

Bryan movement is a forward and not a backward one. Bryan is not seeking the Presidential nomination; but he leaves no doubt that if it comes to him, he will stand for democratic ideals. He could say of himself to-day as he said at the St. Louis convention two years ago: "You may dispute whether I have fought a good fight; you may dispute whether I have finished my course; but you cannot deny that I have kept the faith."

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An Undiscovered Species of Monopoly.

As a rule the Chicago Record-Herald is pretty sound editorially on its abstract economics; but what shall we do with its remarkable admonition of the 25th to Bryan in response to his condemnation of monopolies? We quote: "The monopoly which cheapens goods and divides the economies of superior organization with consumers is beneficial to society." We suspect that the monopoly which divides its advantages with consumers, whether advantages of superior organization or anything else, has yet to be discovered. The pretty well established fact is that monopolies give consumers a share of their advantages as and only as they cease to be monopolies.

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THE DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH.

Those of us who have these many years been trying, apparently in vain, to gain the public ear in behalf of just and therefore sane principles of wealth distribution, may be pardoned our amazement at the present state of the public mind on this subject. The change in the trend of thought has been so sudden, and the current runs all at once so swift, as to make the vast phenomenon seem almost miraculous.

Not that public sentiment as yet demands just principles of distribution, either in generals or by any particular method; but it does distinctly recognize the fact that the results of the prevailing system of distribution are morally unjust and socially dangerous. Regardless of its great significance this recognition is of the utmost importance. It has been impossible heretofore to arouse public opinion to any realization whatever of the iniquities and dangers of prevailing modes of wealth distribution. The principal criticisms of Henry George's epochal work, "Progress and Poverty," were not that its argument was fallacious but that its premises were false. The premises alluded to were George's contention, then denied but now appreciated, that progress tends to

enrich the privileged idler and to impoverish the unprivileged worker; or, as it was commonly interpreted by those who denied it, that "the rich grow richer and the poor poorer." These premises are now so generally conceded that those of us who have long been vainly trying to bring them to public attention must enter somewhat into the spirit of Sill's suggestive lines:

Before the monstrous wrong he sits him down—
One man against a stone-walled citadel of sin.
For centuries those walls have been a-building;
Smooth porphyry, they slope and coldly glass
The flying storm and wheeling sun. No chink,
No crevice, lets the thinnest arrow in.
He fights alone, and from the cloudy ramparts
A thousand evil faces jibe and jeer him.
Let him lie down and die; what is the right,
And where is justice in a world like this?
But by and by earth shakes herself, impatient,
And down, in one great roar of ruin, crash
Watch-tower and citadel and battlements.
When the red dust has cleared, the lonely soldier
Stands with strange thoughts beneath the friendly
stars.

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The signs of this marvelous change in public sentiment regarding the distribution of wealth are too abundant for enumeration. In a general way, it has been the theme of the commencement day orations this year of the presidents of nearly every college and university of importance in the country. Senator Elkins has within a few days publicly declared that "there is enough wealth to prevent poverty, but we have not learned how to distribute it." One of the commencement day orators, a St. Louis clergyman, gave picturesqueness to the same idea when he paraphrased Andrew Carnegie, saying that it is not alone a disgrace to die rich but "it is a disgrace to grow rich." Perhaps, however, the most significant of all the expressions of this common recognition of the unjust and socially dangerous distribution of wealth are to be found in the leading paper of the North American Review for June. The authorship of this paper is a secret, but the editor of the Review vouches for him as "the most profound philosopher living in the United States to-day," and the paper itself testifies abundantly to his statesmanlike ability.

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He divides American society roughly into three classes—"those who have much more money than is good for them, those who have perhaps as much money as is good for them, and those who have much less money than would be good for them."

In this classification there appears to be no

recognition of the element of justice in distribution. Yet the writer evidently had no intention of ignoring that element. Farther on in his paper, contrasting "vested interests" with ethical considerations as the basis of ownership, he delicately emphasizes the idea of rightfulness; and still farther on, he accepts the doctrine that "I am my brother's keeper," with this qualification: "to the extent that I am not at liberty to take a dollar unjustly from him, nor to accumulate a dollar of property for myself except with full, careful and generous consideration of what is due to him." Along the same line of thought he further declares that "whoever has a dollar for which a dollar's worth in property or service has not been given, has a dishonest dollar, and if he keeps it he is a dishonest man." This is followed with a prediction that the time is coming "when everybody possessing private property will be required to answer these two plain questions: 'How much have you withdrawn from the common store?' and 'What service did you give in return for it?'" And in conclusion he appeals for the recognition of "some moral basis" for wealth distribution.

But these observations, while they indicate a moral impulse in the writer's mind, do not indicate a very profound ethical analysis, even if he is "the most profound philosopher living in the United States to-day." For it is not true that he who has a dollar for which a dollar's worth has not been given is a dishonest man if he keeps it. When writing this the North American contributor apparently considered no incomes except such on the one hand as are earned and such on the other as are filched corruptly. Probably he did not overlook gifts, bequests and inheritances, which are neither earned nor filched; he may have disregarded them as fairly negligible in a brief magazine paper. But he must have overlooked institutional influences that divert the earnings of one to the pockets of another without personal corruption.

For example, the owner of a valuable mine, of a valuable water privilege or of a valuable building lot, gets many a dollar from the labor of current production without giving a dollar's worth in return; for it is no equivalent for service or for the kind of property that service produces, to give the privilege of utilizing a natural site. The dollar so obtained may be a dishonest dollar, but surely the person who gets and keeps it is not necessarily a dishonest man. There is no dishonesty in his keeping it if he does not realize that the dollar is dishonest. If he does realize

that it is dishonest, there is no one to whom he can honestly give it. It does not in honesty belong to the user of the site any more than to the owner, and if he give it into the public treasury as a conscience fund he only benefits tax-dodging site owners so long as the community does not exact it of other site owners as well as take it from him. Dishonesty with reference to dishonest dollars from such sources is institutional, not personal; personal dishonesty enters in only when the beneficiary refuses to join in abolishing the dishonest institution, thereby personally insisting upon profiting indirectly through communal maladjustments.

Very clearly, then, the anonymous yet distinguished North American contributor has not sought a moral basis for wealth distribution beneath the surface of personal misconduct. Indeed he implies that distribution would rest upon a moral basis if only the profits of "all illegal, corrupt, immoral or demoralizing activities" were eliminated from private fortunes.

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Reflection suggests, however, that distribution would not rest upon a moral basis, no matter how honest men might be in their personal dealings, if institutional influences were continued subtly in operation to divert the products of human labor from the producers. Men would still get dollars for which dollars' worth had not been given.

Nature gives to the producer and only to the producer. The product of his labor comes first into his possession and into no one else's. It is his property and no one else's property, if there is any natural property. And it does not cease to be his property without his own consent or some one else's fraud or force. All this is obvious enough if we consider only an isolated man, like Robinson Crusoe. Whether he picks nuts, digs clams, catches fish, harvests grain, builds him a rude hut, or makes him coarse clothing, the product is delivered by nature directly into his possession.

The same thing is true of men in the highest social state, where specialization is so intense that hundreds of persons co-operate to make, for instance, a single shoe. The first producer in the long series takes directly from nature the raw material to which by his labor he gives the particular form of his own specialty. When he passes this unfinished object to the next specialist he does so either because by fair contract he is satisfied to do so, or because by fraud he has

been unfairly led, or by force has been unfairly compelled, to do so. Likewise with every transfer of the unfinished shoe to the end of the line of production and into the possession finally of the consumer. The process begins with a transfer from Nature to the worker, and all along the line Nature gives to each worker, and only to workers, what they need to make their labor effective in adding to the utility of the product they have received from their predecessors in the producing series. So also with the necessary tools. Whether small and simple, or massive, complex and costly, each tool or machine is itself a product of labor and as such has its beginning, precisely as with the shoe, at the beginning of a series of productive specialties. At this point, and also all along the line of its production, as well as at the point of its use in making shoes, Nature responds directly to the laborer and only to him. To the mere owner, whether of machines or of land, Nature gives nothing. And since Nature gives to the user and only to the user, the true moral basis for property titles must be considered as beginning with him.

This basis can indeed be disturbed by such means as the North American contributor enumerates, all of which would fall into the category of force or fraud. But it can be much more effectively, persistently and resistlessly disturbed by institutional modes of force which, as unjust as personal turpitude, are so subtle as to seem to be honest and fair even to profound philosophers. If the producers to whom alone Nature yields her riches, are forced by law or custom to grant a share of their product to non-producers, to those who get a dollar in service from others without giving a dollar's worth of service in return, then the moral basis of property is disturbed, no matter how honest upon the surface the transaction may appear.

If, for instance, paper titles to Nature be given out and be bought and sold, there may be the appearance of a free contract when producers divide their products with holders of these titles. But it is only an appearance. Nature continues to ignore the paper titles and to give her bounties directly not to the title holders, but to the producers. The title holders, as title holders, extract nothing from Nature; they only extort from the producers to whom Nature yields her fruits and service.

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Notwithstanding his references to the moral basis of property, however, the interest of the North American contributor really lies not in the

ethical phases of wealth distributions so much as in the wisdom, from the point of view of the rich, of yielding to distributive legislation that will more equitably adjust incomes. Having put at one extreme those who have more money than is good for them, and at the other those who have less than would be good for them, and realizing that the latter class constitutes a great majority of the voters, he warns the rich that "the laws regulating the acquisition and descent of property must sooner or later conform to the views of the voters" of that class. In this connection he says it is perfectly apparent that "there is no ultimate security for a single dollar of private property in New York, and precisely the same statement is true of all other American States, except such as a majority of the voters may decide to be just and wise, both to the possessors of such property and to the community at large." Nor does he regard this fact as alarming. On the contrary he considers the time ripe to try to find "some basis for private property which ought and might even yet receive the approval of a majority of the American electorate."

While his own suggestion for such a basis is arbitrary in the extreme, the fact that any suggestion at all, or even the recognition of a necessity for any such suggestion, comes from such a source and through such a channel, is highly significant. When to that fact is added the further one, that this anonymous writer is expressing a quickening public sentiment with reference to the distribution of wealth, a sentiment so vital already that the injustice of present methods of economic distribution can hardly again be seriously disputed, we may regard the outer walls of privilege as having crumbled.

All the problems of production except those that are involved in the problems of distribution have been solved. Though we have by no means exhausted productive possibilities, we have opened and are constantly broadening the great paths of production. Nothing remains in the way of developing a higher and higher civilization but the unsolved problems of distribution. But these problems could not be intelligently considered by public opinion while the notion prevailed that there were no such problems. This notion having now given way, the great civilizing work of the future is immediately before us. Let us be careful simply of one thing as we undertake that work. The problems of distribution are moral as well as economic, and to the demands of a sound natural morality let us turn no deaf ear. Let us see to it that in solving the problems of distribu-

tion we disregard "vested" wrongs in the interest of human rights. Let us place property upon a moral basis.

Heretofore there has been a strenuous insistence upon the theory that everything is either "mine" or "thine." In these changing times there is a demand that everything be considered as "ours." But neither idea of property rights is morally sound. Some things belong in the category of "mine;" they are what I produce or have freely and fairly got in exchange therefor. Other things belong in the category of "thine;" they are what you produce or have freely and fairly got in exchange therefor. And just as true it is that other things are "ours;" they are the common inheritance without access to which no one can produce anything. Establish property rights upon this basis, and property will be secure; refer wealth distribution to this standard, and distribution will be equitable.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

FRANCE.

Paris, June 9.—Chesterton remarks in one of his essays, and, as is usual with him, against the common view, that it is not the much-traveling people who are the true representatives of the breadth and depth of life. It is rather those who live close to and know well their fixed surroundings, and have their thoughts on the great phenomena of the universe, such as the phases of the weather, the birth of children, and, in short, all the common but no less marvelous round of life, growth and death. Such as these have their thoughts on the things that put all men on a common ground. Your globe-trotter sees the surface, and is constantly pointing out differences and making comparisons. Is there not much truth in Chesterton's seemingly paradoxical assertion?

And yet, if the traveler has his mind on resemblances, it is resemblances that he most finds. It is in the superficial things that human beings mostly differ. The human heart and the supreme facts of daily life are pretty nearly the same in Paris and Chicago. If one so chooses, he can be much more struck with similarities than with differences. In the garden of the Tuilleries this afternoon, mothers and nurses were sitting with their children, boys were playing and romping, men were sprinkling grass and digging in flowerbeds, and maples and chestnuts were waving their branches overhead. Along the walks people were going hither and thither across the grounds, and in the Rue Rivoli and the Place de la Concorde hundreds of vehicles were coming and going.

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It was impossible, while one stood there, not to be struck with the common humanity of the scene. And the thought also naturally came that these

very spots had witnessed great scenes which expressed the common conflict of humanity the world over. The age-long fight for democracy had some of its keenest battles nearby. Almost within a stone's throw stood the guillotine which took off Louis XVI's head. The guillotine has not been the universal method of dealing with kings, but whatever different phases the battles for democracy have taken, the underlying motive has been the same, and the French Revolution was not for France alone. The historians have dwelt mainly on its terrors; yet France would not be a republic to-day but for the work of those years. The magnificent statue in the Place de la Republique tells the story in bronze around the base, and on the front of the base are the simple words, "Universal Suffrage."

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Yet the French Republic, like our own, has much to do before her watchwords, "Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite," shall become more than words. One sees the words everywhere in Paris, even on church walls. I mentioned this to the cabman who was taking me to the Pantheon. He shrugged his shoulders, which led me to say that perhaps it was more words than reality as yet. He quite agreed, and finally I ventured to say, thinking it might be near enough the truth in France, "Je suis socialiste." It was most interesting to see how eagerly he took the statement, and to hear the rapidity with which he said three times, "Moi aussi, moi aussi, moi aussi." There was no doubt about the genuineness of his faith, as he understood it. I could see in my talk with him that the word "socialisme" simply meant to him, in a general way, advance to better conditions. He said once, as we passed the often-repeated words, "Not much yet, but we advance a little." He was an intelligent companion whose talk was more interesting than the sight he showed.

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It is hard to conceive how a city could be eternally more beautiful than Paris. As one looks up or down the Champs Elysees, by day or night, the view is magnificent. Almost everywhere in the main part of the city the sightseer is confronted by some notable and splendid building. And yet in the midst of all this splendor there is poverty to every degree, most of which of course escapes the eyes of fleeting travelers.

The best time for seeing the degrees of poverty is the early morning, before the owners of the early shops are awake. I was in Rouen on Wednesday morning at 5 o'clock and wandered through the town with interest divided between the glorious churches and the poor folks that I saw nearby, between the memorials of Jean Darc and her brother peasant of the town who were early astir in their various occupations. In the square by the cathedral, at half past five, there was a large group of workingmen waiting for I knew not what. At one of the doors of the cathedral sat crouching half a dozen old women, apparently expecting alms. Across the square a peasant-woman was tugging a heavy cartload of vegetables.

The cathedral towered up with magnificent spire