

FIFTY-FIVE DAYS A SERF.

A portion of a sermon delivered on Sunday evening, January 31, in the Vine Street Congregational church, Cincinnati, O., by the pastor, Herbert S. Bigelow.

Moreover, the profit of the earth is for all.

These words are found in the book of Ecclesiastes. What this author knew about political economy we cannot say. But it is possible, without straining the words, to put a great truth into them.

The profit of labor is for the individual who labors. But the profit of the earth is for all. In these two propositions lies the solution of the problem of the just distribution of wealth. Private property in the products of labor, and public property in the profits of the earth. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

What is the profit of the earth? A striking answer to this question may be found in a speech of Congressman Baker, of New York, reported in the Congressional Record of January 18.

Some time ago a law passed the Albany legislature requiring that in the tax duplicates the value of the bare land and the value of improvements should be shown in separate columns. The first assessment has been made under the new law, so that it is now possible to tell what the profit of the earth is to the owners of the land on which New York city stands. From the official reports we learn that the value of that particular spot of the earth's surface is \$3,697,686,935. Over three and one-half billion dollars! At five per cent. this means a ground rent of nearly 185 millions a year which that great city pays to those who own the land beneath it.

One hundred and eighty-five millions! Let us try to comprehend it. Suppose every bread-winner in that city earned three dollars a day. Suppose one in every three were a bread-winner. These estimates are too high, but it is well to keep on the safe side. Now, then, it takes the combined labor of all the toilers of New York city, for 55 days in every year, to satisfy the claims of the landlords. The last bulletin of the department of labor contains the results of an investigation of the land values of Philadelphia. This investigator shows that the land there is owned by less than ten per cent. of the people. If this percentage holds good in New York, it means that less than 350,000 people collect of the other 3,500,000 who live there a toll of \$185,000,000 a year, which is a kind of first mortgage that they have upon the industry of that mighty city, and which amounts to the

complete enslavement of that entire population for 55 days in every year.

Suppose that by some right of conquest the city of Cleveland were to collect an annual tribute of the citizens of New York. Suppose New York were a vassal of the Forest City. Suppose that every year \$185,000,000 in coin were loaded upon express cars and shipped from the metropolis to the city on the lake. Or suppose this tribute were paid in the form of labor, and all the workers of New York were deported to Cleveland to work in chain gangs for two months in every year! If that were the form of our slavery it would be apparent to all. If that were the form of our slavery the blood of our fathers would assert itself and we would make short work of our tyrants.

But it is encouraging to know that there are some men who see through this subtle form of slavery, and who are beginning to take the necessary steps for its overthrow. I have just looked through the last New Zealand year book. There they recognize the fact that ground values are created by the general development of the community. They, therefore, have a local option law by which any community may abolish all other taxes and raise its necessary revenue by a single tax on the value of land. Already 59 cities and villages have voted on this measure, and all but nine have adopted it.

There we see the first fruits of the teachings of Henry George. That light in New Zealand will spread until a new day will dawn; a day when men will act on the principle that the profit of the earth is for all and not for a few.

AS TO A REPUBLICAN FORM OF GOVERNMENT.

An editorial in the Springfield (Mass.) Republican of January 13, 1904, on the Oregon decision in the Initiative and Referendum case. (See The Public of January 9, page 627.)

The present constitution of the State of Oregon contains an amendment providing an initiative and referendum by which the people can initiate legislation or compel a reference to popular vote of any legislative act. This amendment was attacked in the courts, and a lower tribunal declared it to be invalid on the ground that it had been irregularly adopted. The case went to the state supreme court on two contentions: First, that the legislature had submitted the amendment to the people when another proposed amendment was pending, contrary to constitutional provision; and, second, that it was in conflict with the United States Constitu-

tion which guarantees to every State a republican form of government. Both objections are overruled by the supreme court, it being held as to the first that the obstructing amendment had lapsed from legislative inaction. Regarding the second objection, the court speaks at some length, raising questions of general interest.

It is held that the purpose of the Federal constitutional provision is to protect the people of the several States against aristocratic and monarchical invasions and against insurrections and domestic violence, and to prevent them from abolishing a republican form of government. It does not prevent the people from changing their State constitutions in any way they see fit so long as none of the above results is effected. But what is a republican form of government which must be observed? The court says it is a government "administered by representatives chosen or appointed by the people or by their authority." This is very well so long as emphasis is laid on the word "administered;" and the court quotes Madison on republican government as:

a government which derives all its powers directly or indirectly from the great body of the people, and is administered by persons holding their offices during pleasure, for a limited period, or during good behavior.

Then the court goes on to speak of the initiative and referendum principle, as follows:

Now, the initiative and referendum amendment does not abolish or destroy the republican form of government, or substitute another in its place. The representative character of government still remains. The people have simply reserved to themselves a larger share of legislative power, but they have not overthrown the republican form of government, or substituted another in its place. The government is still divided into the legislative, executive and judicial departments, the duties of which are discharged by representatives selected by the people. Under this amendment, it is true, the people may exercise a legislative power, and may, in effect, vote or defeat bills passed and approved by the Legislature and the governor; but the legislative and executive departments are not destroyed, nor are their powers or authority materially curtailed.

There runs through this whole quotation the implication that legislation through representatives elected by the people is, in some considerable measure at least, an essential feature of a republican form of government, and that a form of government without that feature would be unrepublican and contrary to the provision of the United States Constitution. It is evident that at this point the court has

blundered badly. Are we to understand, for example, that a New England town run on the town-meeting principle has an un-republican form of government? Here the people legislate for themselves directly and without the agency of chosen representatives. They have no legislative branch in their government outside of the whole body of the people. Have they, then, "overthrown the republican form" because their government is not "still divided into the legislative, executive and judicial departments," but goes along without a legislative branch in the common meaning of the term?

We do not imagine the Oregon supreme court would venture to assert that this town form of government comes into collision with that idea of what constitutes a republican form which was held by the framers of the federal Constitution. And if so, then the court would have to concede that the people of a whole State might, if they chose to and it were practicable, abolish legislation through representatives entirely and exercise the power directly by themselves, and still violate no provision of the federal Constitution. And through such devices as the initiative and referendum this assumption by the people in large masses of power directly to make their own laws is to a very considerable extent made practicable, and might possibly be extended to the entire abolition of the body of legislative agents.

Nor would this abolition bring the form of government into conflict with the Madison definition which was at first accepted by the court before it went on to expand its argument into the creation of another and unwarranted definition of what constitutes a republican form of government. It would still, and even more emphatically, be a government deriving all its powers from the great body of the people, and still a government administered—though not necessarily legislated for—by persons chosen by the people rather than by some other power. To imply, even in the remotest degree, that the extension among the people of a more direct control over their government, tends to the creation of an un-republican form of government in the meaning of the federal Constitution, is to give evidence of possessing decidedly un-republican leanings.

Fond Parent—I understand the faculty are very much pleased with your work.

Dropped Junior—Yes, they encored my sophomore year.—Princeton Tiger.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD GOVERNMENT.

Remarks of Gov. L. F. C. Garvin, of Rhode Island, at the banquet of the state executive committee of the Massachusetts and Rhode Island Y. M. C. A., held in Tremont temple, Boston, Mass., January 27, 1904.

The Young Men's Christian associations throughout the land are doing a noble work. They are overcoming the prejudices and jealousies which have long existed between the different religious sects, and are providing a refuge and a home for a multitude of young men who otherwise might stray from the path of rectitude. But notwithstanding the wide influence of these and other beneficent agencies, it remains true that in some directions degeneracy increases.

I am an optimist. I believe that the world is growing better, but I am forced to admit that certain law-created classes do not participate in the advance.

Public life is deteriorating, public servants are yielding more and more to the greater temptations put before them, the spoilsmen have gotten hold of our political machinery and are using it for their own emolument.

I presume that most of you here present are members of the Y. M. C. A. from altruistic motives. You have good homes, whilst many of your fellow members live in uncomfortable tenements or boarding houses. Your attempts to ameliorate their condition are made difficult, almost nugatory, by unwise legislation. Good laws would do more for the very people you are trying to help than all that your efforts can possibly accomplish.

The aim of the Y. M. C. A. is the building of character. To this end the great forces of civilization, intellectual, moral and religious, have almost exclusively been devoted. And yet, so far as the extremes of society are concerned, advance has been slow and success exceedingly imperfect. The wealthiest few and the poverty stricken many, have furnished a barren soil for the development of high character. Vices, on the other hand, have found a rank growth. Thus slaves, because of their impoverishment and lack of responsibility, have ever possessed a low grade of morality—and slavery is purely a creature of law.

An improvement in the material condition of the masses is a prerequisite to a wide diffusion of the virtues. But no one agent has so powerful an effect upon the material welfare of a people as the government under which they live. Transplant a man from Ireland or

Italy to the United States and he is transformed instantly from a drone into a worker. Under our free institutions his hopes, energies and ambitions are aroused, as becomes manifest in every act.

But even here we fall lamentably short of what might easily be were our laws founded upon justice rather than special privilege. Paupers and millionaires, like slaves, are the product of bad laws.

Does not the duty, therefore, devolve upon you, as citizens, if not as members of an organization, to see that the good you would do is not counteracted by that most powerful of agents, the state?

In order to bring about any real change for the better in the legislative department of the government—a department which underlies and in the end shapes the others—it is necessary to inaugurate a reform more radical than any which has preceded. The wise John Stuart Mill once said, in substance, that a little reform did not merely little good, but no good—any seeming benefit being offset by its indirect disadvantages.

By a republic we understand a government whose sovereignty is in the people, and whose administration is vested in the chosen representatives of the people. Such is the theory, but in fact to-day the people of our States have no way of exercising their sovereignty, and the legislators serve, not their constituents, but a few monopolists and bosses.

The remedy lies with the young men of the nation. They must demand, and demand effectively, that the people's law, the State and national constitutions, be placed under the absolute control of the people—a control equally direct and complete with that exercised by a legislature over statute law.

Massachusetts, it may be said to her credit, is taking a step, however halting, in the right direction. If the General Court now in session does its duty, hereafter 50,000 voters will be enabled to initiate future amendments to your State constitution. Given this power effectively, and all else will follow. There will ensue a genuine representation of the people in legislative bodies, both municipal and State, such as the past has never known; and to that will succeed other social reforms which, securing a more equal distribution of the enormous wealth produced by our people, will supplant the few thousand millionaires and a multitude of wretched tenants by a mighty middle class possessing the comforts and amenities of life, unmarred by anxiety for the future of themselves or their children.