

you in short with a few questions to promote the welfare of all humanity. Respectfully, J. Otto —."

Here are the questions he asks:

"First. Is it just that a 40-acre farm is taxed two-thirds higher than an 80-acre of like character of soil, 'only because the former has just as good or better improvements as the latter?'"

"Second. Is it honorable if the law taxes a farm one to ten times higher than another of equal value, 'only because it is cultivated more or less well than the other?'"

"Third. Does it show a noble temperament if any good grain farm is taxed discriminatingly from another of any kind, whether cattle, fruit or vegetable farm, if similar conditions of soil are present?"

"I am willing to testify that under a simple, just taxation of land and money any small farmer, as well as any other mechanic or tradesman, can get along; for that reason my knowledge is permeated with the belief and confidence that homelessness and worthlessness, as well as need and recklessness, will in a short time sink almost into impossibility. With the conviction that I am in a position to prove this to any one, I remain, respectfully, very submissively,

—New York Tribune, of April 19, 1903.

### THE BIOGRAPHY OF A SAINT.

For The Public.

There recently passed away a life, known to myself and a few others, which ought to be told if only in brief outline.

Five years ago this man knew his days were numbered. He might live a few years, he might pass away at any moment. I have never read or known truer heroism than he showed in those doomed days that stretched into five long years. So far as he himself was concerned he would have greeted death with a smile any day of these years—the sooner the better for him. But for the world about him it was well that he lived every day that was granted to him.

I had known him eight years. Several years before I came to meet him, he had become acquainted with the works of Henry George, and these writings became a gospel to him. Deeply religious by nature, and a devoted adherent of the church, he saw in George's teachings the very culmination of the gospel for this world as taught by Jesus. The theory that all of God's children were equally entitled to God's world was a veritable revelation to him.

Some years ago I received a letter from him in which he said: "In the midst of the dark injustice of the world, and seeing no light ahead, I found that my faith in God was dying. No words can tell my agony. Was the misery of poverty all that the masses could expect here? Had God made this rich and beautiful world for the few? Was there to be no chance of happy development for all his people? Could this be God's world, if so few owned its usage and fruitage? Were the millions that surely had divine souls put here only to slave for all their days in the bare effort for food? Surely, I thought, if this be so, then is it not God's but some Devil's world."

It is easy for us to see how, writing thus, he welcomed Henry George's books as almost a divine revelation to his darkened vision of life. And so it was. From the day he saw what he conceived to be the truth in "Progress and Poverty," his whole view of life was changed. Life became again a buoyant aspiration, and it continued so until his death. All that he did had reference to the fresh truth, which, however old, had come to him as a new birth in these closing years.

He was a man of position in his community, a leader in various social and philanthropic activities. His antecedents and education had given him an assured station among the people in whose midst he had been born and reared. He was as popular as a man could be whose life was quiet, and free from all pretense and immodest push.

Now herein lay his heroism. In a community where the single tax was then unknown, he, the prominent, conservative citizen, had to proclaim his new platform. And he not only proclaimed it in his former unassuming manner, but he became aggressive. He soon found that his hitherto commanding position in the community was being undermined. People did not listen to him, did not defer to him as formerly.

Then it was that more than ever his nobility, as well as his good sense, showed itself to some of us. Instead of allowing himself to be set aside, he redoubled his efforts in all the chief interests of his community. He deliberately set himself to maintaining his influence as a public spirited citizen, and he did this with the sole purpose of being able to accomplish more for the cause to which he had devoted himself. Prominence was really distasteful to his nature, and many things he did were crosses to him, assumed, as I have said, deliberately in behalf of

furthering and giving weight to his influence in maintaining the teachings of Henry George.

Few knew the depth of his purpose and the heroism with which he adhered to it, all the while facing the doom of an incurable malady. To those who did know, his life was a benediction and an inspiration. No medieval saint was ever fired with deeper enthusiasm, was ever hallowed with a more perfect spirit of devotion and sacrifice.

J. H. DILLARD.

### THE CULTIVATION OF PHILADELPHIA'S VACANT LOTS.

The Philadelphia Vacant Lots Cultivation is a charity in which sociologists take the keenest interest. For this is a charity that aims, paradoxically, to be not a charity at all; that aims to help as a friend helps, without causing amongst its pensioners that degradation which is, termed, in sociology, "the pauperizing influence."

R. F. Powell, of No. 14 South Broad street, is the superintendent of the association, and its directors are James T. Shinn, Dr. Thomas S. K. Morton, Nathaniel B. Crenshaw, Frederic W. Spiers, Franklin B. Kirkbride, Samuel McCune, Lindsay and Joseph Fels. It was organized in 1897, and in the five years of its life it has developed very remarkably. At the end of 1903, indeed, its development will have been about 1,000 per cent.

The association borrows from certain benevolent owners of real estate vacant tracts of land. These tracts it divides into quarter-acre gardens, which it lends to poor people—to old men principally, to invalids and to maimed persons. It advances to its pensioners the seed, the fertilizer and the few simple tools that truck gardening requires, and it directs the work of planting, growing and gathering of the various crops of potatoes, peas, cabbages, beans, tomatoes, onions and corn. The pensioners begin in April to work. They are engaged pleasantly and healthfully for two or three hours a day, and by June they start to take in their crops, and by the end of the season they have, in many cases, vegetables enough to see them through the winter.

All this food comes to them through their own work, and hence they feel that they earn it. To be sure, they do not pay rent for the land they till; but, on the other hand, they improve the land greatly, grad-

ing it, cleaning it and beautifying it. The association has taken hold of a large number of these unsightly urban lots called "dumps"—tracts filled with ashes, tin cans, worn-out kitchen utensils, and refuse clothing—and they have become, under its direction, fertile and trim gardens. Thus the vacant lot farmer does in a way pay rent, and thus the paradox is achieved of a charity being not a charity at all.

The association was organized in the hard times of 1897, when an unusually large number of able-bodied men in Philadelphia could get no regular employment. There were loaned to it 27 acres of land; \$2,500 in money was contributed, and, in the first year, 96 families earned \$6,000 in vegetables.

In the second year 40 acres of land and \$2,266 were placed in the association's hands, and crops worth \$9,700 were raised by 140 families.

In the third year 72 acres were cultivated and 249 families, involving 1,495 persons, produced a crop valued at \$14,511. To accomplish this, \$2,650 was expended. In other words, every dollar that was contributed yielded, before it reached its final destination, six dollars. It is said that no other charity can show a result so great as this.

The borrowed lands of the association continue to grow, and the running expenses under the management of Superintendent R. F. Powell, continue to diminish. This year over 200 acres will be in cultivation, yet even these will not suffice to meet the applications for gardens that are constantly being made by deserving people who, through old age or ill health, are unable to earn a living in Philadelphia. Only 60 per cent. of the applicants can ever be aided. Therefore the association is desirous of borrowing more land, and at this season the purchase of tools, fertilizer and seed for the spring planting draws on its treasury heavily.

Just now the 800 urban gardens are busy and picturesque places to behold. In them may be seen old men and women with rakes and spades, clearing the soil and spreading the fertilizer. Maimed persons—here a shoemaker, whose failing sight bars him from employment; there a laborer who has lost an arm in a blast—are burning the brush from some new fields. And up and down little boys and girls are busy with shovels and pitchforks; helping as much as they can, for they are the chil-

dren and the grandchildren of the older workers. The superintendent, with his assistants, oversees all.

The Vacant Lots Association is an elaboration and a perfecting of the idea of the late Hazen F. Pingree, of Michigan. Mr. Pingree, when mayor of Detroit, loaned to the unemployed poor of the city the unused city lands, and on these for several years garden truck—potatoes, in the main—was grown. But with the return of industrial prosperity the idea was abandoned.

With the Detroit system as a base, the Vacant Lots association has developed into an unique and many-sided institution. It teaches modern farming thoroughly; many of its graduates have taken holdings in Pennsylvania and New Jersey and are doing well; and therefore it may be called a trade school.

It conducts a very large cooperative farm, employing poor men at good wages, and sharing with these men its profits in crops and money; and therefore it is a practical demonstration of certain theories in modern sociology. It receives from the philanthropist one dollar, which it turns into six at the season's end; and therefore it is a lesson in the science of charity.

Meanwhile, its gardens in West Philadelphia, in Germantown, in Roxborough and at George's Hill are, with their old men and women and child workers, picturesque spots to visit, and spots also where the latest developments in farming may be seen in operation. These gardens, indeed, yield to the acre 200 per cent. more than is yielded by the average rural farm.—The Philadelphia Times.

#### HUMAN PROGRESS AND ORGANIZATIONS.

For The Public.

I have never made a speech or address of any kind before an audience, even a small one, unless the recitations of lessons, etc., of my school days, might be called such. But I am reminded now and then of the imitation sermons that I used to attempt in my early childhood, when standing on a chair, before an audience made up of the members of my family, and looking wise (or attempting to look wise), I began: "Ish blink! Ish blink!" and filled in with such nonsense as the suggestion: "Dig a well." followed by the exhortation: "Dig another well!—Dig five wells!"

Since arriving at the "age of dis-

cretion" I have thought things while listening to sermons from the pulpit and elsewhere, and have wondered whether they contained anything of more value than my childish preachment: "Ish blink!"

Whether consciously or unconsciously, it seems to me that much of the pulpit and platform oratory of to-day very effectively avoids saying more than this.

Yet pulpit and platform are not alone responsible. The people do not want to hear anything more intelligible, because anything more intelligible would be disturbing. Their religion and philosophy have become settled things to them; they believe that nothing new should be attempted. True, some like to hear the "Ish blink" spoken elegantly, with rising and falling inflection, and with a certain sure rhythm—in short, in a way to soothe and comfort them; but anything calculated to stimulate serious thought they will not suffer, because they foresee that it would rob them of the pleasure of repose.

A copy of a recent weekly bulletin of a prominent Brooklyn church has come to my notice, which will serve here as an illustration of this feeling. At the head of the programme for the morning and evening services, we find the following:

WELCOME—

Whosoever thou art that interest this Church;

Remember it is the House of God;

Be reverent, be silent, be thoughtful;

And leave it not without a prayer to God.

For thyself, for those who minister,

And for those who worship here.

The first line, we perceive, is an open welcome—which probably serves very well as bait—closing with a semicolon—the sinker. From this point we trace the beginning of a long string: First, the caution contained in the second line. Second, our orders as to what to do. And third, orders as to what not to do. "It is the House of God;"—By whose authority? By the authority of an organization of people known as the Church. We must be "silent;"—yet a good deal of ish blinking is done (by one); and why silent? We must be "thoughtful;"—yet who would be found guilty of thinking! We must be "reverent;"—a command well adapted to insure silence and hamper thought; for if we do indeed stand in the presence of that which is fixed and final and only to be revered and not to be questioned, why think? or why speak? But if honest reverence is truly desired, it would seem at least that the order