

# Land and Freedom

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## Comment and Reflection

IT would be interesting to catalogue the extravagances of property claims which have arisen in the history of mankind—claims to ownership or jurisdiction over territories, seas, oceans, trade routes, etc. It was, we believe, one of the Popes who gave away the Mediterranean even before he had put in a claim to ownership, though the act of giving may be held to include, *prima facie*, such right of ownership. At all events, it was part of the assumption of Papal rights which at that time extended over the whole earth.

BUT it is informing at the same time to observe that many of these claims have now nothing more than a historic interest. Such are the claims once set up by Venice of dominion over the Adriatic, by England to the British Channel, by Portugal to the Gulf of Guinea and the Indian Ocean, by Denmark over the straits connecting the Baltic and the North Sea. Some of these preposterous claims to proprietary rights were abolished by the dread arbitrament of war; others lapsed by perception of their absurdity or were lost in the common right. Many of these claims were advanced with the object of levying what we see now was actual blackmail on foreign ships of commerce. Denmark imposed duties on all ships passing through the straits from the Baltic to the North Sea until compelled to renounce them under a treaty drawn up less than a hundred years ago.

IT is one of the anomalies of the customs of mankind, and an example of human stupidity, that the nations should have sedulously pursued the policy to which they so strenuously objected in others. Denmark followed the identical customs of the pirates of Tariffa, from which the word tariff is supposed, though perhaps erroneously, to have been derived, and the nations established similar obstructions to commerce and called the system "protection." Not even Denmark in the oppressive duties imposed upon commerce passing through the straits pretended that these were laid with a view to protecting the Danish workingmen. It remained for the nations to systematize this form of piracy in the interest of home monopolies and soften the asperities of the system by high sounding names, building around it a body of self-contradictory philosophy and a strange economic hodge-podge of extravagant and preposterous claims.

WE are to note, however, that the claims set up by arrogant nations to exclusive ownership or dominion over navigable waters connecting with the ocean and traversed by the world's commerce, have now nearly wholly disappeared. Such streams are everywhere recognized as common rights of way. Even in the case of artificial channels through an isthmus, where these are the means of communication between different nations, claims of exclusive jurisdiction are no longer permitted or even advanced.

IF in a few short generations there have occurred such important modifications of the institutions of property in the interests of the common right and common justice, and if the principle of arrogant proprietary claims to one of the natural elements is now superceded by the recognition of a universal right, it is not too much to hope that the years will witness further and more important modifications in the institution of private property rights in land. The claim for such modification is based upon the same principle of natural justice that relegated most of these impudent pretences of dominion over one of the elements to the limbo of exploded superstitions.

THAT our civilization is on trial, and that its failure in a great crisis is evident, is proven by the Massachusetts conviction and execution of Sacco and Vanzetti. The judicial system of a great state has been shown to be grievously at fault, and to have resulted in the execution of two probably innocent men. It is impossible now for any unprejudiced mind on a review of the case to believe anything else than that a barbarous miscarriage of justice has resulted, and this belief will be shared by an ever increasing number who may regard the evidence of the guilt or innocence of the accused as fairly balancing each other.

FOR our own part we believe in their innocence. And this belief has grown with the days which must have weighed heavily upon more hearts than those of the two men who have passed on. It has caused a feeling of heart sickness to note the attitude of those whose office it is to administer justice in Massachusetts, and this includes not only Judge Thayer and Governor Fuller, but President Lowell as well. We are not too far away from the hysteria which swept the Chicago anarchists to their doom to realize how men accused of a crime are convicted of

their opinions, and it would be profitable now for some of our Massachusetts friends who are similiarly swayed by prejudice to read Governor Altgeld's message with which he accompanied his pardon of the anarchists who were committed to prison for their supposed part in the Haymarket tragedy. In many of their judicial aspects the two cases are similar.

**W**E are pleased to know that in the protest aroused over the fate of Sacco and Vanzetti were a few names of those familiar to the Single Tax brotherhood. We wish there had been more. Louis F. Post has rendered what may be his last signal public service in a great national crisis—for to us it seems nothing less, a great moral crisis, if you will—in voicing his protest. In Erie, Pa., James B. Ellery circulated a petition for a reconsideration of the evidence on which the two Italian radicals were convicted, and in Boston John S. Codman, whose family has borne for generations an honored name in the state, was active in their behalf.

**T**HE followers of the Prophet of San Francisco believe in those institutions that were established to maintain justice, and in the orderly processes of the ballot to redress human wrongs. For the first named reason they protested against the conviction of these men, for such conviction was not secured by "due process of law" guaranteed by the Constitution. And because they believe in the orderly processes of the ballot they are opposed to the resort to violence which your "physical force anarchist" advocates. Because they believe in the "sacred rights of property" they are opposed to that communism which even hints at the forcible expropriation of the rich and well-to-do. But they are equally opposed to that one sided communism that obtains in this civilization through the legal expropriation for the benefit of a mere handful of the population. The application of the teachings of Henry George will put an end to that forever.

**T**HEY are unfortunate in their time who criticize or assail existing institutions of property, whether these consist of claims to the Mediterranean or the Adriatic, to a man because of the color of his skin, or to the land which God has made. Better for them had they never been born. That this was the sum of Sacco and Vanzetti's offending seems certain now. The hold-up and murder of which they stood accused was bad enough, but worse still their dreams of a civilization in which the Thayers and Fullers would stand on an equality with the factory hand and the fish peddler, though they never put it quite that way. The belief of your physical force anarchist in the forcible overturn of society is because they doubt the possibility of a peaceable solution, and this is good American revolutionary doctrine, hal-

lowed by the sacrifice of Bunker Hill, and formulated in cold, deliberate statement by Thomas Jefferson and others of the Fathers. It was of such doctrine that Sacco and Vanzetti stood accused—can it be possible that of such "crime" they were convicted?

**B**UT why get so excited by words that assail the existing form of political or economic society? Is it all so wonderfully perfect that it must be preserved at all hazards? Mussolini has destroyed it in Italy and Rivera in Spain; Spengler in Germany is predicting its early dissolution. On every hand are voices indicating its overthrow either by revolution or by the slow processes of decay.

**A**NARCHISM—SOCIALISM. These are the two opposite polls in economic and political philosophy. Anarchism at least evinces a trust in Man and a natural law of social order; Socialism on the other hand places its trust in the state. But because there are or seem to be functions which belong peculiarly to the state, the Single Tax system supplies the necessary via media between man and his voluntary activities and the State and its exclusive delegated functions in the collection of the rent of land and the administration of that fund. Within these two theoretical limitations of the State and voluntary society there is the widest field for co-operation, thus realizing the ideal of that individualism which is the ultimate of the Jeffersonian philosophy and indeed of anarchism itself.

**L**ET the State collect the rent of land and there will be little for government to do save to collect and administer this land rent fund, and to secure justice in minor relations. This will be a task correspondingly easier by reason of the removal of those artificial inequalities which are the temptation of crimes against property. The ideal of both anarchism and socialism will be that much nearer, for both schools seek that harmony of relations which should exist between what we now call the capitalist and the laborer, the employer and the employed. For the power of capital to oppress labor where labor is free to apply itself to every natural opportunity, will have disappeared, a truth which Karl Marx, freed for a moment from certain economic obsessions, saw clearly enough and enunciated in a remarkable chapter in *Das Kapital*. Land forced everywhere into use will call for capital to utilize it, and capital will bid for labor, paying wages determined by the ability of labor to apply itself to the free land. And where labor applies itself singly or cooperatively to land everywhere calling for the productive hand of man, capital, growing increasingly abundant, will offer itself to such independent enterprises at rates of interest determined now by its increasing abundance. Thus will be brought about a harmony