

Would we not rather have interpreted it as an act of almost malignant cruelty? Would we have paid those claims, save as we were actually coerced by the muzzles of shotted cannon? Yet Great Britain and Germany are now doing exactly this toward little Venezuela, a nation feeble at best, whose government has spent its last dollar and its last ounce of strength against a formidable insurrection. Great Britain and Germany can crush and humiliate such a government, but they cannot force it to pay gold when it has none. These European powers have nobody but themselves to blame if the belief swiftly strengthens among the American people that London and Berlin are guilty of an act of cowardice and dishonor.

Another weekly paper of the order of the democratic Democracy has proved its right to a place in the growing list. We refer to the Press, of Helena, Montana. Edited with distinctive ability by W. E. Eggleston, the Helena Press is trying to do for Montana what John Stone Pardee's Red Wing Argus is doing for Minnesota, what Warren Worth Bailey's Johnstown Democrat (daily as well as weekly) is doing for western Pennsylvania, what Herbert Welsh's City and State of Philadelphia is doing for eastern Pennsylvania, what the Springfield Republican (daily and weekly) has long been doing for New England, what the San Francisco Star does for the Pacific coast, and what Bryan's Commoner is doing for the country at large. All these papers ring true democratic notes. Against an expanding force like that, the subsidized and shackled press of both parties will not long be able to make headway with public opinion. We are living in stirring times, when democracy and plutocracy are gathering for a terrific struggle, and papers such as these are marshalling the democratic hosts.

Dr. John Bascom, formerly president of the University of Wisconsin, injected into his address before the Wisconsin teachers' association at Milwaukee on the 29th an observation which has drawn from him in a newspaper interview an explanation that is both acute and commendable.

He puts into words a distinction which many thoughtful persons must have felt without being quite able to express it sharply. It is the distinction between the acceptance by educational and religious institutions of gifts on the one hand of unearned money unlawfully obtained and on the other of unearned money lawfully obtained. John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie were his examples. Being questioned about his address in this particular Dr. Bascom said:

I meant the University of Chicago and its acceptance of the gifts from John D. Rockefeller. When an institution, founded and maintained for the benefit and education of the youth of the public, accepts money which has been gained in direct defiance of the laws and principles laid down by that public, it vitiates its influence on the minds of those students upon whom it is its duty to exert a good and moral influence.

I do not feel the same about Andrew Carnegie's gifts to the colleges and communities at large. He gained his money according to rules which were recognized by the public and by a protection which the public afforded him with its full consent, and though I do not believe it ought to have given that protection, still it made his gains perfectly lawful. Therefore the same stigma cannot be attached to them as to the enormous gains made by the Standard Oil Company.

That distinction is perfectly sound. When men get unearned fortunes as Carnegie has, and as the Astors have, and as every rich man with a legal or institutional privilege has, then fortunes are not stolen by them from the public but are given to them by the public. The public has the power and the right at any time to stop this diversion of its property. If it does not stop it, it is as guilty as the beneficiary if not even more guilty. Of course the beneficiaries can make themselves specially guilty by using their influence to perpetuate the laws and institutions that thus enrich them at the expense of their brethren. But even then the public itself sanctions the wrong, and the profits from it have not the moral foulness they would have if they were extorted from the public against its will by

superior force or abstracted from it by secret fraud.

Not all advice from the old to the young is sound. This is especially so of advice from old and rich philanthropists to ambitious youth on how to succeed in the world. Usually such advice consists of solemn admonitions on the miraculous effects of hard work and honest living, when the cunning sage knows perfectly well that however hard he may have worked and however honestly he may have lived, he owes his fortune neither to his work nor his honesty. He knows, and everyone else knows, that no amount of work and no degree of honesty would have made him rich if he had not become the owner of some kind of "cinch" whereby he could shave the earnings of other people. It is refreshing, therefore, to listen to advice to youth which makes no cunning concealment of the true secret of worldly success. Such advice is given by Dr. D. K. Pearsons, who is editorially described by a Chicago paper as "the sage of Hinsdale." Asked what course he would recommend to a young man starting in life this venerable philanthropist replied:

Get land! Get land! Go out into the northwest corner of Colorado. There are snow-topped mountains spread with tall pines, and there are green valleys and swift-running water. Get land with coal under it. Get pasture land where cattle can be grazed. Get meadow land and tillable land. Buy all you can and hang on to it. Then go to work. Go to stay and do not be disheartened by hardships. Go where there is not a railroad for 60 miles and you have to enter on horseback. The railroad will follow soon, and those who fight hard will come out on top. Another inviting region is in the State of Washington. Avoid the cities and go to the back country and get land. Get tracts up on the mountain side that are heavy with timber and accessible to running water. Take acquisitions in valleys. Mining, agriculture, lumbering, grazing — all branches are full of promise.

For its purpose that is the best advice we have ever seen quoted. It is marred by only one thing. Why the admonition to "go to work"? If work is necessary in order to get or to keep

the land, then of course work must be done. But if the young man gets the land and can keep it without work, the advances of civilization will do the rest. The paper from which we quote the "sage of Hinsdale," the Chicago Journal of the 29th, sees the matter with great clearness. In full sympathy with "the sage," it says: "The young man who can find a way 'to get land' will not regret it," for "land will never be worth less," and "each year should add to the value of land." That's the true idea—"find a way." If the young man finds a way to get and keep land, it makes no difference whether the way comes by inheritance, or fraud, or work, he will grow rich. If he gets and keeps the land, the people who must use it will have to work for him, and this, after all, is the explanation of great riches. It is not the work you do yourself that makes you rich, but that which others have to do for you on your terms.

Henry George, Jr., rightly places the responsibility for the anthracite strike upon the State of Pennsylvania. His lucid explanation is that while "the land value in the region of the mines is enormous," the land "is taxed only a trifle more than agricultural land." Mr. George, who is thoroughly familiar with the region and the labor problems connected with it, sensibly advises that the land value assessments there be increased to \$3,000 an acre. Even at that low valuation, low as compared with market value, he believes "the operators would hasten to put their mines in operation." Enlarging upon the subject, in an interview in the Chicago Chronicle of the 29th, he says:

Of course the thing that makes coal so high at the present time is its scarcity. The operators desire this very condition of things. They are doing as much as they can to make coal scarce. Being compelled to pay only a nominal land tax it is easy for them to hold vast quantities of coal land and allow it to remain idle. Thousands upon thousands of tons of coal are held back in this way. Some day when the other mines give out these in reserve will be opened. It is plain that if a heavy

land tax were made upon such holdings the operators would open the mines and get as much as they could out of them and as soon as possible. It would not pay them to give up a large tax yearly otherwise. The result would be that coal would be plentiful and it would be cheap. The operators would see to it, too, that the miners were kept at work. The matter of the difference of a paltry sum between them and the miners would not move them to close the mines were the land values increased by the State and the taxes made as high as the State has the power to make them. There would be no idle mines then and there would be no idle miners.

That is a perfectly sensible solution, in at least one aspect, of that labor problem which Carroll D. Wright pitifully confesses himself, "after years of careful consideration," to be unable to solve. Though he thinks slight ameliorations may come within the range of his intelligence, he sees no way out of the irrepressible conflict of labor and capital. Nor could anyone else who should follow Mr. Wright's example in seeking a way out. Mr. Wright wants to give to Labor all it earns but doesn't get, without taking from Privilege anything it gets but doesn't earn. That problem is indeed impossible of solution; and if Mr. Wright can be pardoned for confronting himself with it he should be excused for giving it up.

That kind of revolting piety that thanks God for helping us at the expense of others, meets a merited rebuke in an editorial of the Christian Register (Boston) of the 25th. The Register objects specifically to the kind of special Providence which is illustrated by a remark upon which it comments, the remark, namely—

that the hand of God is seen in the sale of the Park Street church in Boston for \$1,250,000. The property was bought 90 years ago for \$50,000. Because it is one of the most eligible sites in the city of Boston for business, it is now worth a million and a quarter. The difference between \$50,000 and the selling price is the gift of the city of Boston, made in the remission of taxes for service rendered to the community which enabled the church to hold the property. Our objection is to the idea

that the hand of God is specially shown in transactions that are advantageous to churches and holy men, and is not shown in other equally important affairs.

It is in the same way that "the hand of God" has interposed in behalf of the Astor family, of Mr. Baer, and of everybody else who secures a stake in the earth which he sells or can sell at a profit to somebody else. The simple fact about that church transaction is that the church corporation pockets \$1,200,000 of public money. It does the same thing, therefore, that Tweed did in New York, only it does it legally and he didn't.

A report on taxation recently made by a special committee of the Citizens Union of New York, and now under consideration by that body, is of general interest; for it deals critically with the usage, universal and vicious, of undervaluation. It is easy to dismiss this subject with the offhand comment that it makes no difference whether taxables are undervalued or overvalued or valued at their true worth, since the same revenue must be raised in any event. To be sure, that seems plausible enough. If tax payers pay 1 per cent. on double valuation, or 2 per cent. on true valuation, or 4 per cent. on half valuation, does it not all come to the same thing in the end? It would if all property were overvalued or undervalued in equal proportion. But the Citizens Union committee finds in New York, what is doubtless true everywhere else, that this is not so. According to its report assessed valuations are about 60 per cent. of the true value, as an average; yet "actual assessments vary over a large range all the way from 40 to 90 per cent. of the real value (with instances below and above those respective extremes)." It is these variations in individual cases that make the usage of undervaluation operate unfairly. The point may be raised, of course, that there would be similar variations just the same if the usage were to assess at full value, as the law requires. But to that point the reply of the