

*(Letter from Mr. Fels)*

A well-known physician of New York City, Dr. Walter Mendelson, is endeavouring to show his brother physicians that removal of the cause is the principle on which social disease should be treated as well as physical disease. He has sent to each one a stirring letter, which states the case plainly. The letter is one which others besides physicians may read with profit, especially those who imagine that when they contribute to some charity their full duty has been done. Dr.

Mendelson's letter is as follows: --

About twice every week, year in and year out, I (and you) get appeals for "charity."

The ever increasing number and variety of these appeals must convince any thinking person that this method of combating a great evil is useless. True, many poor individuals are doubtless relieved, but does not Poverty itself stalk as gaunt and as hideous as ever? Is there less poverty, or is there more today, in New York, in London, in Paris, Berlin or Bombay, than there was thirty years ago?

From my means I can give to about one one-hundredth of all the appeals I get. Why give to yours more than to any other? And would it not be more logical, as well as more just, to appeal rather to those who are the beneficiaries of this social system that makes millionaires on one side and paupers on the other? They get the benefit, let them pay the cost.

What we need is not pitiable alleviation, but cure; not "charity" but justice. A cancer poultice may be agreeable to the victim; but, slowly and ever beneath it, his vitals are being remorselessly eaten out. To my mind every "charity"—and by that I mean any essential thing that is given a man because his poverty denies it to him—is a mere cancer poultice.

As a physician I would despise myself, and be rightly held contemptible by my colleagues, did I content myself with treating symptoms alone and never touching the cause. For the whole tendency of scientific modern medicine is to cure by prevention—to go to the root of things—and not merely to dabble with effects.

Yet—think of it!—in not one single one of all the appeals for "charity" that I have received in the past thirty years has there been so much as a hint that poverty is a curable disease of the social body, and that the charitarians, in addition to relieving, were seriously trying to eradicate poverty by going down to its cause! How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable to the medical mind seems all this ceaseless cry of "Relieve, relieve, relieve!" untempered by the faintest whisper of "Cure"!

Now I, and many, many besides me, believe with Henry George that poverty can be cured, that it is not a divine institution but a devilishly infernal one. And because one thousand people will blindly give money for measures merely alleviative where one will give for eradication, therefore shall I devote what money and time I can to means that, to my mind, strike deep down at

causes—strike not at symptoms but at the disease —and I shall give nothing, or next to nothing, to "charity."

Perhaps you have never seriously considered the philosophy of Henry George. If so, do me the favor to read the enclosed.[the first chapter of his *Progress and Poverty*]. It will at least give you an outline of a doctrine that has encircled and enriched the world, that has infused new life, and hope, and religion into thousands; that is daily gaining new adherents and losing no old ones; and that is based on reason, on justice and on brotherly love.