

Land and Freedom

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Comment and Reflection

HERE is a quotation from an article by George B. Cutten, President of the Colgate University, in the *New York Times* of recent date:

To those who claim that religion is not meeting the moral demands of the time, it should be recalled that we are moving very swiftly in this century, and new social problems are arising with astonishing rapidity.

From its nature religion is conservative, and religious solutions must from necessity lag behind the presentation of problems; but looking at things in the large, as for example, a thousand years at a time, or even a century, we cannot help recognize the consistency with which religion has met and conquered presented problems even if unusually late in doing so—as, for example, the case of slavery. Nor has religion attacked the problem in any craven spirit, but boldly every enemy has been faced and never has religion refused to pay the price, as great as that price has sometimes been.

One has only to note the problems now being attacked to realize that though slow in starting, there has never been any question of retreating when once the conflict has begun. War, alcoholic intoxication, child labor and social justice are now on the program, and we may expect these matters to be settled and settled right if it requires centuries.

BY "religion" it must, we suppose, be understood that President Cutten means *organized* religion, though it must be confessed that the term as used by him seems to mean one thing at one time and something else at another. In this way it is easy to make out a case for the defence. We may say that the aroused religious sense of the people did finally result in the abolition of slavery. Here and there Christian men and women made their opposition heard. But it was not the organized church, though here and there were churches to which slavery was abhorrent and which were not afraid to say so through the voices of their pastors and often by explicit declaration.

BUT the veil had best be drawn over the attitude of organized Christianity, both North and South, in the days when the abolition of slavery was being agitated. To say that "religion (organized religion?) met and conquered presented problems—as for example the case of slavery," is to offend one's intelligence. Surely the knowledge of history in the possession of the most casual

student is not to be thus openly affronted. He knows better even if President Cutten has persuaded himself to the contrary.

WE are glad to know that the problems of war and social justice "are now on the programme." The churches had better hurry up before the religious conscience of the people overtakes them. They have not to date shown any particular courage in facing the problem of war, and as for social justice they are for the most part discreetly silent. Social justice, rightly understood, means the deprivation of some social or economic privilege for some one or more of the pwholders. For the pastor to preach it may mean the loss of his pulpit—let us say the loss of his job.

ONE thing, however, is gratifying in President Cutten's article. It is one of the signs that the church has begun the abandonment of the notion that religion has to do only with the regulation of individual conduct. He is evidently of the opinion that great social evils are to be met and overcome, and that the church should be an agency in this war against them. And when the church realizes that it is the denial of fundamental social justice that keeps men in bondage to evil it will see the necessity of plainer speaking than has been its habit. If organized religion, now losing its hold upon so many men and women, ever induces them to affiliate with the Christian churches, it must change its attitude with respect to the great problems of society—above all, it must seek the answer to the question why the natural resources of the country, the bounty of the Creator, are the property of the few, and whether such division of the earth is in accordance with divine intent, or consistent with divine wisdom.

IT is the augury of a new spirit in the Socialist party that it has now abandoned the declaration of class consciousness and a class conflict. There was never anything in this. Luke North pierced it to the heart when he declared that the only true division was between "those who cared and those who didn't." There are classes, of course, and some of these are based upon the possession of economic privileges. But the true appeal is to Man—"I am for men," said Henry George, when he was introduced at one of his last public meetings as "a friend

of labor." We congratulate the Socialists on the abandonment of an ancient shibboleth which was always a stumbling block in the path of progress. Perhaps the way is now open for a wider consideration of those problems which affect the entire well-being of the community and concern every man and woman therein.

THE following Resolution was adopted at the recent Liberal Conference in London. It just barely carried: "This Conference affirms its conviction that the housing of the people is a national responsibility." If the housing of the people is a national responsibility so is the feeding and clothing of the people, and we are well on our way to the extreme of state socialism. The opposition to the recommendation was led by our friend Ashley Mitchell among others.

WHAT is the national responsibility in the matter? Only to provide the opportunities for the people who will then make their own housing. The State is neither an architect, builder or contractor. It is impossible for the nation or the government to lay a single board or drive a single nail. If under the direction of the state the producers of houses start building, the result will be disappointing. If the intention is that the government raise the necessary money to secure housing accommodations for the people the question then is, why are the people unable to do this for themselves, and the nation's responsibility is of another sort—a responsibility for the laws and conditions that fail to secure for the people opportunities for employment that will enable them to provide their own housing.

THE well known farm paper, *Farm and Fireside*, speaking of a glass factory which turns out 41 times as many bottles as could be turned out by one man under the old processes, and declaring that one worker with a steam shovel does as much as 145 men could accomplish with pick and shovel, cries out: "Hasten the day when the manless plow, that will work day and night by itself, is perfected."

WELL, what then? Would it surprise *Farm and Fireside* to be told that the majority of the farmers, if they remained farmers, would then come pretty near starving to death? The man who owns the land then needing no labor, could start his manless plow going and watch it from a point of vantage while he gathers in the fruits of his land. Others "fortunate" enough to own manless plows, but no land, would be forced to sell their plows at a sacrifice and enter the employ of the landowning farmers, or others in the performance of menial chores. The inventor of a manless reaper would complete his destruction.

THIS does not mean that labor saving devices are the enemy of labor, as Socialists declare. Nor does it

mean that government should own the machinery. Nor does it mean that the inventor of labor-saving devices should be penalized or discouraged. Under our present system he who owns the land will own the labor saving devices and the men that work them. To the landowner goes the productivity which enhances the value of his land, enabling him to appropriate most of the increase, without effort on his part.

THE wish of this farm paper, if it means well to the farmer, should be not for a manless plow, but for a different division of the wealth produced. Why not think in terms of this division, if it is desired to arrive at any real conclusion? A manless plow is of no use at all to the landless man, but places him at a further disadvantage as compared with the actual possessor of the land. Is it not time that our farm journals—they more especially, as representing the basic industry of the country—begin to seek the reason for the complaint that John Stuart Mill voiced when he said that the invention of labor-saving machinery has failed to better the condition of a single individual dependent upon his labor for a livelihood? Though to this there are exceptions it remains substantially true. The reason was not clear even to the fine mind and keen perception of Mill. But the answer has been given in clear and luminous exposition by Henry George in a book entitled *Progress and Poverty*. We assume that *Farm and Fireside* has heard of the work.

Cleveland's Housing Spasm

CLEVELAND is having her annual housing spasm. This one was started by Dr. E. J. Greeg, who represents in the city council a tenement district in which the poorest dwell, under very bad conditions.

Like all other similar spasms, this one will accomplish nothing except, possibly, to enrich a few landowners, win a little publicity for local politicians and capitalists, and glorify Andrew J. Thomas, a New York architect who was urged to visit Cleveland to advise the city council and who was hailed by the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* as the "Housing Messiah," which caused the irreverent cynics to chortle. If Thomas' advice is acted upon, it will cause the poor tenement inhabitants some discomfort and expense, for they will be compelled to go elsewhere.

This spasm, however, has been the cause of some plain talk, and that is at least educational. Councilman Petrash, chairman of the building committee, put his finger on the sorest spot in the problem. He declared that if the city or private capitalists undertook to acquire the bad, old tenements, to tear them down, and to make way for Architect Thomas' improved buildings, the landowners would at once ask prohibitive prices, and it would be found that the city's building code stood in the way.