

# Land and Freedom

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## Comment and Reflection

THE forces of ignorance are best employed when masquerading in the company of idealism. As their insolence knows no bounds, we must not be surprised to find them offering their services at the altar of truth itself. For instance, nothing seems more capable of unadulterable thought than the concept of Liberty. Yet we venture to say her virtue has been not a little profaned by the attribution of a quality which is foreign to her genius.

OF frequent occurrence are such ideas as, "Let us be thankful for our freedom." The same thought is expressed, although rather gloomily, somewhere in the memoirs of Washington—"Those who are born after us will not appreciate how easily they came by that for which we have suffered. There will seem no need to cherish an independence they did not struggle to obtain." We wonder from this if the father of our country was by any chance thinking of independence and liberty as nothing more than freedom from foreign domination. It must be remembered that chattel slavery was in his day a recognized institution.

WE trust it may be now permitted to suggest that perhaps we have been thankful for something we don't quite have—and that gratitude, in the absence of understanding, may be a positive barrier to the attainment of the subject of our thanks. Can it really be considered a sign of freedom and independence that we are prone to think in terms of eternal vigilance only against the foreigner (witness our tariffs), or to "purge" our officialdom by merely "turning the rascals out" periodically? On the other hand, have we not exercised too scant a vigilance over dangers much closer to home than those seemingly supplied by foreign powers and even national politics? In truth, we have been neglectful of the fact that liberty, like charity, should begin at home, in the sphere of genuine economic tranquillity.

IT is not without a feeling of reverence that we undertake to seek clarification of why we are supposed to be thankful for the freedom we are allowed. For in look-

ing upon freedom as a matter primarily of freedom from foreign control and thanking our stars(?) we have a Democracy (*political* freedom), we suspect we are really catering to forces that are undermining it. If being thankful means thankful to some higher power, that power in truth cannot be our Heavenly Father—it is blasphemy to believe that a beneficent Creator should desire us to thank Him that we are not bondsmen. For while there are infinite ways in which gratitude and thanksgiving may be felt and uttered, is this to say we must be grateful for the right to be born as free men and to live as free men? On the contrary, we rather suspect that we have been tricked into the idea of offering this brand of gratitude, not in reality to God, but to those of His children who, through ignorance, have become the taskmasters of their brethren.

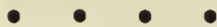
AT bottom, these prayers of thanksgiving for our freedom appear to be merely an echo of the idea that "things might be worse." This is only too evident in a world where things seem to be getting worse. If only men could understand that prayers of thanksgiving might well rest at that point where ignorance has been overthrown! To behold a free world, free in the sense that we might all be able to use the good earth, now restricted by the ignorance of men, is to indeed invoke a reverent spirit of joy that we should be part of it. If instead, we find ourselves barred from that earth, because we do not know or have forgotten what freedom is, might we not better give thanks to a Providence that now and then sends a man to teach us the real meaning of freedom? Yes, we need teachers! Anyone doubting that should be asked if it is not a sad commentary that many people seem beholden to a Bill of Rights or other parchment as the *source* of their liberty, their freedom of speech and even of the right to worship in their own faith. That a Magna Charta should be hailed as a witness to the dignity of man sounds queer indeed to those of us who know what was in the minds of the enemies of King John.

LIBERTY is a property of man that normally belongs to him as an indestructible part of his being. It cannot be bought—that would involve a contradiction. By the same token, it cannot be the subject matter of

gratitude. There is a nobility in freedom, when understood, which frowns upon any attempt to engraft upon it the convention of "thank you." Nor have we overlooked that liberty is primarily an abstract ideal, and that it permeates a man's soul only as he is able to perceive its genius. If his conception is inadequate, he shall never fully enjoy it. Take, for example, the "freedom" which our southern slaves obtained when the shackles of their bondage had been broken. A much greater degree of slavery inhered in the political liberty they received in exchange for their relatively secure economic status under the old system. As Henry George said, they became free only to compete against themselves and others for employment at starvation wages. This of course had to follow, where the soil of their "adopted" country was fenced off by institutions which disinherited them from freedom more effectively than the slave traders who had snatched them from their native Africa.

PERHAPS it will be thought that we might at least be thankful that we in America do not now live in Europe. This is just another way of saying we are grateful not to be our unborn children. If what is inwardly felt is "after us the deluge," then it is indeed a false security we live under. Already we have confessed that in a few more years the few thousand miles of water between Europe and ourselves will not make much difference. Of course, we must be careful not to limit our concern to freedom from only military wars. War is but a generic term for crime, disease, misery, and unnatural death. And we know that the greatest toll of human life and happiness results not from military combat but from the worry and suffering that are associated with poverty.

HENRY GEORGE has supplied the world with a true definition of freedom as well as a formula for its attainment. When humanity comprehends the full meaning of freedom, they will make short work of all war. Until that time we honor liberty in but name and form. Its realization will depend on ourselves. When we are no longer "thankful" for "liberty," by that sign shall we know we have it.



WHERE Liberty rises, there virtue grows, wealth increases, knowledge expands, invention multiplies human powers, and in strength and spirit the freer nation rises among her neighbors as Saul amid his brethren—taller and fairer. Where Liberty sinks, there virtue fades, wealth diminishes, knowledge is forgotten, invention ceases, and empires once mighty in arms and arts become a helpless prey to freer barbarians!

Only in broken gleams and partial light has the sun of Liberty yet beamed among men, but all progress hath she called forth.—HENRY GEORGE

## The Three I's

By JOHN HANNA

IGNORANCE, Indifference and Inertia impede progress in the twentieth century as they have delayed progress in all the centuries. Ignorance is not simply an attribute of the unlearned, the people who have not had the advantage of the thing we call education. It is found very frequently among the highly educated. *Ignorance* consists in the disposition to ignore the ideas advanced in disagreement with prevailing belief or custom. This has been true in all times. When Roger Bacon tried to establish or obtain recognition of the value of experimental science as opposed to the old system of authoritarian scholasticism he met the antagonism of the so-called educated; some actively interfered with his work, many more simply ignored his teachings.—The scene has changed.—Experimental science has become the order of the day; colleges and industrial plants have their research laboratories in a quest for new knowledge or for a better application of the old.

The Roger Bacons of the twentieth century are stirring the world with proposals for social and economic betterment.—History repeats itself.—These efforts are being ignored. This *Ignorance* is very prevalent among the people who dislike any disturbance of the established order. Such is the attitude of Ignorance.

Indifference is the natural child of ignorance and bears a strong resemblance to its parent. Indifference is negative in all respects except in that of standing in the light of others. Indifference to art never painted a picture, carved a statue or wrote a poem. Indifference to mechanical achievement never invented a machine. Indifference to sanitation or therapeutics never isolated a microbe or founded a hospital. Indifference to economic principles never solved a social problem, never even understood one. Men who are so indifferent to social and economic problems that they never read a serious book or listen to a serious discussion of them still feel competent to express an opinion on any proposal for social betterment or economic change. This feeling of competence is usually the product of political or business affiliations and is governed by them; allaying any desire for a deeper knowledge of the subject. Such is the attitude of Indifference!

Inertia in the sphere of human conduct bears the character it has in the physical realm, a tendency when at rest to remain at rest and when in motion to continue in motion in a straight line unless acted upon by an outside force. Human inertia is a compound of ignorance and indifference. How often one hears "There has always been greed in the world and there always will be." "We have always had wars and we always will." Some take refuge in a quotation from Scripture, "The poor ye have always with you." Such inertia is sloth; had it prevailed