

sleeps where the winds from the sea stir her long grasses and quiet rivers. With the political freedom won after centuries of oppression she fronts the future clinging to the old and poisonous policies which have spelt decay and death to so many peoples. And there is less excuse for her than for other lands, since she has the teachings of the Brehon Code written in the dawn of her history. She has the ennobling sentiments of many of her patriots who saw the truth and proclaimed it. That the land of Ireland belongs to the Irish people, and not to the Irish landlords, is a truth held by many a humble priest whose memory is long and who has read much.

The statesman who will appeal to this slumbering sentiment in the minds and hearts of Irishmen will light a flame that will light the world.

But not yet!

## Acres of Diamonds

ABOUT two decades ago, one Russell H. Conwell devised a lecture bearing the title which heads this article and which he delivered more than five thousand times. In doing so he visited all parts of the United States and earned fees which he devoted in a large part to sending young men through college. The lecture was devoted almost entirely to inculcating the belief that the diamond fields of opportunity lay all about us and only needed intensive cultivation to bring success to every man who would apply the principles exemplified by the lecturer. The appeal was to the low ideal of commercial success, with only the saving grace that the surplus when won should be used for the same educational purpose to which the lecturer was devoting his own profits.

A dispatch recently tells us that the condition which Mr. Conwell saw only in his vision actually exists on government land in South Africa, where diamonds can be picked up with little effort. Indeed the statement was made that the Minister of Mines and Forests had within a few hours picked up nearly a thousand dollars worth of the stones. The first thought of the unreflecting citizen would normally be "Happy South Africa! where wealth can be had merely for the picking; as this limitless wealth exists on government land clearly the Union of South Africa can exist for the future without collecting taxes and one of the grave sources of human discontent will be allayed." But he is not allowed to remain long in the contemplation of this glorious vision. One of those gloomy persons known as political economists buttonholes him and says, "Do you know that this diamond discovery on public land may precipitate one of the greatest financial catastrophies of all the ages? Don't you know that for many years past the output of diamonds has been regulated by a benevolent monopoly, which only permitted as much of the crop to be marketed as would not depreciate the value of diamonds? Just how much of previous crops remains un-

marketed only those on the inside know. And this situation has come about not altogether because of the desire of the diamond monopolists to enhance their own profits, but also because an unregulated market might easily deprive the diamond of perhaps its most valuable quality, its reliability as an investment which can be turned into cash without loss should an emergency arise. Large numbers of citizens have come to realize that such precious stones minister to their sense of their own importance, to the vanity of their wives or other female relatives and at the same time furnish an unfailing resource in times of financial stress. What is going to happen if, in addition to the undistributed hoard of diamonds whose existence is suspected, this new source of diamonds exists in the hands of the government, which can with difficulty be controlled by the trust and which will be under pressure to sell the stones as fast as they are found to meet the demands for new revenue which, if they do not already exist, will certainly arise, when the existence of a new source of revenue has become generally known?"

Then if we go a step further and imagine the Union of South Africa to derive from its diamond fields a sufficient revenue to enable it to dispense with any tax levy whatever, how would the country fare?

All land holders would immediately assume an even more highly privileged position than they now enjoy. Paying no taxes they would be under no pressure to sell their land or to permit anyone to use it save under such conditions as were favorable enough to overcome the natural inertia which is one of the chief characteristics of highly privileged classes everywhere. The lot of the landless classes would be much more severe than it is now. Rents would rise to the highest points that the traffic would bear, and unless the disinherited classes lost all the instincts of self-preservation, revolution would be speedy and inevitable.

This aspect of the case indicates that taxation, if properly applied may be the salvation of the people, not their destruction, as so many have deemed it.

## The So-Called Housing Problem

FOR nearly eight years New York has been struggling with a so-called housing problem which has attracted the attention of the civilized world. The diversion of capital and laborers into belligerent channels from 1914 to 1920 brought about its normal consequences, the total stoppage of building in a city which was growing in population at the rate of 100,000 per year. Naturally a point was reached where living accommodations became congested and houses and apartments ceased to be available at any figure which ordinary citizens could afford to pay.

For a couple of years the Legislature considered the problem without being able to discern that the only line of policy, whether sound economically or not, which would

solve the problem of shortage of housing was to make the investment of capital in housing more attractive than investments in any other property. The only way the legislature could do this was to permit cities to take the tax off housing partly or wholly for a certain number of years. Not because the Legislature understood the probable effects of such a policy, but because it was that or nothing, the policy of tax exemption was decided upon and it certainly worked. Something like \$2,500,000,000 was invested in housing and although the exemption was stopped three years ago so far as new buildings were concerned, the flood tide is still running, and though most people think that the point of adequate supply has been reached there seems to be no end of construction in sight.

In the first years of the building boom complaint was frequently heard that the public was not getting the benefit of tax exemption but that it was all going into the pockets of the builders. But no claims had been made that, at the outset, rents would be reduced. All that was contended was that it would cause new buildings to be erected. No one could question that that purpose was accomplished. Those who were far-sighted saw that after a time the supply of building would exceed the effective demand and that rents would commence to fall. This condition has begun to happen. Rents starting at \$25. per room per month have fallen to \$20. per room per month and are now down to \$15. per month per room in many places and still the building boom continues, soon the price seems liable to fall to \$12., which is cost with a slight profit, and if we compute this value in pre-war dollars we will find that the price or rent of these rooms will not be far from pre-war rentals.

Still the cry for housing relief arises. Even if rooms rent for \$12.50 per month per room such rentals are beyond the reach of vast fractions of the City's population. How is the large number of families whose earning range from \$30. to \$40. to be provided for? A large number of well meaning people are committed to the idea that they should be housed in good homes regardless of what the cost of the homes may be.

For the first time, when the flood tide of prosperity is supposed to be running, we find people advancing the view that as there are vast numbers of people whose labor is necessary to our comfort and well-being, and who can not exact a living wage for themselves, that we must supplement this by providing homes below cost, but that this subsidy policy must be carefully differentiated from pauperization. The citizen's self-respect must be preserved even though he may be in receipt of relief by the expenditure of public money. Incidentally none of the projects which has been discussed have resulted in anything practical.

No one seems courageous enough to declare that what we are confronted with is just the old poverty problem back again; a large proportion of the people engaged in unorganized industries have been unable to get their wages

advanced enough to make up for the depreciated dollar, and so while their nominal wages have risen they are actually worse off than before the war. As usual when we get beneath the surface we find that all the so-called social problems, by whatever name they are called, proceed from the same fundamental cause, the denial of natural rights to the earth and its bounties.

## Authority

(Republished by Request.)

THE following article by Joseph Dana Miller which appeared in Nov.-Dec. 1926, of LAND AND FREEDOM was in reply to President Coolidge who had said in an address at the Georgetown University: "I would not venture to say what our country most needs from its educated young men and women. But one of its urgent needs is a greater spirit of loyalty which can come only from reverence for constituted authority, faith in things as they are."

To this vicious teaching we made reply as follows: (Fred S. Wallace of the Coshocton, Ohio, *Daily Tribune*, paid the article the compliment of saying: "Several of the paragraphs rise to the heights of Henry George were he writing on the same theme.")

"The final arbiter of all intellectual truth is the mind; of all moral truth the conscience. These are the real authorities, and the duty of subjecting all things to the test of reason and conscience a man owes to his fellowmen, and to God. It is the most solemn of all obligations, for truth is the most valuable of all earthly possessions. How great a wrong then he commits by a slavish subservience to authority. The fallibility of human reason is not to be disputed—we hear much of it, certainly too much. But the fallibility of authority is of an infinitely more tenuous nature. We may decide wrongly by following our own mental processes. But ultimately the path if persisted in leads to truth. To the rational processes of the mind there is no other destination. But Authority is the rock in the way of intellectual and social progress. It is a tyranny that keeps kings on their thrones and fakirs in high places; that moves armies across the prostrate bodies of peoples; that sends Conscience that should rule the world quaking and trembling into dark corners.

What credentials has Authority beyond its apparel, insignia, gold lace or sounding titles? Can it "point with pride" to its record, or "view with alarm" the results of disobedience to its commands? Has it such achievements to its credit that justify the suppression of conscience and the reasoning faculty to its obiter dicta? Read the record and decide. For instead of being usually right this most worshipful Authority is nearly always everywhere wrong. Its history trails with blunders, bristles with fallacies; it is even now pompous with theories long exploded; everywhere it has cheated, humbugged and tyrannized over reason and conscience.