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Current Comment

DR. FRANK CRANE has to prepare an article every day on some subject. Now some subjects can be treated that way—and that fast. But not all subjects. Therefore allowance must be made for conditions imposed that compel him to write faster than most people can think.

He does it very well, but of course not equally well at all times. Only recently he has been telling us, under the title, "The Tragedy of England;" after conversing with English bankers and financiers, that the condition of England is more threatening than that of any country in Europe, and he says: "There are some 40,000,000 people in Great Britain and Ireland. This population cannot support itself upon the land. They are absolutely dependent upon selling their manufactures abroad and importing their means of subsistence from abroad."

GRANTED that England is a maritime and manufacturing nation. Granted, too, that if there were more agriculture there would be less manufacturing. Granted, also, that as matters stand anything that interferes with exports of manufactured products and imports of food products must work hardships to her people.

But Dr. Crane's inference is that this cannot in the nature of things be changed—in other words, that England cannot be self-maintaining. But the stubborn fact is that she has been, and in recent times, too, with a population not greatly less. There was a time when she imported very little of her needed agricultural products.

AND when she was so nearly self-sustaining, as for generations she was, great tracts of land were held unproductive as deer forests and game preserves. England not self-sustaining! What she almost was, with all these landlord handicaps, she could again become, with resources for feeding her own population infinitely multiplied.

Whether this is desirable or not is another question. Absolute free trade between nations will decide for every land to what degree it may continue or become self-sufficient. And the question of how far every land may become so, is not important, whatever the uninformed may think. If it gets what it wants by trade, very well; if it produces ninety per cent. of all it needs to eat, drink and wear—very well, too, but not any better. The essential thing is that it gets it. And vast tracts of land held out of productive use, whether the country be self-sufficient or not, whether it produces all for itself, or obtains most of what it need by trade, prevent the people from getting the goods that satisfy the desires of the people. "The tragedy of England" is not what Dr. Crane thinks it is, but is the tragedy of every country, whatever its degree of self-sufficiency.

That tragedy is the use or non-use of its natural resources by the few who monopolize them.

THE *Detroit Free Press*, in its issue of Dec. 25, says: "America needs desperately at this time laws that will afford a reasonable protection to capital, and less mischievous meddling with capital, so that there may be a restoration of confidence." Will the *Free Press* indicate to us the kind of taxes which will reasonably protect capital and involve less mischievous meddling with business? If it has such a tax to suggest, may we not ask that it announce it to a waiting world?

THE *New York Times* recently printed an article showing the low prices which "property" (land) brought in Times Square not so many years ago. In 1855 the west side of Sixth avenue, between Forty-second and Forty-third streets, sold at auction for \$29,125. The Forty-second street corner brought the highest price, \$6,050. In 1875 St. Luke's Lutheran church bought the 80 foot front plot on the north side of Forty-second street between Broadway and Eighth avenue for \$45,000. Last year the same property sold for \$500,000. The *Times* gives other figures for "property" (land) in this vicinity at various periods. Does it draw any lesson from these remarkable increases? Years ago the *Times* said, "Undoubtedly, the Single Tax is the ideal form of taxation." Will it kindly repeat it?

THE *Cleveland Press* says that in another century the development of automatic machinery will free men from labor with the exception of a few hours a day, and exultingly cries, "Real civilization will follow." Will it, indeed? No less an authority than John Stuart Mill said that it was "very doubtful if the development of machinery had lightened the labor of a single human being."

Machinery has enormously increased the production of wealth. But what has happened? Land values have risen. The gain has been swallowed up by the owners of natural resources. Neither Labor nor Capital (Capital per se) has been enriched. One class have appropriated the major benefits of improved machinery, and all other improved methods of production. Carried further, even as far as the *Press* has forecasted, it can result only in the same way. Such progress makes chiefly, if not solely, for the owners of economic rent.

HERE is a subject for a cartoon which would contain more truth than the usual run. Let the picture represent a man busily engaged in breaking down and defacing his fences, making great daubs of paint on the walls of his house and barn, and scattering refuse, such as tin cans,