

The Peer and The Prophet
Being

The Duke of Argyll's
Article on
The Prophet of San Francisco

and the Reply of Henry George
Entitled
The Reduction to Iniquity

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THE REDUCTION TO INIQUITY.

by Henry George

"In this paper it has not been my aim to argue," says the Duke of Argyll, in concluding his article entitled "The Prophet of San Francisco." It is generally waste of time to reply to those who do not argue. Yet, partly because of my respect for other writings of his, and partly because of the ground to which he invites me, I take the first opportunity I have had to reply to the Duke.

In doing so, let me explain the personal incident to which he refers, and which he has seemingly misunderstood. In sending the Duke of Argyll a copy of "Progress and Poverty" I intended no impertinence, and was unconscious of any impropriety. Instead, I paid him a high compliment. For, as I stated in an accompanying note, I sent him my book, not only to mark my esteem for the author of the "Reign of Law," but because I thought him a man superior to his accidents.

I am still conscious of the profit I derived from the "Reign of Law," and can still recall the pleasure it gave me. What attracted me, however, was not, as the Duke seems to think, what he styles his "nonsense chapter." On the contrary, the notion that it is necessary to impose restrictions upon labour seems to me strangely incongruous, not only with free trade, but with the idea of the dominance and harmony of natural laws, which in preceding chapters he so well develops. Where such restrictions as Factory Acts seem needed in the interests of labour, the seeming need, to my mind, arises from previous restrictions, in the removal of which, and not in further restrictions, the

true remedy is to be sought. What attracted me in the "Reign of Law" was the manner in which the Duke points out the existence of physical laws and adaptations which compel the mind that thinks upon them to the recognition of creative purpose. In this way the Duke's book was to me useful and grateful, as I doubt not it has been to many others.

My book, I thought, might, in return, be useful and grateful to the Duke—might give him something of that "immense and instinctive pleasure" of which he has spoken as arising from the recognition of the grand simplicity and unspeakable harmony of universal law. And in the domain in which I had, as I believed, done something to point out the reign of law, this pleasure is, perhaps, even more intense than in that of which he had written. For in physical laws we recognise only intelligence, and can but trust that infinite wisdom implies infinite goodness. But in social laws he who looks may recognise beneficence as well as intelligence; may see that the moral perceptions of men are perceptions of realities; and find ground for an abiding faith that this short life does not bound the destiny of the human soul. I then knew the Duke of Argyll, only by his book. I had never been in Scotland, or learned the character as a landlord he bears there. I intended to pay a tribute and give a pleasure to a citizen of the republic of letters, not to irritate a land-owner. I did not think a trumpery title and a patch of ground could fetter a mind that had communed with Nature, and busied itself with causes and beginnings. My mistake was that of ignorance. Since the Duke of Argyll has publicly called attention to it, I thus publicly apologise.

The Duke declares it has not been his aim to argue. This is clear. I wish it were as clear it had not been his aim to misrepresent. He seems to have written for those who have never read the books he criticises. But as those who have done so constitute a very respectable part of the reading world, I can leave his misrepresentations to take care of themselves, confident that the incredible absurdity he attributes to my reasonings will be seen, by whoever reads my books, to belong really to the Duke's distortions. In what I have here to say I prefer to meet him upon his own ground, and to hold to the main question.* I accept the reduction to iniquity.

* It is unnecessary for me to say anything of India further than to remark that the essence of "naturalisation" is not in governmental collection of rent, but in its utilisation for the benefit of the people. Nor as to public debts is it worth while to add anything here to what I have said in "Social Problems."

Strangely enough, the Duke expresses distrust of the very tribunal to which he appeals. "It is a fact," he tells us, "that none of us should ever forget, that the moral faculties do not as certainly revolt against iniquity as the reasoning faculties do against absurdity." If that be the case, why, then, may I ask, is the Duke's whole article

addressed to the moral faculties? Why does he talk about right and wrong, about justice and injustice, about honour and dishonour, about my "immoral doctrines " and "profligate conclusions," "the unutterable meanness of the gigantic villainy" I advocate? Why style me "such a preacher of unrighteousness as the world has never seen," and so on? If the Duke will permit me, I will tell him, for in all probability he does not know—he himself, to paraphrase his own words, being a good example of how men who sometimes set up as philosophers and deny laws of the human mind are themselves unconsciously subject to those very laws. The Duke appeals to moral perceptions for the same reason that impels men, good or bad, learned or simple, to appeal to moral perceptions whenever they become warm in argument; and this reason is, the instinctive feeling that the moral sense *is* higher and truer than the intellectual sense; that the moral faculties *do* more certainly revolt against iniquity than the intellectual faculties against absurdity. The Duke appeals to the moral sense, because he instinctively feels that with all men its decisions have the highest sanction; and if he afterwards seeks to weaken its authority, it is because this very moral sense whispers to him that his case is not a good one.

My opinion as to the relative superiority of the moral and intellectual perceptions is the reverse of that stated by the Duke. It seems to me certain that the moral faculties constitute a truer guide than the intellectual faculties, and that what, in reality, we should never forget, is not that the moral faculties are untrustworthy, but that those faculties may be dulled by refusal to heed them, and distorted by the promptings of selfishness. So true, so ineradicable is the moral sense, that where selfishness or passion would outrage it, the intellectual faculties are always called upon to supply excuse. No unjust war was ever begun without some pretence of asserting right or redressing wrong, or, despite themselves, of doing some good to the conquered. No petty thief but makes for himself some justification. It is doubtful if any deliberate wrong is ever committed, it is certain no wrongful course of action is ever continued, without the framing of some theory which may dull or placate the moral sense.

And while, as to things apprehended solely by the intellectual faculties, the greatest diversities of perception have obtained and still obtain among men, and those perceptions constantly change with the growth of knowledge, there is a striking consensus of moral perceptions. In all stages of moral development, and under all forms of religion, no matter how distorted by selfish motives and intellectual perversions, truth, justice, and benevolence have ever been esteemed, and all our intellectual progress has given us no higher moral ideals than have obtained among primitive peoples. The very distortions of the moral sense, the apparent differences in the moral standards of different times and peoples, do but show essential unity. Wherever moral perceptions have differed or do differ, the disturbance may be traced to causes which, originating in selfishness and perpetuated by intellectual perversions

have distorted or dulled the moral faculty. It seems to me that the Creator, whom both the Duke of Argyll and myself recognise behind physical and mental laws, has not left us to grope our way in darkness, but has, indeed, given us a light by which our Steps may be safely guided—a compass by which, in all degrees of intellectual development, the way to the highest good may be surely traced. But just as the compass by which the mariner steers his course over the trackless sea in the blackest night may be disturbed by other attractions, may be misread or clogged, so is it with the moral sense. This evidently is not a world in which men must be either wise or good, but a world in which they may bring about good or evil as they use the faculties given them.

I speak of this because the recognition of the supremacy and certainty of the moral faculties seems to me to throw light upon problems otherwise dark, rather than because it is necessary here, since I admit even more unreservedly than the Duke the competence of the tribunal before which he cites me. I am willing to submit every question of political economy to the tests of ethics. So far as I can see, there is no social law which does not conform to moral law, and no social question which cannot be determined more quickly and certainly by appeal to moral perceptions than by appeal to intellectual perceptions. Nor can there be any dispute between us as to the issue to be joined. He charges me with advocating violation of the moral law in proposing robbery. I agree that robbery is a violation of the moral law, and is therefore, without further inquiry, to be condemned.

As to what constitutes robbery, it is, we will both agree, the taking or withholding from another of that which rightfully belongs to him. That which *rightfully* belongs to him, be it observed, not that which legally belongs to him. As to what extent human law may create rights is beside this discussion, for what I propose is to change, not to violate, human law. Such change the Duke declares would be unrighteous. He thus appeals to that moral law which is before and above all human laws, and by which all human laws are to be judged. Let me insist upon this point. Landholders must elect to try their case either by human law or by moral law. If they say that land is rightfully property because made so by human law, they cannot charge those who would change that law with advocating robbery. But if they charge that such change in human law would be robbery, then they must show that land is rightfully property irrespective of human law.

For land is not of that species of things to which the presumption of rightful property attaches. This does attach to things that are properly termed wealth, and that are the produce of labour. Such things in their beginning must have an owner, as they originate in human exertion, and the right of property which attaches to them springs from the manifest natural right of every individual to himself and to the benefit of his own exertions. This is the moral basis of property, which makes certain things

rightfully property totally irrespective of human law. The Eighth Commandment does not derive its validity from human enactment. It is written upon the facts of Nature, and self-evident to the perceptions of men. If there were but two men in the world, the fish which either of them took from the sea, the beast which he captured in the chase, the fruit which he gathered, or the hut which he erected, would be his rightful property, which the other could not take from him without violation of the moral law. But how could either of them claim the world as his rightful property? Or if they agreed to divide the world between them, what moral right could their compact give as against the next man who came into the world?

It is needless, however, to insist that property in land rests only on human enactment, which may at any time be changed without violation of moral law. No one seriously asserts any other derivation. It is sometimes said that property in land is derived from appropriation. But those who say this do not really believe it. Appropriation can give no right. The man who raises a cupful of water from the river acquires a right to that cupful, and no one may rightfully snatch it from his hand; but this right is derived from labour, not from appropriation. How could he acquire a right to the river, by merely appropriating it? Columbus did not dream of appropriating the New World to himself and his heirs, and would have been deemed a lunatic had he done so. Nations and princes divided America between them, but by "right of strength." This, and this alone, it is that gives any validity to appropriation. And this, evidently, is what they really mean who talk of the right given by appropriation.

This "right of conquest," this power of the strong, is the only basis of property in land to which the Duke ventures to refer. He does so in asking whether the exclusive right of ownership to the territory of California, which, according to him, I attribute to the existing people of California, does not rest upon conquest, and "if so, may it not be as rightfully acquired by any who are strong enough to seize it?" To this I reply in the affirmative. *If* exclusive ownership is conferred by conquest, then, not merely, as the Duke says, has it "been open to every conquering army and every occupying host in all ages and in all countries of the world to establish a similar ownership," but *it is now open*; and when the masses of Scotland, who have the power, choose to take from the Duke the estates he now holds, he cannot, if this be the basis of his claims, consistently complain.

But I have never admitted that conquest or any other exertion of force can give right. Nor have I ever asserted, but, on the contrary, have expressly denied, that the present population of California, or any other country, have any exclusive right of ownership in the soil, or can in any way acquire such a right. I hold that the present, the past, or the future population of California, or of any other country, have not, have not had, and cannot have, any right save to the use of the soil, and that as to this their rights are

equal. I hold with Thomas Jefferson, "that the earth belongs in usufruct to the living, and that the dead have no power or right over it." I hold that the land was not created for one generation to dispose of, but as a dwelling-place for all generations; that the men of the present are not bound by any grants of land the men of the past may have made, and cannot grant away the rights of the men of the future. I hold that if all the people of California, or any other country, were to unite in any disposition of the land which ignored the equal right of one of their number, they would be doing a wrong; and that if they could even grant away their own rights, they are powerless to impair the natural rights of their children. And it is for this reason that I hold the titles to the ownership of land which the Government of the United States is now granting are of no greater moral validity than the land-titles of the British Isles, which rest historically upon the forcible spoliation of the masses.

How ownership of land was acquired in the past can have no bearing upon the question of how we should treat land now; yet the inquiry is interesting, as showing the nature of the institution. The Duke of Argyll has written a great deal about the rights of landowners, but has never, I think, told us anything of the historical derivation of these rights. He has spoken of his estates, own [sic, in the reprint] but has nowhere told us how they came to be his estates. This, I know, is a delicate question, and on that account I will not press it. But while a man ought not to be taunted with the sins of his ancestors, neither ought he to profit by them. And the general fact is, that the exclusive ownership of land has everywhere had its beginning in force and fraud, in selfish greed and unscrupulous cunning. It originated, as all evil institutions originate, in the bad passions of men, not in their perceptions of what is right or their experience of what is wise. "Human laws," the Duke tells us, "are evolved out of human instincts, and, in direct proportion as the accepted ideas on which they rest are really universal, in that same proportion have they a claim to be regarded as really natural, and as the legitimate expression of fundamental truths." If he would thus found on the widespread existence of exclusive property in land an argument for its righteousness, what, may I ask him, will he say to the much stronger argument that might thus be made for the righteousness of polygamy or chattel slavery? But it is a fact, of which I need hardly more than remind him, though less well-informed people may be ignorant of it, that the treatment of land as individual property is comparatively recent, and by at least nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand of those who have lived on this world has never been dreamed of. It is only within the last two centuries that it has, by the abolition of feudal tenures and the suppression of tribal customs, fully obtained among our own people. In fact, even among us it has hardly yet reached full development. For not only are we still spreading over land yet unreduced to individual ownership, but in the fragments of common rights which yet remain in Great Britain, as well as in laws and customs, are there survivals of the older system. The first and universal perception of mankind is

that declared by the American Indian chief Black Hawk: "The Great Spirit has told me that land is not to be made property like other property. The earth is our mother!" And this primitive perception of the right of all men to the use of the soil from which all must live has never been obscured save by a long course of usurpation and oppression.

But it is needless for me to discuss such questions with the Duke. There is higher ground on which we may meet. He believes in an intelligent Creator; he sees in Nature contrivance and intent; he realises that it is only by conforming his actions to universal law that man can master his conditions and fulfil his destiny.

Let me, then, ask the Duke to look around him in the richest country of the world, where art, science, and the power that comes from the utilisation of physical laws have been carried to the highest point yet attained, and note how few of this population can avail themselves fully of the advantages of civilisation. Among the masses the struggle for existence is so intense that the Duke himself declares it necessary by law to restrain parents from working their children to disease and death! Let him consider the conditions of life involved in such facts as this -- conditions, alas! obvious on every side -- and then ask himself whether this is in accordance with the intent of Nature.

The Duke of Argyll has explained to me in his "Reign of Law" with what nice adaptations the feathers on a bird's wing are designed to give it the power of flight; he has told me that the claw on the wing of a bat is intended for it to climb by. Will he let me ask him to look in the same way at the human beings around him? I will ask him to consider the little children growing up in city slums, toiling in mines, working in noisome rooms; the young girls chained to machinery all day or walking the streets by night; the women bending over forges in the Black Country or turned into beasts of burden in the Scottish Highlands; the men who all life long must spend life's energies in the effort to maintain life! He should consider them as he has considered the bat and the bird. If the hook of the bat be intended to climb by and the wing of the bird be intended to fly by, with what intent have human creatures been given capabilities of body and mind which under conditions that exist in such countries as Great Britain only a few of them can use and enjoy?

They who see in Nature no evidences of conscious, planning intelligence may think that all this is as it must be; but who that recognises in His works an infinitely wise Creator can for a moment hesitate to infer that the wide difference between obvious intent and actual accomplishment is due, not to the clash of natural laws, but to our ignoring them? Nor need we go far to confirm this inference. The moment we consider in the largest way what kind of an animal man is, we see in the most

important of social adjustments a violation of Nature's intent sufficient to account for want and misery and aborted development.

Given a ship sent to sea with abundant provisions for all her company, what must happen if some of that company take possession of the provisions and deny to the rest any share?

Given a world so made and ordered that intelligent beings placed upon it may draw from its substance an abundant supply for all physical needs, must there not be want and misery in such a world if some of those beings make its surface and substance their exclusive property, and deny the right of the others to its use? Here, as on any other world we can conceive of, two and two make four, and when all is taken from anything nothing remains. What we see clearly would happen on any other world does happen on this.

The Duke sees intent in Nature. So do I. That which conforms to this intent is natural, wise, and righteous. That which contravenes it is unnatural, foolish, and iniquitous. In this we agree. Let us then bring to this test the institution which I arraign and he defends.

Place, stripped of clothes, a landowner's baby among a dozen workhouse babies, and who that you call in can tell the one from the others? Is the human law which declares the one born to the possession of a hundred thousand acres of land, while the others have no right to a single square inch, conformable to the intent of Nature or not? Is it, judged by this appeal, natural or unnatural, wise or foolish, righteous or iniquitous? Put the bodies of a duke and a peasant on a dissecting table, and bring, if you can, the surgeon who, by laying bare the brain, or examining the viscera, can tell which is duke and which is peasant. Are not both land animals of the same kind, with like organs and like needs? Is it not evidently the intent of Nature that both shall live on land and use land, in the same way, and to the same degree? Is there not, therefore, a violation of the intent of Nature in human laws which give to one more land than he can possibly use, and deny any land to the other?

Let me ask the Duke to consider, from the point of view of an observer of Nature, a landless man — a being fitted in all his parts and powers for the use of land, compelled by all his needs to the use of land, and yet denied all right to land. Is he not as unnatural as a bird without air, a fish without water? And can anything more clearly violate the intent of Nature than the human laws which produce such anomalies?

I call upon the Duke to observe that what Nature teaches us is not merely that men *were* equally intended to live on land, and to use land, and therefore had

originally equal rights to land, but that they are *now* equally intended to live on and use land, and, therefore, that present rights to land are equal. It is said that fish deprived of light will, in the course of generations, lose their eyes, and, within certain narrow limits, it is certain that Nature does conform some of her living creatures to conditions imposed by man. In such cases the intent of Nature may be said to have conformed to that of man, or rather to embrace that of man. But there is no such conforming in this case. The intent of Nature, that all human beings should use land, is as clearly seen in children born today as it could have been seen in any past generation. How foolish, then, are those who say that although the right to land was originally equal, this equality of right has been lost by the action or sufferance of intermediate generations. How illogical those who declare that, while it would be just to assert this equality of right in the laws of a new country where people are now coming to live, it would be unjust to conform to it the laws of a country where people long have lived! Has Nature anywhere or in anything shown any disposition to conform to what we call vested interests? Does the child born in an old country differ from the child born in a new country?

Moral right and wrong, the Duke must agree with me, are not matters of precedent. The repetition of a wrong may dull the moral sense, but will not make it right. A robbery is no less a robbery the thousand millionth time it is committed than it was the first time. This they forgot who, declaring the slave trade piracy, still legalise the enslavement of those already enslaved. This they forget who, admitting the equality of natural rights to the soil, declare that it would be unjust now to assert them. For as the keeping of a man in slavery is as much a violation of natural right as the seizure of his remote ancestor, so is the robbery involved in the present denial of natural rights to the soil as much a robbery as was the first act of fraud or force which violated those rights. Those who say it would be unjust for the people to resume their natural rights in the land without compensating present holders confound right and wrong as flagrantly as did they who held it a crime in the slave to run away without first paying his owner his market value. They have never formed a clear idea of what property in land means. It means not merely a continuous exclusion of some people from the element which it is plainly the intent of Nature that all should enjoy, but it involves a continuous confiscation of labour and the results of labour. The Duke of Argyll has, we say, a large income drawn from land. But is this income really drawn from land? Were there no men on his land, what income could the Duke get from it, save such as his own hands produced? Precisely as if drawn from slaves, this income represents an appropriation of the earnings of labour. The effect of permitting the Duke to treat the land as his property is to make so many other Scotsmen, in whole or in part, his serfs — to compel them to labour for him without pay, or to enable him to take from them their earnings without return. Surely, if the Duke will look at the matter in this way, he must see that the iniquity is not in abolishing an institution which permits one man

to plunder others, but in continuing it. He must see that any claim of landowners to compensation is not a claim to payment for what they have previously taken, but to payment for what they might yet take, precisely as would be the claim of the slaveholder — the true character of which appears in the fact that he would demand more compensation for a strong slave, out of whom he might yet get much work, than for a decrepit one, out of whom he had already forced nearly all the labour he could yield.

In assuming that denial of the justice of property in land is the prelude to an attack upon all rights of property, the Duke ignores the essential distinction between land and things rightfully property. The things which constitute wealth or capital (which is wealth used in production), and to which the right of property justly attaches, are produced by human exertion. Their material is matter, which existed before man, and which man can neither create nor destroy; but their essence — that which gives them the character of wealth — is labour impressed upon or modifying the conditions of matter. Their existence is due to the physical exertion of man, and, like his physical frame, they tend constantly to return again to Nature's reservoirs of matter and force. Land, on the contrary, is that part of the external universe on which and from which alone man can live; that reservoir of matter and force on which he must draw for all his needs. Its existence is not due to man, but is referable only to that Power from which man himself proceeds. It continues while he comes and goes, and will continue, so far as we can see, after he and his works shall disappear. Both species of things have value, but the value of the one species depends upon the amount of labour required for their production; the value of the other upon the power which its reduction to ownership gives of commanding labour or the results of labour without paying any equivalent. The recognition of the right of property in wealth, or things produced by labour, is thus but a recognition of the right of each human being to himself and to the result of his own exertion; but the recognition of a similar right of property in land is necessarily the impairment and denial of this true right of property.

Turn from principles to facts. Whether as to national strength or national character, whether as to the number of people or as to their physical and moral health, whether as to the production of wealth or as to its equitable distribution, the fruits of the primary injustice involved in making the land, on which and from which a whole people must live, the property of but a portion of their number, are everywhere evil, and nothing but evil.

If this seems to any too strong a statement, it is only because they associate individual ownership of land with permanence of possession and security of improvement. These *are* necessary to the proper use of land, but so far from being dependent upon individual ownership of land they can be secured without it in greater degree than

with it. This will be evident upon reflection. That the existing system does not secure permanence of possession and security of improvements in anything like the degree necessary to the best use of land is obvious everywhere, but especially obvious in Great Britain, where the owners of land and the users of land are for the most part distinct persons. In many cases the users of land have no security from year to year — a logical development of individual ownership in land so flagrantly unjust to the user and so manifestly detrimental to the community, that in Ireland, where this system most largely prevailed, it has been deemed necessary for the State to interfere in the most arbitrary manner. In other cases, where land is let for years, the user is often hampered with restrictions that prevent improvement and interfere with use, and at the expiration of the lease he is not merely deprived of his improvements, but is frequently subjected to a blackmail calculated upon the inconvenience and loss which removal would cost him. Wherever I have been in Great Britain, from Land's End to John o' Groat's and from Liverpool to Hull, I have heard of improvements prevented and production curtailed from this cause — in instances which run from the prevention of the building of an outhouse, the painting of a dwelling, the enlargement of a chapel, the widening of a street, or the excavation of a dock, to the shutting up of a mine, the demolition of a village, the tearing up of a railway track, or the turning of land from the support of men to the breeding of wild beasts. I could cite case after case, each typical of a class, but it is unnecessary. How largely use and improvement are restricted and prevented by private ownership of land may be appreciated only by a few, but specific cases are known to all. How insecurity of improvement and possession prevents the proper maintenance of dwellings in the cities, how it hampers the farmer, how it fills the shopkeeper with dread as the expiration of his lease draws nigh, have been, to some extent at least, brought out by recent discussions, and in all these directions propositions are being made for State interference more or less violent, arbitrary, and destructive of the sound principle that men should be left free to manage their own property as they deem best.

Does not all this interference and demand for interference show that private property in land does not produce good results, that it does not give the necessary permanence of possession and security of improvements? Is not an institution that needs such tinkering fundamentally wrong? That property in land must have different treatment from other property, all, or nearly all, are now agreed. Does not this prove that land ought not to be made individual property at all; that to treat it as individual property is to weaken and endanger the true rights of property?

The Duke of Argyll asserts that in the United States we have made land private property because we have found it necessary to secure settlement and improvement. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Duke might as well urge that our protective tariff is proof of the necessity of "protection." We have made land private

property because we are but transplanted Europeans, wedded to custom, and have followed it in this matter more readily, because in a new country the evils that at length spring from private property in land are less obvious, while a much larger portion of the people seemingly profit by it — those on the ground gaining at the expense of those who come afterwards. But so far from this treatment of land in the United States having promoted settlement and reclamation, the very reverse is true. What it has promoted is the scattering of population in the country and its undue concentration in cities, to the disadvantage of production and the lessening of comfort. It has forced into the wilderness families for whom there was plenty of room in well-settled neighbourhoods, and raised tenement houses amid vacant lots, led to waste of labour and capital in roads and railways not really needed, locked up natural opportunities that otherwise would have been improved, made tramps and idlers of men who, had they found it in time, would gladly have been at work, and given to our agriculture a character that is rapidly and steadily decreasing the productiveness of the soil.

As to political corruption in the United States, of which I have spoken in "Social Problems," and to which the Duke refers, it springs, as I have shown in that book, not from excess, but from deficiency of democracy, and mainly from our failure to recognise the equality of natural rights as well as of political rights. In comparing the two countries, it may be well to note that the exposure of abuses is quicker and sharper in the United States than in England, and that to some extent abuses which in the one country appear in naked deformity are in the other hidden by the ivy of custom and respectability. But be this as it may, the reforms I propose, instead of adding to corruptive forces, would destroy prolific sources of corruption. Our "protective tariff, our excise taxes, and demoralising system of local taxation would, in their direct and indirect effects, corrupt any government, even if not aided by the corrupting effects of the grabbing for public lands. But the first step I propose would sweep away these corruptive influences, and it is to governments thus reformed, in a state of society in which the reckless struggle for wealth would be lessened by the elimination of the fear of want, that I would give, not the management of land or the direction of enterprise, but the administration of the funds arising from the appropriation of economic rent.

Note: The quote before "protective tariff" appears in the reprint, but I can't find a close quote -- check the original -- WCA

The Duke styles me a pessimist. But, however pessimistic I may be as to present social tendencies, I have a firm faith in human nature. I am convinced that the attainment of pure government is merely a matter of conforming social institutions to moral law. If we do this, there is, to my mind, no reason why in the proper sphere of

public administration we should not find men as honest and as faithful as when acting in private capacities.

But to return to the reduction to iniquity. Test the institution of private property in land by its fruits in any country where it exists. Take Scotland. What, there, are its results? That wild beasts have supplanted human beings; that glens which once sent forth their thousand fighting men are now tenanted by a couple of gamekeepers; that there is destitution and degradation that would shame savages; that little children are stunted and starved for want of proper nourishment; that women are compelled to do the work of animals; that young girls who ought to be fitting themselves for wifehood and motherhood are held to monotonous toil in factories; while others, whose fate is sadder still, prowl the streets; that while a few Scotsmen have castles and palaces, more than a third of Scottish families live in one room each, and more than two-thirds in not more than two rooms each; that thousands of acres are kept as playgrounds for strangers, while the masses have not enough of their native soil to grow a flower, are shut out even from moor and mountain, dare not take a trout from a loch or a salmon from a stream!

If the Duke thinks all classes have gained by the advance in civilisation, let him go into the huts of the Highlands. There he may find countrymen of his, men and women the equals in natural ability and in moral character of any peer or peeress in the land, to whom the advance of our wondrous age has brought no gain. He may find them tilling the ground with the crookit spade, cutting grain with the sickle, threshing it with the flail, winnowing it by tossing it in the air, grinding it as their forefathers did a thousand years ago. He may see spinning-wheel and distaff yet in use, and the smoke from the fire in the centre of the hut ascending as it can through the thatch, that the precious heat, which costs so much labour to procure, may be economised to the utmost. These human beings are in natural parts and powers just such human beings as may be met at a royal levee, at a gathering of scientific men or inventors, or captains of industry. That they so live and work is not because of their stupidity, but because of their poverty — the direct and indisputable result of the denial of their natural rights. They have not merely been prevented from participating in the "general advance," but are positively worse off than were their ancestors before commerce had penetrated the Highlands or the modern era of labour-saving inventions had begun. They have been driven from the good land to the poor land. While their rents have been increased, their holdings have been diminished, and their pasturage cut off. Where they once had beasts, they cannot now eat a chicken or keep a donkey, and their women must do work once done by animals. With the same thoughtful attention he has given to "the way of an eagle in the air," let the Duke consider a sight he must have seen many times — a Scottish woman toiling uphill with a load of manure on her back. Then let him apply "the reduction to iniquity."

Let the Duke not be content with feasting his eyes upon those comfortable houses of the large farmers which so excite his admiration. Let him visit the bothies in which farm servants are herded together like cattle, and learn, as he may learn, that the lot of the Scottish farm servant — a lot from which no industry or thrift can release him — is to die in the workhouse, or in the receipt of a parish dole if he be so unfortunate as to outlive his ability to work. Or let him visit those poor broken-down creatures who, enduring everything rather than accept the humiliation of the workhouse, are eking out their last days upon a few shillings from the parish, supplemented by the charity of people nearly as poor as themselves. Let him consider them, and, if he has imagination enough, put himself in their place. Then let him try "the reduction to iniquity."

Let the Duke go to Glasgow, the metropolis of Scotland, where, in underground cellars and miserable rooms, he will find crowded together families who (some of them, lest they might offend the deer) have been driven from their native soil into the great city to compete with each other for employment at any price, to have their children debauched by daily contact with all that is vile. Let him some Saturday evening leave the districts where the richer classes live, wander for a while through the streets tenanted by working people, and note the stunted forms, the pinched features. Vice, drunkenness, the recklessness that comes when hope goes, he will see too. How should not such conditions produce such effects? But he will also see, if he chooses to look, hard, brave, stubborn struggling — the workman who, do his best, cannot find steady employment; the bread-winner stricken with illness; the Widow straining to keep her children from the workhouse. Let the Duke observe and reflect upon these things, and then apply the reduction to iniquity.

Or let him go to Edinburgh, the modern "Athens," of which Scotsmen speak with pride, and in buildings from whose roofs a bowman might strike the spires of twenty churches he will find human beings living as he would not keep his meanest dog. Let him toil up the stairs of one of these monstrous buildings, let him enter one of those "dark houses," let him close the door, and in the blackness think what life must be in such a place. Then let him try the reduction to iniquity. And if he go to that good charity (but, alas! how futile is Charity without Justice!) where little children are kept while their mothers are at work, and children are fed who would otherwise go hungry, he may see infants whose limbs are shrunken from want of nourishment. Perhaps they may tell him, as they told me, of that little girl, barefooted, ragged, and hungry, who, when they gave her bread, raised her eyes and clasped her hands, and thanked our Father in Heaven for his bounty to her. They who told me that never dreamed, I think, of its terrible meaning. But I ask the Duke of Argyll, did that little child, thankful for that poor dole, get what our Father provided for her? Is He so niggard? If not, what is

it, who is it, that stands between such children and our Father's bounty? If it be an institution, is it not our duty to God and to our neighbour to rest not till we destroy it? If it be a man, were it not better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were cast into the depths of the sea?

There can be no question of over-population -- no pretence that Nature has brought more men into being than she has made provision for. Scotland surely is not over-populated. Much land is unused; much land is devoted to lower uses, such as the breeding of game, that might be devoted to higher uses; there are mineral resources untouched; the wealth drawn from the sea is but a small part of what might be drawn. But it is idle to argue this point. Neither in Scotland, nor in any other country, can any excess of population over the power of Nature to provide for them be shown. The poverty so painful in Scotland is manifestly no more due to over-population than the crowding of two-thirds of the families into houses of one or two rooms is due to want of space to build houses upon. And just as the crowding of people into insufficient lodgings is directly due to institutions which permit men to hold vacant land needed for buildings until they can force a monopoly price from those wishing to build, so is the poverty of the masses due to the fact that they are in like manner shut out from the opportunities Nature has provided for the employment of their labour in satisfaction of their wants.

Take the island of Skye as illustrating on a small scale cause of poverty throughout Scotland. The people of Skye poor -- very poor. Is it because there are too many of them? An explanation lies nearer -- an explanation which would account for poverty, no matter how small the population. If there were but one man in Skye, and if all that he produced, save enough to give him a bare living, were periodically taken from him and carried off, he would necessarily be poor. That is the condition of the people of Skye. With a population of some seventeen thousand there are, if my memory serves me, twenty-four landowners. The few proprietors who live upon the island, though they do nothing to produce wealth, have fine houses, and live luxuriously, while the greater portion of the rents are carried off to be spent abroad. It is not merely that there is thus a constant drain upon the wealth produced, but that there the power of producing wealth is enormously lessened. As the people are deprived of the power to accumulate capital, production is carried on in the most primitive style, and at the greatest disadvantage.

If there are really too many people in Scotland, why not make the landlords emigrate? They are not merely best fitted to emigrate, but would give the greatest relief. They consume most, waste most, carry off most, while they produce least. As landlords, in fact, they produce nothing. They merely consume and destroy. Economically considered, they have the same effect upon production as bands of robbers or pirate

fleets. To national wealth they are as weevils in the grain, as rats in the storehouse, as ferrets in the poultry-yard. The Duke of Argyll complains of what he calls my “assumption that owners of land are not producers, and that rent does not represent, or represents in a very minor degree, the interest of capital.” The Duke will justify his complaint if he will show how the owning of land can produce anything. Failing in this, he must admit that though the same person may be a labourer, capitalist, and landowner, the owner of land, as an owner of land, is not a producer. And surely he knows that the term "rent" as used in political economy, and as I use it in the books he criticises, never represents the interest on capital, but refers alone to the sum paid for the use of the inherent capabilities of the soil.

As illustrating the usefulness of landlords, the Duke says:—

My own experience now extends over the best part of forty years. During that time I have built over fifty homesteads, complete for man and beast. I have drained and reclaimed many hundreds, and inclosed some thousands of acres. In this sense I have added house to house, and field to field, not — as pulpit orators have assumed in similar cases — that I might dwell alone in the land, but that the cultivating class may live more comfortably and with better appliances for increasing the produce of the soil.

And again, he says that during the last four years he has spent on one property £40,000 in the improvement of the soil.

I fear that in Scotland the Duke of Argyll has been "hiding his light under a bushel," for his version of the way in which he has "added house to house and field to field" differs much from that which common Scotsmen give. But this is a matter into which I do not wish to enter. What I would like to ask the Duke is, how he built the fifty homesteads and reclaimed the thousands of acres. Not with his own hands, of course, but with his money. Where, then, did he get that money? Was it not taken as rent from the cultivators of the soil? And might not they, had it been left to them, have devoted it to the building of homesteads and the improvement of the soil as well as he? Suppose the Duke spends on such improvements all he draws in rent, minus what it costs him to live, is not the cost of his living so much waste as far as the improvement of the land is concerned? Would there not be a considerably greater fund to devote to this purpose if the Duke got no rent, and had to work for a living?

But all Scottish landholders are not even such improvers as the Duke. There are landlords who spend their incomes in racing, in profligacy, in doing things which when not injurious are quite as useless to man or beast as the works of that English Duke, recently dead, who spent vast sums in burrowing underground like a mole.

What the Scottish landlords call their "improvements" have, for the most part, consisted in building castles, laying out pleasure-grounds, raising rents, and evicting their kinsmen. But the encouragement given to agriculture, by even such improving owners as the Duke of Argyll, is very much like the encouragement given to traffic by the Duke of Bedford, who keeps two or three old men to open and shut gates he and his have erected across the streets of London. That much the greater part of the incomes drawn by landlords is as completely loss for all productive purposes as though it were thrown into the sea, there can be no doubt. But that even the small part which *is* devoted to reproductive improvement is largely wasted. the Duke of Argyll himself clearly shows in stating, what I have learned from other sources, that the large outlays of the great landholders yield little interest, and, in many cases, no interest at all. Clearly, the stock of wealth would have been much greater had this capital been left in the hands of the cultivators, who, it most cases, suffer from lack of capital, and in many cases have to pay the most usurious interest.

In fact, the plea of the landlords that they, as landlords, assist in production, is very much like the plea of the slaveholders that they gave a living to the slaves. And I am convinced that if the Duke of Argyll will consider the matter as a philosopher rather than as a landlord, he will see the gross inconsistency between the views he expresses as to negro slavery and the position he assumes as to property in land.

In principle the two systems of appropriating the labour of other men are essentially the same. Since it is from land and on land that man must live, if he is to live at all, a human being is as completely enslaved when the land on which he must live is made the property of another, as when his own flesh and blood are made the property of that other. And at least, after a certain point in social development is reached, the slavery that results from depriving men of all legal right to land is, for the very reason that the relation between master and slave is not so direct and obvious, more cruel and more demoralising than that which makes property of their bodies.

And turning to facts, the Duke must see, if he will look, that the effects of the two systems are substantially the same. He is, for instance, an hereditary legislator, with power in making laws which other Scotsmen, who have little or no voice in making laws, must obey under penalty of being fined, imprisoned, or hanged. He has this power, which is essentially that of the master to compel the slave, not because anyone thinks that Nature gives wisdom and patriotism to eldest sons more than to younger sons, or to some families more than to other families, but because as the legal owner of a considerable part of Scotland he is deemed to have greater rights in making laws than other Scotsmen, who can live in their native land only by paying some of the legal owners of Scotland for the privilege.

That power over men arises from ownership of land as well as from ownership of their bodies the Duke may see in varied manifestations if he will look. The power of the Scottish landlords over even the large farmers, and, in the smaller towns, over even the well-to-do shopkeepers and professional men, is enormous. Even where it is the custom to let on lease, and large capital is required, competition, aided in many cases by the law of hypothec, enables the landlord to exert a direct power over even the large farmer. That many substantial farmers have been driven from their homes and ruined because they voted or were supposed to have voted against the wishes of their landlords is well known. A man whose reputation was that of the best farmer in Scotland was driven from his home in this way a few years since for having politically offended his landlord. In Leeds (England) I was told of a Scottish physician who died there lately. He had been in comfortable practice in a village on the estate of a Scottish duke. Because he voted for a Liberal candidate, word was given by the landlord's agent that he was no longer to be employed, and, as the people feared to disobey the hint, he was obliged to leave. He came to Leeds, and, not succeeding in establishing himself, pined away, and would have died in utter destitution but that some friends he had made in Leeds wrote to the candidate for supporting whom he had been boycotted, who came to Leeds, provided for his few days of life, and assumed the care of his children. I mention to his honour the name of that gentleman as it was given to me. It was Sir Sydney Waterlow.

During my recent visit to the Highlands I was over and over again told by well-to-do men that they did not dare to let their opinions be known, or to take any action the landlords or their agents might dislike. In one town such men came to me by night and asked me to speak, but, telling me frankly that they did not dare to apply for a hall, requested me to do that for myself, as I was beyond the tyranny they feared. If this be the condition of the well-to-do, the condition of the crofters can be imagined. One of them said to me, "We have feared the landlord more than we have feared God Almighty; we have feared the factor more than the landlord, and the ground officer more than the factor." But there is a class lower still than even the crofters — the cotters — who, on forty-eight hours' notice, can be turned out of what by courtesy are called their homes, and who are at the mercy of the large farmers or tacksmen, who in turn fear the landlord or agent. Take this class, or the class of farm servants who are kept in bothies. Can the Duke tell me of any American slaves who were lodged and fed as these white slaves are lodged and fed, or who had less of all the comforts and enjoyments of life?

The slaveholders of the South never, in any case that I have heard of, interfered with the religion of the slaves; and the Duke of Argyll will doubtless admit that this is a power which one man ought not to have over another. Yet he must know that at the disruption of the Scottish Church, some forty years ago, Scottish proprietors not

merely evicted tenants who joined the Free Church (and in many cases eviction meant ruin and death), but absolutely refused sites for churches, and even permission for the people to stand upon the land and worship God according to the dictates of their conscience. Hugh Miller has told, in the "Cruise of the Betsy," how one minister, denied permission to live on the land, had to make his home on the sea in a small boat. Large congregations had to worship on mountain roadsides without shelter from storm and sleet, and even on the sea-shore, where the tide flowed around their feet as they took the communion. But perhaps the slavishness which has been engendered in Scotland by land monopoly is not better illustrated than in the case where, after keeping them off his land for more than six years, a Scottish duke allowed a congregation the use of a gravel-pit for purposes of worship, whereupon they sent him a resolution of thanks!

In the large cities tyranny of this kind cannot, of course, be exercised, but it is in the large cities that the slavery resulting from the reduction of land to private ownership assumes the darkest shades. Negro slavery had its horrors, but they were not so many or so black as those constantly occurring in such cities. Their own selfish interests, if not their human sympathies or the restraint of public opinion, would have prevented the owners of negro slaves from lodging and feeding and working them as many of the so-called free people in the centres of civilisation are lodged and fed and worked.

With all allowance for the prepossessions of a great landlord, it is difficult to understand how the Duke of Argyll can regard as an animating scene the history of agricultural improvement in Scotland since 1745. From the date mentioned, and the fact that he is a Highlander, I presume that he refers mainly to the Highlands. But as a parallel to calling this history "animating," I can think of nothing so close as the observation of an economist of the Duke's school, who, in an account of a visit to Scotland a generation or so ago, spoke of the pleasure with which, in a workhouse, he had seen "both sexes and all ages, even to infants of two and three years, earning their living by picking oakum," or as the expression of pride with which a Polish noble, in the last century, pointed out to an English visitor some miserable-looking creatures who, he said, were samples of the serfs, any one of whom he could kick as he pleased!

"Thousands and thousands of acres," says the Duke, "have been reclaimed from barren wastes; ignorance has given place to science, and barbarous customs of immemorial strength have been replaced by habits of intelligence and business." This is one side of the picture; but unfortunately there is another side — chieftains taking advantage of the reverential affection of their clansmen, and their ignorance of a foreign language and a foreign law, to reduce those clansmen to a condition of virtual slavery; to rob them of the land which by immemorial custom they had enjoyed; to substitute for the mutual tie that bound chief to vassal and vassal to chief the cold

maxims of money-making greed; to drive them from their homes that sheep might have place, or to hand them over to the tender mercies of a great farmer.

"There has been grown," says the Duke, "more corn, more potatoes, more turnips; there has been produced more milk, more butter, more cheese, more beef, more mutton, more pork, more fowls and eggs." But what becomes of them? The Duke must know that the ordinary food of the common people is meal and potatoes; that of these many do not get enough, that many would starve outright if they were not kept alive by charity. Even the wild meat which their fathers took freely, the common people cannot now touch. A Highland poor-law doctor, whose district is on the estate of a prominent member of the Liberal party, was telling me recently of the miserable poverty of the people among whom his official duties lie, and how insufficient and monotonous food was beginning to produce among them diseases like the *pellagra* in Italy, when I asked him if they could not, despite the gamekeepers, take for themselves enough fish and game to vary their diet. "They never think of it," he replied; "they are too cowed. Why, the moment any one of them was even suspected of cultivating a taste for trout or grouse, he would be driven off the estate like a mad dog."

Besides the essays and journals referred to by the Duke of Argyll, there is another publication, which any one wishing to be informed on the subject may read with advantage, though not with pleasure. It is entitled "Highland Clearances," and is published in Inverness by A. McKenzie. There is nothing in savage life more cold-bloodedly atrocious than the warfare here recorded as carried on against the clansmen by those who were their hereditary protectors. The burning of houses; the ejection of old and young; the tearing down of shelters put up to protect women with child and tender infants from the bitter night blast; the threats of similar treatment against all who should give them hospitality; the forcing of poor helpless creatures into emigrant ships which carried them to strange lands and among a people of whose tongues they were utterly ignorant, to die in many cases like rotten sheep, or to be reduced to utter degradation. An animated scene truly! Great districts once peopled with a race, rude it may be and slavish to their chiefs, but still a race of manly virtues, brave, kind, and hospitable — now tenanted only by sheep or cattle, by grouse or deer! No one can read of the atrocities perpetrated upon the Scottish people, during what is called "the improvement of the Highlands," without feeling something like utter contempt for men, who, lions abroad, were such sheep at home that they suffered these outrages without striking a blow, even if an ineffectual one. But the explanation of this reveals a lower depth in the "reduction to iniquity." The reason of the tame submission of the Highland people to outrages which should have nerved the most timid is to be found in the prostitution of their religion. The Highland people are a deeply religious people, and during these evictions their preachers preached to them that their trials were the

visitation of the Almighty, and must be submitted to under the penalty of eternal damnation!

I met accidentally in Scotland, recently, a lady of the small landlord class, and the conversation turned upon the poverty of the Highland people. "Yes, they are poor," she said, "but they deserve to be poor; they are so dirty. I have no sympathy with women who won't keep their houses neat and their children tidy."

I suggested that neatness could hardly be expected from women who every day had to trudge for miles with creels of peat and seaweed on their backs.

"Yes," she said, "they have to work hard. But that is not so sad as the hard lives of the horses. Did you ever think of the horses? They have to work all their lives — till they can't work any longer. It makes me sad to think of it. There ought to be big farms where horses should be turned out after they had worked some years, so that they might have time to enjoy themselves before they died."

"But the people!" I interposed. "They, too, have to work till they can't work longer."

"Oh yes!" she replied, "but the people have souls, and even if they have a hard time of it here, they will, if they are good, go to heaven when they die, and be happy hereafter. But the poor beasts have no souls, and if they don't enjoy themselves here they have no chance of enjoying themselves at all. It is too bad!"

The woman was in sober earnest. And I question if she did not fairly represent much that has been taught in Scotland as Christianity. But at last, thank God! the day is breaking, and the blasphemy that has been preached as religion will not be heard much longer. The manifesto of the Scottish Land Restoration League, calling upon the Scottish people to bind themselves together in solemn league and covenant for the extirpation of the sin and shame of landlordism, is a lark's note in the dawn.

As in Scotland so elsewhere. I have spoken particularly of Scotland only, because the Duke does so. But everywhere that our civilisation extends the same primary injustice is bearing the same evil fruit. And everywhere the same spirit is rising, the same truth is beginning to force its way.

Henry George.