

Franklin K. Lane on Henry George

YOU speak of great Americans and have named all four from political life I concur in your selection. Now what writers would you say were most distinctly American in thought and most influential upon our thought, men who a hundred years hence will be regarded not great as literary men but as American social, spiritual and economic philosophers? It occurs to me that this singular trio might be selected—Emerson, Henry George and William James. What say you?—FRANKLIN K. LANE, in recently published "Letters."

THE following poster was recently stuck up on the walls of London:

The landlords of England are chasing their foxes,
The "heroes" of England are shaking their boxes;
The landlords of England draw millions in rents,
The "heroes" of England are begging for cents.
They fought for "their country," tho' none may regret it,
The question remains, "Why in hell don't they get it?"

Cheap Land Then

RUMMAGING through old documents, W. E. Watson finds a deed dated 1775, selling 100 acres of Virginia land for \$1.25. The owner who sold was Warner Washington, cousin of George.

With prices like that, think what you could have done in 1775 with your present income.

Try to buy good land today at a cent and a quarter an acre. There's unquestionably something to the Single Taxers' claim that *nearly all the wealth we produce by our labors eventually is absorbed in rising land values*. The land hasn't changed. The value has.—Little Rock (Ark.) *Daily News*.

"Property in land is not the result of productive labor but is derived solely from the State itself, the original owner; the amount of land being incapable of increase, if the owners of large tracts can waste them at will without State restriction, the State and its people may be helplessly impoverished and one great purpose of government defeated." From an Opinion of the Justices of the Supreme Court of Maine, 1908, sustaining the right of the legislature to regulate the cutting of timber. (103 Me., 506.)

THE Single Tax sounds Utopian only because our conceptions are distorted by long contemplation of nothing but economic maladjustment. When its reasonableness is once seen, effective steps towards its realization cannot long be delayed.—PROF. LEWIS J. JOHNSON.

The Way to Peace

IN our opinion, the short cut to permanent peace is the quenching of the land thirst of the peoples of all nations, and the surest way to dissipate that thirst is by a process of giving ready access to the land for all. As we said only last issue, the destruction of fictitious or speculative values in land by the simple form of converting all goodwill to the State, or by the State adopting a land settlement policy which would enable every person so desiring to acquire a plot of land on the lease-in-perpetuity system, without the right to acquire goodwill on speculative purposes, would do more to create universal contentment and happiness than anything else as yet either realized or dreamed of. And the greater the happiness of the people created on such lines universally, the less the prospect of war. New Zealand can cease boasting of having claims as a pattern country while she has no adequate land policy. And when she does the scheme we have outlined there will be no need to boast in order to induce other countries to emulate her example. They will do that fast enough. This will also help Mr. Massey to justify his conviction that the Empire has been saved from a dreadful fate by Divine Providence "for a great purpose."—*Eden Gazette*, Auckland, New Zealand.

To turn the golden stream of economic rent partly or mostly into the State's treasury where it would relieve the public of taxation in burdensome forms, seems to be extraordinarily desirable.—PROF. E. B. ANDREWS.

RESOLVED, That all men have a natural right to a portion of the soil; and that as the use of the soil is indispensable to life, the right of all men to the soil is as sacred as their right to life itself.—Platform of the American Free Soil Party, Article II, Pittsburgh Convention, August 11, 1852, Cooper's "American Politics," Book II, p. 35.

BOOK REVIEWS

* THE SOCIAL TREND

* *The Social Trend*. By Edward Alsworth Ross. 12 mo. clo. 235 pp. Price \$1.75. The Century Co., New York City.

Prof. Edward A. Ross, of the University of Wisconsin, is an economist who has done much good work at times. The first part of the present volume is filled with forebodings over what may result from the tendency to over-population. The figures are not new, nor are the doleful prophecies based upon these figures at all novel. Every once in a while some newspaper writer for one of the sensational journals which afflict civilization presents frightful predictions of the time to come when the people of the earth will possess "standing room only."

One thing is certain, the earth is big enough, there are such illimitable spaces now unoccupied, that the spectre of over-population looms only as a very distant possibility. Another fact also seems indisputably established, that the fecundity following an increase in wealth and prosperity with a corresponding increase of intelligence is not nearly so great as might be predicated on present standards of living. We can reasonably anticipate that with a rise in the standards of living the hobgoblin of over-population will be found as baseless a speculation

as that of the people who are said to have been thrown into terrors of apprehension as to what would happen if the earth fell into the sun.

On page 52 Prof. Ross points out that "Throughout its history the American people have developed in the presence of abundant land." It is necessary to remind the Professor that we are still in the presence of abundant land. He says, "without wishing it, yet with nobody to blame, we have entered upon the era of limited natural resources." But limited by whom? Surely somebody is to blame. Our own ignorance regarding the matter is deserving of some censure.

Prof. Ross shows us how land values shot up as the crop-bearing area "slackened." The word "slackened" is a euphonious term for another fact not indicated at all—the appropriation and monopolization of unused natural opportunities.

And when he says, "Think of the aggregate value of farm land gaining 118 per cent. in value in a single decade," it is to be regretted that he did not touch upon the origin of such increase and the social consequences that follow from it.

There are many enlightened comments in parts of this work. But none truer than this from page 125:

"A quarter of a century ago social workers took to investigating seriously the headwaters of the endless flow of miserable people defiling before them. They have traced up the tributaries of this flood, and, instead of finding their sources to be *individual congenial defects*, they have found many of them to be adverse *social conditions*."

And he adds significantly that "some of these conditions can be removed without disturbing anybody much save the taxpayer."

We do not want to find fault with this work for not being what it does not pretend to be. It treats many of the superficialities and it does this often with a thoughtful and discriminating touch. It does not indicate what we regard as fundamental, but the author does say (page 180): "One way to divert the people from fundamentals is to get them hurraing for petty betterment." We have no desire to indicate that the author pays unconscious homage to this tendency in much of what he has written in the work before us.

On page 188 Prof. Ross says: "The tragedy in the situation of the wage earner in modern industry has been his *insecurity*."

And what is our author's remedy for this condition? It is a "dismissal wage"—that is, where workmen are discharged by reason of no fault of their own they shall receive a six month's wage. A local board is to decide the question of each worker's fitness to receive this "dismissal wage."

Our respect for Prof. Ross falls once more to zero. The intelligence that he brings to bear on some of the problems touched upon explodes into this monstrous bubble of a "dismissal wage." To elaborate upon it, to indicate that the form of compensation suggested is a violation of all the canons of property, would be a needless waste of words.

What is the matter with the professorial mind? Is it that in the scrupulous avoidance of fundamentals they grasp at these frantic proposals that set at naught both the claims of equity and common sense, and erect fantastic conceptions of the relations of labor and capital? Here is a denial of the right of the employer to cease his partnership relations on any ground that may seem to him reasonable without paying him for six months to come what is euphoniously called a "dismissal wage." Yet it is an inalienable right for any employer to sever such relations for any reason that may seem to him sufficient. What is the State that it should be the judge in such matters?

All of this confusion of thought arises from a failure to get clearly in one's mind the real relations of Labor and Capital.—J. D. M.

* SOCIALISM AND CHARACTER

* *Socialism and Character*. By Henry Sturt, M.A., Lecturer at the University of Wales. 12 mo. clo. 214 pp. E. P. Dutton & Co., New York City.

The writer of the work before us begins with this inquiry: "Can any one who is not utterly callous profess himself content with our present social system?" and then he pictures the places, Sheffield, Wolverhampton and the East End of London where the industrial evils of our civilization reveal themselves in their worst lights.

He then announces his belief that "the characteristic defects of our society are due to individualism." He is careful to add that by this he means "the way of distributing wealth whereby men scramble for it according to each individual's strength and cunning." He then quotes from Henry Maine the belief of that writer (Popular Government) that succeeding in business (which he calls a beneficent private war) is "the climbing of one individual upon the back of another."

The author thinks we must adopt some intelligent plan of distributing wealth. And this he calls Socialism. But he does not tell what this intelligent plan is going to be. He pictures, and we concede the evils of present conditions, and then he leaves with a word wholly vague and indefinite, that we hold like a rag doll in our laps while the sawdust runs out!

The very title of the work leaves us with other problems on our hands. The author tells us that the main purpose of the work is to show what improvements in personal character may be looked for as the results of forming a better social organization, and in particular of distributing wealth upon an equitable system. Granted again, but the assumption that socialism provides such a system is a non sequitur.

It may be said that perhaps the writer uses the word socialism in the loose sense in which it is sometimes used as defining a better state of society, which makes socialists of all those seeking social betterment. It appears not. This writer, who is lecturer at the National University of Wales, goes further than Marx. He expressly condemns the Marxian programme as "too narrow." There is demanded "a thoroughgoing social reorganization." Socialism is spoken of as "the regulation of the acquisitive and dominative minds." "If we are to undertake to reform the distribution of wealth on socialistic principles we must also reform the commonwealth in other respects, in the organization of industry, in government, in the family, and in the relations of the sexes, especially in their economic relation."

Prof. Sturt is nothing if not thorough. At a time when Socialism is showing a tendency to modify its demands, a tendency that has followed on a falling away of the voting strength of socialism everywhere, this writer comes with a programme that "out-Herods Herod" in its suggestions for regulation, government ownership and management, and a social and economic regimen that exceeds anything with which we are acquainted.

The author has an easy method of settling the question of the distribution of wealth in terms of equity. It is so easy that we wonder why we hadn't thought of it before:

"The true principle to be observed in the distribution of wealth is that of public service. It is neither possible nor desirable to do this with exactness. I doubt whether a socialistic system would make any great change in the economic position of our professional or salaried class. (The Professor is going to see to it that there will be no reduction of the salaries of professors.) Some of these at present are paid too much; which is because they have special skill, and bargain to get the highest terms they can for their services. (It would seem that possessing special skill they may not after all be too highly paid.) Others are paid too little; which is mainly because the professions are overcrowded, a trouble which could easily be remedied by public regulation." (Easy as rolling off a log!)

Elsewhere the author says: "The distribution of wealth should not be left to 'natural' causes, in other words to *the result of a scramble*." The italics are ours. So small is the author's faith in natural laws. The author finds it impossible to conceive of a society in which the individual is left free to follow his own inclinations to produce, to seek the satisfaction of his desires in which play of forces the general satisfaction of all is secured. He does not seem to have heard of Henry George, and knows nothing at all apparently of the philosophy of individualism. He seems to think that the opposite of this teaching of extreme socialism is anarchism. He has never even heard of the theory that while making a place for the exercise of functions purely social or governmental leaves the individual free, that harmonizes the two theories of government and constitutes the true via media.

Yet he seems now and then to approach the problem only to run away from it. Note the phrase: "Let us consider some of the causes