this duty for seventy days. His opponents had used this interval to advantage, and when he returned public opinion had reversed itself. He was not elected for a third term, though it is a question if the election had not been falsified to his detriment.

The Optimate party made the most of their victory. The election for Consul brought to the head of the state their most conscienceless leader Opimius. The attack was first made on the colony newly established on the ruins of Carthage. When that mighty power had been destroyed, a curse was pronounced upon the city. Now came reports that hyenas had dug up the corner-stones and landmarks, and the Roman high priests, who were members of the Optimate class, saw at once a sign of the disfavor of the gods therein.

The citizens were called together to decide on this question. Gracchus and his following were of course also there. Tremendous excitement raged. Every one realized how much depended upon the vote on this question. The Consuls made the usual sacrifice, the lictor who held the sacred entrails in his hands demanded of the followers of Gracchus, "The bad

citizens shall make room for the good ones." It seemed as though he would lay hands on Gracchus himself. With that he was struck down by a hot-headed follower of the Popular Party. This thoughtless deed was the signal for a mighty tumult. Gracchus wished to quiet the people. He did not notice that in another place a Tribune was speaking. According to an old law, it was forbidden under severest penalty to interrupt a Tribune. So he gave his opponents formal ground for complaint against himself in that he, a friend of the people, had assailed the rights of the Tribune of the people.

That night the Optimates armed themselves for the conflict. At the behest of the Consul, each one appeared accompanied by two armed slaves. The next morning, as the Popular Party observed the warlike preparations of their opponents, the followers of Gracchus assembled upon the Aventine, the old place of assembly of the Popular Party. But Gracchus was opposed to street fighting. Quietly and armed only with a dagger, he joined his friends. A delegate was sent to negotiate with the Optimates, but these had him arrested, and the Consul gave the signal for the attack. At the same time he issued a proclamation that whoever laid down his arms would not be punished. The battle was a brief one 250 adherents of Gracchus fell. He wished to kill himself, but his nearest friends prevailed upon him

to preserve himself for Rome, and the cause. Gracchus agreed to make the attempt, but he stumbled and injured his foot. In order to give him time for flight, one of his friends sacrificed himself by attacking the pursuers, and as this friend fell a second one sacrificed his life for their honored leader. But this sacrifice was likewise in vain. In a sacred grove the body of Gracchus and that of his faithful slave were found soon after. Both had killed themselves.

A former friend of Gracchus found the bodies. He cut off the head of Caius and brought it to the Optimates amidst rejoicing. It is even said that he took out the brain and filled the cavity with lead, so that it might be heavier, for the conquerors kept their promise to pay for it in its weight in gold.

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## V

## LAND REFORM DURING THE CIVIL WAR, AND THE CAESARS.

The Optimates had triumphed. They were the undisputed masters. It seemed that riches and power were assured to them for all time. They abolished the inhibition against selling the land of the small farmers, one of the fundamental principles of the land reform of the Gracchi.

In 118 B. C. the Senate declared the activities of the land commission at an end. In cases where the

state lands had not yet been divided, they should remain the property of the existing possessor, although a certain interest was to be charged against it. This interest was likewise abolished in 111 B. C., and all state lands were declared the absolute property of those occupying them at the time.

When Libius Drusus, the son of that Tribune who had so shamefully betrayed Caius Gracchus, perhaps with the intention of redeeming the sins of his father, introduced in 91 B. C. a land reform law which was to provide homesteads for the poor citizens of Rome, in Italy and Sicily, the Optimates simply removed this inconvenient interloper by the hands of a hired assassin.

And yet it soon was evident how short-sighted and foolish were the Optimates, from the standpoint of self-preservation, in abolishing the reform land laws so ruthlessly. As a result of economic abuses, those terrible civil wars took place, which brought death and destruction especially among the aristocratic families.

It was a species of land reform which the victors of the civil wars established, when they settled thousands, yes, tens of thousands, of their warriors upon the estates of their murdered opponents. Sulla colonized 120,000 of his veterans in Italy following his victory over his enemies. He was far-seeing enough to make the estates of these veterans not subject to sale, but it was impossible to make a solid farmer

class out of these turbulent soldiers. The Triumvirate of Pompey, Cæsar and Crassus had also aimed to provide land for its veterans as one of its chief purposes.

Cæsar enacted the regulation that for at least twenty years thereafter these farm lands might not be sold. In a single year—30 B. C.—Augustus provided that 100,000 homesteads should be established and disbursed among his veterans. But all this was not, of course, significant of fundamental, systematic land reform.

Pliny, the elder, the great naturalist, expressed the end of this development in a short fateful sentence: "The great estates are the destruction of Italy and the provinces."

And the proud Senate. When the dictators had arisen out of these internal disorders, the Senate was forced to accept insult and ignominy, and cringingly regarded it as good fortune if some half-mad tyrant deigned to surround his horse with men of the senatorial rank. We know, too, of a Cæsar who, when in need of funds, simply had the tax lists brought before him in order that he might pick out the wealthiest and condemn them to execution so that their money could be used to cover the expenses of the court. When Nero learned that half the province of Africa belonged to six persons, he suffered them to be "naturally" executed. But all of this can be merely

touched upon in this treatise. It, however, serves as a demonstration that the destruction of economic justice will always result in the downfall of any people. The blood of the Gracchi, the great land reformers of Rome, was avenged a thousand-fold upon those who rejoiced in having overwhelmed them.

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## THE MORAL.

Is it necessary to point to the moral which is taught by the mighty events of two thousand years ago? A few things may be briefly passed upon.

With what caution and suspicion should one regard the praise of the "Powers that be!" How dangerous it is to adopt a so-called "moderate" policy which conceives of only one motive, and that is not to disturb existing conditions. "Let well enough alone" is a policy that never dare say "yes" and never "no."

Had Laelius and Scipio Africanus, and that whole circle of influential and honest men, aligned themselves on the side of land reform, the Optimates of that time would not have named Laelius "The Rational One," but perhaps the judgment of history would have given him this name, whereas now we can only accuse him of cowardly weakness. Whoever wishes to accomplish something must have the courage and the will to do. Brave hearts must forego

the praise of their day and with a far-seeing eye should build for the future.

And the second lesson: All high purposes must always be joined with a conception of that which is possible of accomplishment. The crowd applauding Drusus when instead of certain foreign colonies he proposed establishing 36,000 homesteads in Italy, when in place of indeterminate leases he promised unrestricted private ownership, this crowd surely felt itself "more radical" and better friends of the people than were the followers of the Gracchi. It is the old experience which, after two thousand years, stands out from every page in history. Whoever promises most and demands without limitation, that one has the masses on his side. That at bottom the "radical" catch phrase, thought impossible of fulfillment, is the greatest obstacle in the path of every serious progressive movement, is recognized only after the enemy of the people has finished his work and the cause of the people is lost.

It may also be of value to us to point to the lesson which the era of the Gracchi presents to us, concerning a phrase much used in our time, the phrase: "A free

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man upon his own heritage." When we land reformers* of today desire to place a limit upon the amount

* One of the peculiar complications of the German land question, is the development of the huge mortgage-loan banks,

of indebtedness which may be placed upon the land and to institute reforms concerning mortgages, requiring heroic measures to bring about, we are often met with the objection from those well disposed towards us, that this would be interference with the freedom of property rights, "the pride of the German."* The Gracchi well knew that the freedom to mortgage the land is the deadly enemy of the true freedom of the small landholder.

What did the Senate do after the death of the last Gracchus? What action did they believe best for securing the permanence of their victory? The inhibition against sale and impounding was removed, the small farmer became a "Free" owner, and ere scarce a span of life was passed they were as though swept away. To establish land ownership on the same basis as merchandise means simply that the people will ultimately be trampled upon, and become a source of exploitation.

Must we also speak of the greatest enemy of economic reform, the indifference and stupidity of men? There is no question that by far a large majority of

who own a large percentage of the land values of Germany. In some cases the "owner" of a piece of valuable land has but a ten or twenty per cent. equity in it. For this reason the best method for regulating and controlling these mortgages is a very vital part of the land question. (Trans.)

* Evidently a cousin of our own "Anglo-Saxon Freedom." (Trans.)

the Roman citizens had their sympathies on the side of the idealistic brothers. But it was that sort of sympathy that shows itself on occasion by applause and hurrahs, and that never enters into the struggle with a will, and that never brings a sacrifice for a cause which is recognized as good. Had the people of Rome concerned themselves earnestly with the problem, had they remained faithful to their leaders in the hours of fate, then the murder of the two brothers would not have been possible. Later, when all was passed, the people erected a monument to the brothers, and sanctified the places where they had lived and had died. They bestowed upon the mother every honor and affection. But a sense of gratitude and a token of reverence are always easier and more comfortable than a steady, unflinching fulfillment of one's duty. What conclusion can one derive from these memories regarding the significance of life? Where is there a woman today who, looking backward, would not rather have been Cornelia, with all her sorrows, anxieties and sacrifices, than one of those women who unthinkingly led a conventional life, and never looked into the heights, nor dared gaze into the depth? And which of us, man or woman, who does not envy the Gracchi and their lives? In the short years of their aspirations and labors, their battles and defeats, they led a richer life than any hundred "carpet-knights" who so anx-

iously avoided the discussion of any other subjects than the games at the circus, or the weather, or the latest reports of the wars, out there in Spain or Africa. The coward and the weakling is at the same time always a fool, cheating himself in the end, of all that makes life worth living.

Not everyone can or should be the leader, but everyone can and should, in his day, in his calling, and in the manner that it is given to him, take part in the decisive battles of his time. Everyone, as a soldier of an idea, can and should stand in the ranks, and be a part of the living warp and woof of the world's history, which will not end so long as mankind works and hopes and fights. The personal endeavor that no succession of disappointments can weaken, the little constant sacrifices which every cause demands, these are what can ennoble every life and can insure to every one a portion of true greatness.

Reviewing the memories of antiquity, we perceive that everywhere it was the land question upon the decision of which depended the fate of the nation. In Israelitish history it is the wonderful law of Moses, from which the word goes forth, "The land shall not be sold forever, for the land is mine," saith Jehóvah. "Ye are but strangers and sojourners with me." And we perceive the sins of the mighty, and we hear the sacred protests of the prophets.

## 40 The Battles for Land Reform in Rome

In ancient Greece, Solon in his land laws and land reforms established the foundations for the brilliant culture of Attica, and similar regulations adopted in the name of Lycurgus caused the proudest race of soldiers in the world to develop.

In the passing of Hellenic culture, we see Aegis and Kleomenes again risk life and kingdom in the effort to establish a land reform. And again, in Rome, we find the noblest who wished to secure the fatherland to the people, in the highest sense of the word; Manlius and Licinius, and the two brothers out of the family of the Gracchi. Truly if any movement may extoll itself because of a proud name, and a glorious past, then it is that movement which sets out to establish the land of the nation as an assured homestead to all honest labor.

We land reformers are not men of yesterday. In unbroken ranks we can follow, throughout the history of mankind, the vicissitudes experienced by our truth. May this knowledge teach us that we must ever be more faithful, ever more willing to make sacrifices, that we may become worthy of such ancestors.

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