

Man's Birthright
or
The Higher Law of Property
by
Edward H. G. Clark

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

The author of "Man's Birthright" claims to have arrived at a logical and well-founded solution of the vexed questions concerning the rightful ownership of the earth's surface and of property depending upon what Aristotle calls "Nature's bounty."

In associating their imprint with an essay dealing with such "burning questions," the publishers think it proper to say that they do not find themselves in accord with certain of the conclusions arrived at by the author. These conclusions appear to them, however, to be ably and forcibly presented, and to be entitled to respectful consideration, and it is their belief that the essay should be of service in inducing discussion in the right direction.

It is their opinion also that Mr. Clark's reasonings should prove of special service in offsetting the barren and pernicious theories of Henry George, in pointing out a method by which the "natural right" of each generation to some ownership in the surface of the earth can be respected without destroying the status of individual property upon which the existence and the development of civilized society depends, and finally in suggesting a logical and equitable basis for taxation to replace the various muddled and inequitable systems now in force.

It is in the hope that in these directions the book may lead to a wider and more intelligent discussion of the proper relations of the individual to society, that the publishers find themselves interested in placing it before the public.

DEDICATION.

IF, in this small volume, I have been able not only to present a great natural truth, a momentous human right, but to give it such decisive expression that it cannot be misunderstood, I shall attribute much of my success to the public and private influence of the most accomplished scholar I ever knew, the most superb orator I can even imagine, and the highest-minded, noblest man, I believe, that American institutions have thus far produced — my friend for twenty years, Wendell Phillips. During the last months of his life, when his home was full of illness, but when it was not supposed that death was drawing so near to his own great heart, I sent him the request, not knowing his afflictions, that he would read and consider the matter of this book, then in another form. Most earnestly and faithfully he did what I asked, writing several letters, moreover, of such commendation for my pen that I have not the courage to commit them to print. But they have had much to do with this piece of work. I know the value of its basic thought — which is not my own. Of that, I ask no man's judgment. Mr. Phillips himself did not have time or health to weigh it fully; but he took time and strength to push me to the performance of the most mature and the most necessary task I have ever touched. And now, so much of it as I have finished I lay down devotedly to his memory. My bit of laurel may not be worthy of its shrine; but it is the best I have.

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