

THE LAND QUESTION: A WOMAN'S SYMPOSIUM.

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V. INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING. Frances M. Milne.

If I were asked to epitomize what the single tax means to me, I should say, "Individual freedom and social well-being." The *laissez-faire* of today has secured neither. The dream of nationalism promises the last, but even its most strenuous advocates will not claim that it does not hedge in the first with very serious limitations. Artificial limitations create artificial wrongs; and I think any one who closely scrutinizes Mr. Bellamy's proposed Utopia will discover many such.

The imperative need of existence to material and spiritual beings as we are, is to possess untrammelled our natural right of access to the gifts of the Creator common to all, and to stand in just relations to our fellows. These are conditions which can be fulfilled as completely in the most simple and primitive mode of life, as in the most highly developed. It is not great invention, not even high literary culture, which makes a people free; but the spirit which recognizes, as a practical truth, the *equality* of man. "For man is man, and who is more?"

Does it not weary you, sometimes, this "wondrous, wondrous age" — where there is so much progress and so little liberty? All these achievements in which we triumph so vainly, have they not exalted us to heaven like the ancient city, only that we might be cast down to hell? Have they added one iota, so far, to the real sum of human happiness? Have they not, on the contrary, added most grievously to the sum of human misery? It does not seem to me that the world at present is morally ready for these things. That they have a present existence among us does not prove it; they may have been necessary as a tremendous physical and intellectual force to drive us on to a realization and acceptance of ultimate truth; and one beneficent result of our acceptance of the great truth of the equal right of all men to the use of the earth — in other words, the adoption of the single tax, "unlimited" — might be, and I think would be, to call us back for a time to simpler modes of life that should draw us closer to one another in kindly human fellowship and service. It might purify our souls by a newly awakened sense of the grandeur of this physical universe, so that it should be possible for us to contemplate the marvel of a Niagara without computing the water power it could furnish to manufacturing enterprise; and so that we could feel our spirits thrilled by the memories of Gethsemane, without planning to run an electric railroad to the Mount of Olives!

The steam plough, for instance, will no longer be such a *desideratum*, when fields of a thousand acres — in whose cultivation now the tiller merely bears the part of an adjunct to machinery — are transformed into ten or twenty smiling farmsteads, abodes of self-respecting industry and

domestic peace. The multiform and complex so-called modern improvements of the monstrous sixteen and twenty story buildings of our modern Chicago, will be simplified to the rational requirements of health and comfort, when the blight of our modern city itself has been swept away. We shall not be so anxious to "put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes," when we have awakened from the nightmare activity of nineteenth century civilization, and realize that the morning and the evening make the day. The insanity of greed, the terror of want, which have fevered heart and brain, and made us doubt anything outside of material circumstance, will be healed when we have placed ourselves in true relationship to nature's laws. Life will not be merely what we get out of it in sordid gain or restless excitement: it will be the supreme gift of the Creator, to be used worthily to noble ends. Man will call a halt in his present mad rush after material achievement, and pause to understand himself, and renovate his being by contact and communion with that nature whose forces he now regards merely as a mechanism to do his will. The sense of reverence, purified from superstition, will reawaken, and the controlling spirit of brotherhood glorify human intercourse. The beauty and the value of existence will dawn upon the human mind with a sense of awe and joy we know not now.

In that coming era, the immense aggregations of capital in a few hands, which we see today, will not only be impossible, but will no longer be desired by any man breathing the atmosphere of a world fulfilling normal conditions. And, released from its long bondage, individual aspiration and industry will at last have its true scope; while "association in equality" will secure to each community all the blessings of human progress. Then, and then only, will man's inventive genius fulfil the beneficent purpose it was intended to serve, instead of being the weapon of the powerful against the weak — as we see it today; for we shall then be capable of using all material advancement as a means and not an end, and shall regard with horror any gain which involves a brother's loss.

It is such a future that the single tax, in its fulness, prophesies to me: a country in which neither millionaire nor pauper shall be found from sea to sea; a race of men and women whose lives of grand simplicity shall shame the dwarfed humanity of today which shows belittled beside its own inventions. "It is a cause worth living for, and worth dying for," says a letter which came to me not long ago from one who is battling in the vanguard of the fight in far-off Australia. Aye! is it not?

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