The Labor Question

I

First Principles

This world is the creation of God. The men brought into it for the brief period of their earthly lives are the equal creatures of His bounty, the equal subjects of His provident care.

By his constitution man is beset by physical wants, on the satisfaction of which depend not only the maintenance of his physical life but also the development of his intellectual and spiritual life.

God has made the satisfaction of these wants dependent on man's own exertions, giving him the power and laying on him the injunction to labor—a power that of itself raises him far above the brute, since we may reverently say that it enables him to become, as it were, a helper in the creative work.

God has not put on man the task of making bricks without straw. With the need for labor and the power to labor He has also given to man the material for labor. This material is land —man physically being a land animal, who can live only on and from land, and can use other elements, such as air, sunshine, and water, only by the use of land.

Being the equal creatures of the Creator, equally entitled under His providence to live their lives and satisfy their needs, men are equally entitled to the use of land, and any adjustment that denies this equal use of land is morally wrong.

Being created individuals, with individual wants and powers, men are individually entitled (subject of course to the moral obligations that arise from such relations as that of the family) to the use of their own powers and the enjoyment of the results.

The True Right of Property

There thus arises, anterior to human law, and deriving its validity from the law of God, a right of private ownership in things produced by labor—a right that the possessor may transfer, but of which to deprive him without his will is theft.

This right of property, originating in the right of the individual to himself, is the only full and complete right of property. It attaches to things produced by labor, but cannot attach to things created by God.

Thus, if a man take a fish from the ocean he acquires a right of property in that fish, which exclusive right he may transfer by sale or gift. But he cannot obtain a similar right of property in the ocean, so that he may sell *it* or give *it* or forbid others to use *it*.

Or, if he set up a windmill he acquires a right of property in the things such use of wind enables him to produce. But he cannot claim a right of property in the wind itself, so that he may sell *it* or forbid others to use *it*.

Or, if he cultivate grain he acquires a right of property in the grain his labor brings forth. But he cannot obtain a similar right of property in the sun which ripened it or the soil on which it grew.

For these things are of the continuing gifts of God to all generations of men, which all may use, but none may claim as his alone.

To attach to things created by God the same right of private ownership that justly attaches to things produced by labor is to impair and deny the true rights of property. For a man who out of the proceeds of his labor is obliged to pay another man for the use of ocean or air or sunshine or soil, all of which are to men involved in the single term land, is in this deprived of his rightful property, and thus robbed.

Private Possession of Land Different from Private Ownership

While the right of ownership that justly attaches to things produced by labor cannot attach to land, there may attach to land a right of possession. God has not granted the earth to

mankind in general in the sense that all without distinction can deal with it as they please, and regulations necessary for its best use may be fixed by human laws. But such regulations must conform to the moral law—must secure to all equal participation in the advantages of God's general bounty. The principle is the same as where a human father leaves property equally to a number of children. Some of the things thus left may be incapable of common use or of specific division. Such things may properly be assigned to some of the children, but only under condition that the equality of benefit among them all be preserved.

In the rudest social state, while industry consists in hunting, fishing, and gathering the spontaneous fruits of the earth, private possession of land is not necessary. But as men begin to cultivate the ground and expend their labor in permanent works, private possession of the land on which labor is thus expended is needed to secure the right of property in the products of labor. For who would sow if not assured of the exclusive possession needed to enable him to reap? Who would attach costly works to the soil without such exclusive possession of the soil as would enable him to secure the benefit?

This right of private possession in things created by God is, however, very different from the right of private ownership in things produced by labor. The one is limited, the other unlimited, save in cases when the dictate of self-preservation terminates all other rights. The purpose of the one, the exclusive possession of land, is merely to secure the other, the exclusive ownership of the products of labor; and it can never rightfully be carried so far as to impair or deny this. While anyone may hold exclusive possession of land so far as it does not interfere with the equal rights of others, he can rightfully hold it no further.

Thus Cain and Abel, were there only two men on earth, might by agreement divide the earth between them. Under this compact each might claim exclusive right to his share as against the other. But neither could rightfully continue such claim against the next man born. For since no one comes into the world without God's permission, his presence attests his

equal right to the use of God's bounty. For them to refuse him any use of the earth which they had divided between them would be for them to commit murder. And for them to refuse him any use of the earth, unless by laboring for them or by giving them part of the products of his labor he bought it of them, would be for them to commit theft.

II

The Application of First Principles

God's laws do not change. Though their applications may alter with altering conditions, the same principles of right and wrong that hold when men are few and industry is rude also hold amid teeming populations and complex industries. In our cities of millions and our states of scores of millions, in a civilization where the division of labor has gone so far that large numbers are hardly conscious that they are land users, it still remains true that we are all land animals and can live only on land, and that land is God's bounty to all, of which no one can be deprived without being murdered, and for which no one can be compelled to pay another without being robbed. But even in a state of society where the elaboration of industry and the increase of permanent improvements have made the need for private possession of land widespread, there is no difficulty in conforming individual possession with the equal right to land.

For as soon as any piece of land will yield to the possessor a larger return than is had by similar labor on other land, a value attaches to it which is shown when it is sold or rented. Thus, the value of the land itself, irrespective of the value of any improvements in or on it, always indicates the precise value of the benefit to which all are entitled in its use, as distinguished from the value which as producer, or successor of a producer, belongs to the possessor in individual right.

To combine the advantages of private possession with the justice of common ownership it is only necessary, therefore, to take for common uses what value attaches to land irrespective

of any exertion of labor on it. The principle is the same as in the case referred to, where a human father leaves equally to his children things not susceptible of specific division or common use. In that case such things would be sold or rented and the value equally applied.

Our Proposal

It is on this common-sense principle that we, who term ourselves single tax men, would have the community act.

We do not propose to assert equal rights to land by keeping land common, letting any one use any part of it at any time. We do not propose the task, impossible in the present state of society, of dividing land in equal shares; still less, the yet more impossible task of keeping it so divided.

We propose, leaving land in the private possession of individuals, with full liberty on their part to give, sell, or bequeath it, simply to levy on it for public uses a tax that shall equal the annual value of the land itself, irrespective of the use made of it or the improvements on it. And since this would provide amply for the need of public revenues, we would accompany this tax on land values with the repeal of all taxes now levied on the products and processes of industry—which taxes, since they take from the earnings of labor, we hold to be infringements of the right of property.

This we propose, not as a cunning device of human ingenuity, but as a conforming of human regulation to the will of God.

State Revenue and the Moral Law

No sooner does the state arise than, as we all know, it needs revenues. This need for revenues is small at first, while population is sparse, industry rude, and the functions of the state few and simple. But with the growth of population and advance of civilization the functions of the state increase and larger and larger revenues are needed. Now, the raising of public revenues must accord with the moral law.

Hence:

It must not take from individuals what rightfully belongs to individuals.

It must not give some an advantage over others, as by increasing the prices of what some have to sell and others must buy.

It must not lead men into temptation by requiring trivial oaths, by making it profitable to lie, to swear falsely, to bribe or to take bribes.

It must not confuse the distinctions of right and wrong, and weaken the sanctions of religion and the state by creating crimes that are not sins, and punishing men for doing what in itself they have an undoubted right to do.

It must not repress industry. It must not check commerce. It must not punish thrift. It must offer no impediment to the largest production and the fairest division of wealth.

Existing Taxes Violate the Moral Law

Consider the taxes on the processes and products of industry by which through the civilized world public revenues are collected—the monstrous customs duties that hamper intercourse between so-called Christian States; the taxes on occupations, on earnings, on investments, on the building of houses, on the cultivation of fields, on industry and thrift in all forms.

All these taxes violate the moral law. They take by force what belongs to the individual alone; they give to the unscrupulous an advantage over the scrupulous; they have the effect, nay, are largely intended, to increase the price of what some have to sell and others must buy; they corrupt government; they make oaths a mockery; they shackle commerce; they fine industry and thrift; they lessen the wealth that men might enjoy, and enrich some by impoverishing others.

Yet, what most strikingly shows how opposed to Christianity is this system of raising public revenues, is its influence on thought.

Christianity teaches us that all men are brethren; that their true interests are harmonious, not antagonistic. It gives

us, as the Golden Rule of life, that we should do to others as we would have others do to us. But out of the system of taxing the products and processes of labor, and out of its effects in increasing the price of what some have to sell and others must buy, has grown the theory of "protection," which denies this gospel, which holds Christ ignorant of political economy and proclaims laws of national well-being utterly at variance with His teaching. This theory sanctifies national hatreds; it inculcates a universal war of hostile tariffs; it teaches people that their prosperity lies in imposing on the productions of other peoples restrictions they do not wish imposed on their own; and instead of the Christian doctrine of man's brotherhood it makes the injury of foreigners a civic virtue.

III

Land-value Taxation Conforms to Moral Law

But to consider what we propose—the raising of public revenues by a single tax on the value of land irrespective of improvements—is to see that in all respects this does conform to the moral law.

The value we propose to tax, the value of land irrespective of improvements, does not come from any exertion of labor or investment of capital on or in it—the values produced in this way being values of improvement which we would exempt.

Land Values Due to Social Progress

The value of land irrespective of improvement is the value that attaches to land by reason of increasing population and social progress. This is a value that always goes to the owner, as owner, and never does and never can go to the user; for if the user be a different person from the owner, he must always pay the owner in rent or in purchase money; while if the user be also the owner, it is as owner, not as user, that he receives it, and by selling or renting the land he can, as owner, continue to receive after he ceases to be a user.

Thus, taxes on land irrespective of improvement cannot

lessen the rewards of industry, nor add to prices, nor in any way take from the individual what belongs to the individual. They can only take the value that attaches to land by the growth of the community, and which therefore belongs to the community as a whole.

Taxation of Land Values Would Relieve Labor

To take land values for the state, abolishing all taxes on the products of labor, would therefore leave to the laborer the full produce of labor; to the individual all that rightfully belongs to the individual. It would impose no burden on industry, no check on commerce, no punishment on thrift; it would secure the largest production and the fairest distribution of wealth, by leaving men free to produce and to exchange as they please without any artificial enhancement of prices; and by taking for public purposes a value that cannot be carried off, that cannot be hidden, that of all values is most easily ascertained and most certainly and cheaply collected, it would enormously lessen the number of officials, dispense with oaths, do away with temptations to bribery and evasion, and abolish man-made crimes in themselves innocent.

In that primitive condition ere the need for the state arises there are no land values. The products of labor have value, but in the sparsity of population no value as yet attaches to land itself. But as increasing density of population and increasing elaboration of industry necessitate the organization of the state, with its need for revenues, value begins to attach to land. As population still increases and industry grows more elaborate, so the needs for public revenues increase. And at the same time and from the same causes land values increase. The connection is invariable. The value of things produced by labor tends to decline with social development, since the larger scale of production and the improvement of processes tend steadily to reduce their cost. But the value of land on which population centers, goes up and up. Take Rome, or Paris, or London, or New York, or Melbourne. Consider the enormous value of land in such cities as compared with the value of land in sparsely settled parts of the same countries.

To what is this due? Is it not due to the density and activity of the populations of those cities—to the very causes that require great public expenditure for streets, drains, public buildings, and all the many things needed for the health, convenience, and safety of such great cities? See how, with the growth of such cities, the one thing which steadily increases in value is land; how the opening of roads, the building of railways, the making of any public improvements, adds to the value of land.

Taxation of Land Values Makes for Social Equality

Here is a natural law by which, as society advances, the one thing that increases in value is land—a natural law by virtue of which all growth of population, all advance of the arts, all general improvements of whatever kind, add to a fund that both the commands of justice and the dictates of expediency prompt us to take for the common uses of society. Now, since increase in the fund available for the common uses of society is increase in the gain that goes equally to each member of society, is it not clear that the law by which land values increase with social advance while the value of the products of labor does not increase, tends with the advance of civilization to make the share that goes equally to each member of society more and more important as compared with what goes to him from his individual earnings, and thus to make the advance of civilization lessen relatively the differences that in a ruder social state must exist between the strong and the weak, the fortunate and the unfortunate?

That the value attaching to land with social growth is intended for social needs is shown by the final proof.

Other Alternatives Make for Injustice

For refusal to take for public purposes the increasing values that attach to land with social growth is to necessitate the getting of public revenues by taxes that lessen production, distort distribution, and corrupt society. It is to leave some to take what justly belongs to all; it is to forego the only means by which it is possible in an advanced civilization to

gard to the bounty of their Creator, on an equal level of opportunity to exert their labor and to enjoy its fruits. And then, without drastic or restrictive measures, the forestalling of land would cease. For then the possession of land would mean only security for the permanence of its use, and there would be no object for anyone to get land or to keep land except for use; nor would his possession of better land than others had confer any unjust advantage on him, or unjust deprivation on them, since the equivalent of the advantage would be taken by the state for the benefit of all.

We see thus that the law of justice, the law of the Golden Rule, is not a mere counsel of perfection, but indeed the law of social life. We see that, if we were only to observe it, there would be work for all, leisure for all, abundance for all; and that civilization would tend to give to the poorest not only necessaries, but all comforts and reasonable luxuries as well. We see that Christ was not a mere dreamer when he told men that if they would seek the kingdom of God and its right doing they might no more worry about material things than do the lilies of the field about their raiment; but that he was only declaring what political economy in the light of modern discovery shows to be a sober truth.

IV

There are many who, feeling bitterly the monstrous wrongs of the present distribution of wealth, are animated only by a blind hatred of the rich and a fierce desire to destroy existing social adjustments. This class is indeed only less dangerous than those who proclaim that no social improvement is needed or possible. But it is not fair to confound with them those who, however mistakenly, propose definite schemes of remedy.

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vaguely and improperly used to include all who desire social improvement, do not seek the abolition of all private property. Those who do this are properly called Communists. What the Socialists seek is the state assumption of capital (in which they vaguely and erroneously include land), or, more properly speaking, of large capitals, and state management and direction of at least the larger operations of industry. In this way they hope to abolish interest, which they regard as wrong and an evil; to do away with the gains of exchangers, speculators, contractors, and middlemen, which they regard as waste; to do away with the wage system and secure general co-operation; and to prevent competition, which they deem the fundamental cause of the impoverishment of labor. The more moderate of them, without going so far, go in the same direction, and seek some remedy or palliation of the worst forms of poverty by government regulation. The essential character of socialism is that it looks to the extension of the functions of the state for the remedy of social evils; that it would substitute regulation and direction for competition; and intelligent control by organized society for the free play of individual desire and effort.

Trades-unionists and Protectionists

Though not usually classed as Socialists, both the trades-unionists and the protectionists have the same essential character. The trades-unionists seek the increase of wages, the reduction of working hours, and general improvement in the condition of wage-workers, by organizing them into guilds or associations which shall fix the rates at which they will sell their labor; shall deal as one body with employers in case of dispute; shall use on occasion their necessary weapon, the strike; and shall accumulate funds for such purposes and for the purpose of assisting members when on strike, or (sometimes) when out of employment. The protectionists seek, by governmental prohibitions or taxes on imports, to regulate the industry and control the exchanges of each country, so, as they imagine, to diversify home industries and prevent the competition of people of other countries.

Anarchists

At the opposite extreme are the Anarchists, a term which, though frequently applied to mere violent destructionists, refers also to those who, seeing the many evils of too much government, regard government in itself as evil, and believe that in the absence of coercive power the mutual interests of men would secure voluntarily what co-operation is needed.

Our Views

Differing from all these are those for whom I would speak. Believing that the rights of true property are sacred, we would regard forcible communism as robbery that would bring destruction. But we would not be disposed to deny that voluntary communism might be the highest possible state of which men can conceive. Nor do we say that it cannot be possible for mankind to attain it, since among the early Christians and among the religious orders of the Catholic Church we have examples of communistic societies on a small scale. Knowing these things, we cannot take it on ourselves to say that a social condition may not be possible in which an all-embracing love shall have taken the place of all other motives. But we see that communism is only possible where there exists a general and intense religious faith, and we see that such a state can be reached only through a state of justice. For before a man can be a saint, he must first be an honest man.

The Social and Individual Natures of Man

With both Anarchists and Socialists we, who for want of a better term have come to call ourselves single-tax men, fundamentally differ. We regard them as erring in opposite directions—the one in ignoring the social nature of man, the other in ignoring his individual nature. While we see that man is primarily an individual, and that nothing but evil has come or can come from the interference by the state with things that belong to individual action, we also see that he is a social being, or, as Aristotle called him, a political animal, and that the state is requisite to social advance, having an

indispensable place in the natural order. Looking on the bodily organism as the analogue of the social organism, and on the proper functions of the state as akin to those that in the human organism are discharged by the conscious intelligence, while the play of individual impulse and interest performs functions akin to those discharged in the bodily organism by the unconscious instincts and involuntary motions, the Anarchists seem to us like men who would try to get along without heads and the Socialists like men who would try to rule the wonderfully complex and delicate internal relations of their frames by conscious will.

The philosophical Anarchists of whom I speak are few in number, and of little practical importance. It is with socialism in its various phases that we have to do battle.

With the Socialists we have some points of agreement, for we recognize fully the social nature of man and believe that all monopolies should be held and governed by the state. In these, and in directions where the general health, knowledge, comfort and convenience might be improved, we, too, would extend the functions of the state.

The Vice of Socialism

But it seems to us the vice of socialism in all its degrees is its want of radicalism, of going to the root. It takes its theories from those who have sought to justify the impoverishment of the masses, and its advocates generally teach the preposterous and degrading doctrine that slavery was the first condition of labor. It assumes that the tendency of wages to a minimum is the natural law, and seeks to abolish wages; it assumes that the natural result of competition is to grind down workers, and seeks to abolish competition by restrictions, prohibitions and extensions of governing power. Thus mistaking effects for causes, and childishly blaming the stone for hitting it, it wastes strength in striving for remedies that, when not worse, are futile. Associated though it is in many places with democratic aspiration, yet its essence is the same delusion to which the children of Israel yielded when, against the protest of their prophet, they insisted on a king; the de-

lusion that has everywhere corrupted democracies and enthroned tyrants—that power over the people can be used for the benefit of the people; that there may be devised machinery that, through human agencies, will secure for the management of individual affairs more wisdom and more virtue than the people themselves possess.

This superficiality and this tendency may be seen in all the phases of socialism.

Protectionism

Take, for instance, protectionism. What support it has, beyond the mere selfish desire of sellers to compel buyers to pay them more than their goods are worth, springs from such superficial ideas as that production, not consumption, is the end of effort; that money is more valuable than money's-worth, and to sell more profitable than to buy; and above all, from the desire to limit competition which springs from an unanalyzing recognition of the phenomena that necessarily follow when men who have the need to labor are deprived by monopoly of access to the natural and indispensable element of all labor. Its methods involve the idea that governments can more wisely direct the expenditure of labor and the investment of capital than can laborers and capitalists, and that the men who control governments will use this power for the general good and not in their own interests. They tend to multiply officials, restrict liberty, invent crimes. They promote perjury, fraud and corruption. And they would, were the theory carried to its logical conclusion, destroy civilization and reduce mankind to savagery.

Trades-unionism

Take trades-unionism. While within narrow lines trades-unionism promotes the idea of the mutuality of interests, and often helps to raise courage and further political education, and while it has enabled limited bodies of workingmen to improve somewhat their condition, and gain, as it were, breathing space, yet it takes no note of the general causes that determine the conditions of labor, and strives for the

elevation of only a small part of the great body by means that cannot help the rest. Aiming at the restriction of competition—the limitation of the right to labor, its methods are like those of an army which, even in a righteous cause, are subversive of liberty and liable to abuse, while its weapon, the strike, is destructive in its nature, both to combatants and non-combatants, being a form of passive war. To apply the principle of trades-unions to all industry, as some dream of doing, would be to enthrall men in a caste system.

Or take even such moderate measures as the limitation of working hours and of the labor of women and children. They are superficial in looking no further than to the eagerness of men and women and little children to work unduly, and in proposing forcibly to restrain overwork while utterly ignoring its cause—the sting of poverty that forces human beings to it. And the methods by which these restraints must be enforced multiply officials, interfere with personal liberty, tend to corruption, and are liable to abuse.

Thorough-going Socialism

As for thorough-going socialism, which is the more to be honored as having the courage of its convictions, it would carry these vices to full expression. Jumping to conclusions without effort to discover causes, it fails to see that oppression does not come from the nature of capital, but from the wrong that robs labor of capital by divorcing it from land, and that creates a fictitious capital that is really capitalized monopoly. It fails to see that it would be impossible for capital to oppress labor were labor free to the natural material of production; that the wage system in itself springs from mutual convenience, being a form of co-operation in which one of the parties prefers a certain to a contingent result; and that what it calls the "iron law of wages" is not the natural law of wages, but only the law of wages in that unnatural condition in which men are made helpless by being deprived of the materials for life and work. It fails to see that what it mistakes for the evils of competition are really the evils of restricted competition—are due to a one-sided competition to

which men are forced when deprived of land. Its methods, the organization of men into industrial armies, the direction and control of all production and exchange by governmental or semi-governmental bureaus, would, if carried to full expression, mean Egyptian despotism.

Difference as to Remedies

We differ from the Socialists in our diagnosis of the evil, and we differ from them as to remedies. We have no fear of capital, regarding it as the natural handmaiden of labor; we look on interest in itself as natural and just; we would set no limit to accumulation, nor impose on the rich any burden that is not equally placed on the poor; we see no evil in competition, but deem unrestricted competition to be as necessary to the health of the industrial and social organism as the free circulation of the blood is to the health of the bodily organism—to be the agency whereby the fullest cooperation is to be secured. We would simply take for the community what belongs to the community, the value that attaches to land by the growth of the community; leave sacredly to the individual all that belongs to the individual; and, treating necessary monopolies as functions of the state, abolish all restrictions and prohibitions save those required for public health, safety, morals and convenience.

The Fundamental Difference

But the fundamental difference is in this: socialism in all its phases looks on the evil of our civilization as springing from the inadequacy or inharmony of natural relations, which must be artificially organized or improved. In its idea there devolves on the state the necessity of intelligently organizing the industrial relations of men, the construction, as it were, of a great machine whose complicated parts shall properly work together under the direction of human intelligence. This is the reason why socialism tends toward atheism. Failing to see the order and symmetry of natural law, it fails to recognize God.

On the other hand, we who call ourselves single-tax men

(a name which expresses merely our practical propositions) see in the social and industrial relations of men not a machine which requires construction, but an organism which needs only to be suffered to grow. We see in the natural social and industrial laws such harmony as we see in the adjustments of the human body, harmonies that as far transcend the power of man's intelligence to order and direct as it is beyond man's intelligence to order and direct the vital movements of his frame. We see in these social and industrial laws so close a relation to the moral law as must spring from the same authorship, and that proves the moral law to be the sure guide of man where his intelligence would wander and go astray. Thus, to us, all that is needed to remedy the evils of our time, is to do justice and give freedom.

V

The Remedy for the Condition of Labor

And it is because that in what we propose—the securing to all men of equal natural opportunities for the exercise of their powers and the removal of all legal restriction on the legitimate exercise of those powers—we see the conformation of human law to the moral law, that we hold with confidence, not merely that this is a sufficient remedy for the present condition of labor, but that it is the only possible remedy.

The Iron Law of Wages

Since man can live only on land and from land, land being the reservoir of matter and force from which man's body itself is taken, and on which he must draw for all that he can produce, does it not irresistibly follow that to give the land in ownership to some men and to deny to others all right to it is to divide mankind into the rich and the poor, the privileged and the helpless? Does it not follow that those who have no rights to the use of land can live only by selling their power to labor to those who own the land? Does it not follow that what the Socialists call "the iron law of wages," what the political economists term "the tendency of wages to

a minimum," must take from the landless masses—the mere laborers, who of themselves have no power to use their labor —all the benefits of any possible advance or improvement that does not alter this unjust division of land? For having no power to employ themselves, they must, either as labor-sellers or land-renters, compete with one another for permission to labor. This competition with one another of men shut out from God's inexhaustible storehouse, has no limit but starvation, and must ultimately force wages to their lowest point, the point at which life can just be maintained and reproduction carried on.

This is not to say that all wages must fall to this point, but that the wages of that necessarily largest stratum of laborers, those who have only ordinary knowledge, skill and aptitude, must so fall. The wages of special classes who are fenced off from the pressure of competition by peculiar knowledge, skill, or other causes, may remain above that ordinary level. Thus, where the ability to read and write is rare its possession enables a man to obtain higher wages than the ordinary laborer. But as the diffusion of education makes the ability to read and write general, this advantage is lost. So when a vocation requires special training or skill, or is made difficult of access by artificial restrictions, the checking of competition tends to keep wages in it at a higher level. But as the progress of invention dispenses with peculiar skill, or artificial restrictions are broken down, these higher wages sink to the ordinary level. And so, it is only so long as they are special that such qualities as industry, prudence, and thrift can enable the ordinary laborer to maintain a condition above that which gives a mere living. Where they become general, the law of competition must reduce the earnings or savings of such qualities to the general level which, land being monopolized and labor helpless, can be only that at which the next lowest point is the cessation of life.

Labor's Storehouse

Or, to state the same thing in another way: Land being necessary to life and labor, its owners will be able, in return

for permission to use it, to obtain from mere laborers all that labor can produce, save enough to enable such of them to maintain life as are wanted by the landowners and their dependents.

Thus, where private property in land has divided society into a land-owning class and a landless class, there is no possible invention or improvement, whether it be industrial, social, or moral, which, so long as it does not affect the ownership of land, can prevent poverty or relieve the general conditions of mere laborers.

Laborsaving Improvements

For whether the effect of any invention or improvement be to increase what labor can produce or to decrease what is required to support the laborer, it can, so soon as it becomes general, result only in increasing the income of the owners of land, without at all benefiting the mere laborers. In no event can those possessed of the mere ordinary power to labor, a power utterly useless without the means necessary to labor, keep more of their earnings than enough to enable them to live.

Where Has the Benefit Gone?

How true this is, we may see in the facts of today. In our own time invention and discovery have enormously increased the productive power of labor, and at the same time greatly reduced the cost of many things necessary to the support of the laborer. Have these improvements anywhere raised the earnings of the mere laborer? Have not their benefits mainly gone to the owners of land—enormously increased land values?

I say mainly, for some part of the benefit has gone to the cost of monstrous standing armies and warlike preparations; to the payment of interest on great public debts; and, largely disguised as interest on fictitious capital, to the owners of monopolies other than that of land. But improvements that would do away with these wastes would not benefit labor; they would simply increase the profits of landowners. Were

standing armies and all their incidents abolished, were all monopolies other than that of land done away with, were governments to become models of economy, were the profits of speculators, of middlemen, of all sorts of exchangers saved, were every one to become so strictly honest that no policemen, no courts, no prisons, no precautions against dishonesty would be needed—the result would not differ from that which has followed the increase of productive power.

The Paradox

Nay, would not these very blessings bring starvation to many of those who now manage to live? Is it not true that if there were proposed today what all Christian men ought to pray for, the complete disbandment of all the armies of Europe, the greatest fears would be aroused for the consequences of throwing on the labor market so many unemployed laborers?

The explanation of this and of similar paradoxes that in our time perplex on every side, may be easily seen. The effect of all inventions and improvements that increase productive power, that save waste and economize effort, is to lessen the labor required for a given result, and thus to save labor, so that we speak of them as laborsaving inventions or improvements. Now, in a natural state of society where the rights of all to the use of the earth are acknowledged, laborsaving improvements might go to the very utmost that can be imagined without lessening demand for men, since in such natural conditions the demand for men lies in their own enjoyment of life and the strong instincts that the Creator has implanted in the human breast.

Disinherited From the Earth

But in that unnatural state of society where the masses of men are disinherited of all but the power to labor when opportunity to labor is given them by others, the demand for them becomes simply the demand for their services by those who hold this opportunity, and man himself becomes a commodity. Hence, although the natural effect of laborsaving

improvement is to increase wages, yet, in the unnatural condition which private ownership of the land begets, the effect, even of such moral improvements as the disbandment of armies and the saving of the labor that vice entails, is, by lessening the commercial demand, to lower wages and reduce mere laborers to starvation or pauperism. If laborsaving inventions and improvements could be carried to the very abolition of the necessity for labor, what would be the result? Would it not be that landowners could then get all the wealth that the land was capable of producing, and would have no need at all for laborers, who must then either starve or live as pensioners on the bounty of the landowners?

Natural Bounty Unavailing

Thus, so long as private property in land continues—so long as some men are treated as owners of the earth and other men can live on it only by their sufferance—human wisdom can devise no means by which the evils of our present condition may be avoided.

Nor yet could the wisdom of God.

By the light of that right reason of which St. Thomas speaks we may see that even He, the Almighty, so long as His laws remain what they are, could do nothing to prevent poverty and starvation while property in land continues.

How could He? Should He infuse new vigor into the sunlight, new virtue into the air, new fertility into the soil, would not all this new bounty go to the owners of the land, and work not benefit, but rather injury, to mere laborers? Should He open the minds of men to the possibilities of new substances, new adjustments, new powers, could this do any more to relieve poverty than steam, electricity and all the numberless discoveries and inventions of our time have done? Or, if He were to send down from the heavens above or cause to gush up from the subterranean depths, food, clothing—all the things that satisfy man's material desires—to whom, under our laws, would all these belong? So far from benefiting man, would not this increase and extension of His bounty prove but a curse, enabling the privileged class more riotously to

roll in wealth, and bringing the disinherited class to more widespread starvation or pauperism?

VI

Since labor must find its workshop and reservoir in land, the labor question is but another name for the land question.

The most important of all the material relations of man is his relation to the planet he inhabits, and by virtue of the law, "unto whom much is given, from him much is required," the very progress of civilization makes the evils produced by private property in land more widespread and intense.

The Root of the Evil

What is producing throughout the civilized world the present condition of things is not this and that local error or minor mistake. It is nothing less than the progress of civilization itself; nothing less than the intellectual advance and the material growth in which our country has been so pre-eminent, acting in a state of society based on private property in land.

How Blessings Are Turned into Curses

The discoveries of science, the gains of invention, have given to us in this wonderful century more than has been given to men in any time before; and, in a degree so rapidly accelerating as to suggest geometrical progression, are placing in our hands new material powers. But with the benefit comes the obligation. In a civilization beginning to pulse with steam and electricity, where the sun paints pictures and the phonograph stores speech, it will not do to be merely as just as were our fathers. Intellectual advance and material advance require corresponding moral advance. Knowledge and power are neither good nor evil. They are not ends, but means—evolving forces that if not controlled in orderly relations must take disorderly and destructive forms. The deepening pain, the increasing perplexity, the growing discontent, mean nothing less than that forces of destruction swifter

and more terrible than those that have shattered every preceding civilization are already menacing ours—that if it does not quickly rise to a higher moral level; if it does not become in deed as in word a Christian civilization, on the wall of its splendor must flame the doom of Babylon: "Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting!"

Factory Laws Ineffective

I have already referred generally to the defects that attach to all socialistic remedies for the evil condition of labor, and of these the widest and strongest are that the state should restrict the hours of labor, the employment of women and children, the unsanitary conditions of workshops, etc. Yet how little may in this way be accomplished.

A strong, absolute ruler might hope by such regulations to alleviate the conditions of chattel slaves. But the tendency of our times is towards democracy, and democratic states are necessarily weaker in paternalism, while in the industrial slavery growing out of private ownership of land that prevails in Christendom today, it is not the master who forces the slave to labor, but the slave who urges the master to let him labor. Thus the greatest difficulty in enforcing such regulations comes from those whom they are intended to benefit. It is not, for instance, the masters who make it difficult to enforce restrictions on child labor in factories, but the mothers who, prompted by poverty, misrepresent the ages of their children even to the masters, and teach the children to misrepresent.

But while in large factories and mines regulations as to hours, ages, etc., though subject to evasion and offering opportunities for extortion and corruption, may be to some extent enforced, how can they have any effect in those far wider branches of industry where the laborer works for himself or for small employers?

Not Remedies but Only Palliatives

All such remedies are of the nature of the remedy for overcrowding that is generally prescribed with them—the re-

striction under penalty of the number who may occupy a room and the demolition of unsanitary buildings. Since these measures have no tendency to increase house accommodation or to augment ability to pay for it, the overcrowding that is forced back in some places goes on in other places, and to a worse degree. All such remedies begin at the wrong end. They are like putting on brake and bit to hold in quietness horses that are being lashed into frenzy; they are like trying to stop a locomotive by holding its wheels instead of shutting off steam; like attempting to cure smallpox by driving back its pustules. Men do not overwork themselves because they like it; it is not in the nature of the mother's heart to send children to work when they ought to be at play; it is not of choice that laborers will work in dangerous and unsanitary conditions. These things, like overcrowding, come from the sting of poverty. And so long as the poverty of which they are expression is left untouched, such restrictions can have only partial and evanescent results. The cause remaining, repression in one place can only bring out its effects in other places, and the task assigned to the state is as hopeless as to ask it to lower the level of the ocean by bailing out the sea.

State Regulation of Wages Impossible

Nor can the state cure poverty by regulating wages. It is as much beyond the power of the state to regulate wages as it is to regulate the rates of interest. Usury laws have been tried again and again, but the only effect they have ever had has been to increase what the poorer borrowers must pay, and for the same reasons that all attempts to lower by regulation the price of goods have always resulted merely in increasing them. The general rate of wages is fixed by the ease or difficulty with which labor can obtain access to land, ranging from the full earnings of labor, where land is free, to the least on which laborers can live and reproduce, where land is fully monopolized. Thus, where it has been comparatively easy for laborers to get land, as in the United States and in Australasia, wages have been higher than in Europe and it has been impossible to get European laborers to work there

for wages that they would gladly accept at home; while as monopolization goes on under the influence of private property in land, wages tend to fall, and the social conditions of Europe to appear. Thus, under the partial yet substantial recognition of common rights to land, of which I have spoken, the many attempts of the British parliament to reduce wages by regulation failed utterly. And so, when the institution of private property in land had done its work in England, all attempts of parliament to raise wages proved unavailing. In the beginning of this century it was even attempted to increase the earnings of laborers by grants in aid of wages. But the only result was to lower commensurately what wages employers paid.

The state could only maintain wages above the tendency of the market (for, as I have shown, labor deprived of land becomes a commodity) by offering employment to all who wish it; or by lending its sanction to strikes and supporting them with its funds. Thus it is that the thorough-going Socialists, who want the state to take all industry into its hands, are much more logical than those timid Socialists who propose that the state should regulate private industry—but only a little.

Peasant Proprietorship No Salvation

The same hopelessness attends the suggestion that working people should be encouraged by the state in obtaining a share of the land. It is proposed that, as is now being attempted in Ireland, the state shall buy out large landowners in favor of small ones, establishing what is known as peasant proprietors. Supposing that this can be done even to a considerable extent, what will be accomplished save to substitute a larger privileged class for a smaller privileged class? What will be done for the still larger class that must remain, the laborers of the agricultural districts, the workmen of the towns, the proletarians of the cities? Is it not true, as Professor De Laveleye says, that in such countries as Belgium, where peasant proprietary exists, the tenants—for there still exist tenants—are rackrented with a mercilessness unknown in Ire-

land? Is it not true that in such countries as Belgium the condition of the mere laborer is even worse than it is in Great Britain where large ownerships obtain? And, if the state attempts to buy up land for peasant proprietors, will not the effect be what is seen today in Ireland, to increase the market value of land and thus make it more difficult for those not so favored, and for those who will come after, to get land?

Subsidized Industries Unjustifiable

How, moreover, is it possible to justify state aid to one man to buy a bit of land without also insisting on state aid to another man to buy a donkey, to another to buy a shop, to another to buy the tools and materials of a trade—state aid, in short, to everybody who may be able to make good use of it, or thinks that he could? And is not this communism—not the communism of the early Christians and of the religious orders, but communism that uses the coercive power of the state to take rightful property by force from those who have, to give to those who have not? For the state has no purse of Fortunatus; the state cannot repeat the miracle of the loaves and fishes; all that the state can give, it must get by some form or other of the taxing power. And whether it gives or lends money, or gives or lends credit, it cannot give to those who have not, without taking from those who have.

Small Holdings Futile

But aside from all this, any scheme of dividing up land while maintaining private property in land is futile. Small holdings cannot co-exist with the treatment of land as private property where civilization is materially advancing and wealth augments. We may see this in the economic tendencies that in ancient times were the main cause that transformed world-conquering Italy from a land of small farms to a land of great estates. We may see it in the fact that while two centuries ago the majority of English farmers were owners of the land they tilled, tenancy has been for a long time the all but universal condition of the English farmer. And now the mighty forces of steam and electricity have come to urge concentration. It

is in the United States that we may see on the largest scale how their power is operating to turn a nation of landowners into a nation of tenants. The principle is clear and irresistible. Material progress makes land more valuable, and when this increasing value is left to private owners land must pass from the ownership of the poor into the ownership of the rich, just as diamonds so pass when poor men find them. What the British government is attempting in Ireland is to build snow houses in the Arabian desert! to plant bananas in Labrador!

There is one way, and only one way, in which working people in our civilization may be secured a share in the land of their country, and that is the way that we propose—the taking of the profits of landownership for the community.

VII

Trade Societies

Again, workingmen's associations may promote fraternity, extend social intercourse, and provide assurance in case of sickness or death, but if they go no further, they are powerless to affect wages even among their members. As to trades-unions proper, the attitude of many good people may, perhaps, best be stated as one of warm approbation provided that they do not go too far. For these good people object to strikes; they reprehend societies that "do their best to get into their hands the whole field of labor and to force workingmen either to join them or to starve"; they discountenance the coercing of employers and seem to think that arbitration might take the place of strikes.

The Strike and the Boycott

They use expressions and assert principles that are all that the trade-unionist would ask, not merely to justify the strike and the boycott, but even the use of violence where only violence would suffice. For they speak of the insufficient wages of workmen as due to the greed of rich employers; they assume the moral right of the workman to obtain em-

ployment from others at wages greater than those others are willing freely to give; and they deny the right of anyone to work for such wages as he pleases, in such a way as to give the impression that "blacklegging"—i. e., the working for less than union wages—is a crime.

To men conscious of bitter injustice, to men steeped in poverty yet mocked by flaunting wealth, such words mean more than I can think is realized.

When fire shall be cool and ice be warm, when armies shall throw away lead and iron to try conclusions by the pelting of rose leaves, such labor associations as these good people are thinking of may be possible. But not till then.

Coercion

For labor associations can do nothing to raise wages but by force. It may be force applied passively, or force applied actively, or force held in reserve, but it must be force. They *must* coerce or hold the power to coerce employers; they *must* coerce those among their own members disposed to straggle; they must do their best to get into their hands the whole field of labor they seek to occupy and to force other workingmen either to join them or to starve. Those who speak of trades-unions bent on raising wages by moral suasion alone, are like those who would tell you of tigers that live on oranges.

The Closed Door

The condition of the masses today is that of men pressed together in a hall where ingress is open and more are constantly coming, but where the doors for egress are closed. If forbidden to relieve the general pressure by throwing open those doors, whose bars and bolts are private property in land, they can only mitigate the pressure on themselves by forcing back others, and the weakest must be driven to the wall. This is the way of labor unions and trade guilds. Even the most peaceable societies would, in their efforts to find employment for their own members, necessarily displace others.

Philanthropy Helpless

For even the philanthropy which, recognizing the evil of trying to help labor by alms, seeks to help men to help themselves by finding them work, becomes aggressive in the blind and bitter struggle that private property in land entails, and in helping one set of men, injures others. Thus, to minimize the bitter complaints of taking work from others and lessening the wages of others in providing their own beneficiaries with work and wages, benevolent societies are forced to devices akin to the digging of holes and filling them up again.

Who Is the Blackleg?

Labor associations of the nature of trade guilds or unions are necessarily selfish; by the law of their being they must fight for their own hand, regardless of who is hurt; they ignore, and must ignore, the teaching of Christ that we should do to others as we would have them do to us, which a true political economy shows is the only way to the full emancipation of the masses. They must do their best to starve workmen who do not join them, they must by all means in their power force back the "blackleg"—as the soldier in battle must shoot down his mother's son if in the opposing ranks. And who is the blackleg? A fellow creature seeking work—a fellow creature in all probability more pressed and starved than those who so bitterly denounce him, and often with the hungry, pleading faces of wife and child behind him.

Labor Trusts

And, in so far as they succeed, what is it that trade guilds and unions do but to impose more restrictions on natural rights; to create "trusts" in labor; to add to privileged classes other somewhat privileged classes; and to press the weaker closer to the wall?

I speak without prejudice against trades-unions, of which for years I was an active member.

Violation of Natural Rights

And in pointing out that their principle is selfish and incapable of large and permanent benefits, and that their methods violate natural rights and work hardship and injustice, I am only saying what, both in my books and by word of mouth, I have said over and over again to them. Nor is what I say capable of dispute. Intelligent trades-unionists know it, and the less intelligent vaguely feel it. And even those of the classes of wealth and leisure who, as if to head off the demand for natural rights, are preaching trades-unionism to workingmen, must needs admit it.

The Great London Dock Strike

All will remember the great London dock strike of two years ago. In a volume called *The Story of the Dockers' Strike*, written by Messrs. Llewellyn Smith and Vaughan Nash, with an introduction by Sydney Buxton, M. P., which advocates trades-unionism as the solution of the labor question, and of which a large number were sent to Australia as a sort of official recognition of the generous aid received from there by the strikers, I find in the summing up, on pages 164-65, the following:

> If the settlement lasts, work at the docks will be more regular, better paid, and carried on under better conditions than ever before. All this will be an unqualified gain to those who get the benefit from it. But another result will undoubtedly be to contract the field of employment and lessen the number of those for whom work can be found. The lower class casual will, in the end, find his position more precarious than ever before, in proportion to the increased regularity of work which the 'fitter' of the laborers will secure. The effect of the organization of dock labor, as of all classes of labor, will be to squeeze out the residuum. The loafer, the cadger, the failure in the industrial race—the members of "Class B" of Mr. Charles Booth's hierarchy of social classes

—will be no gainers by the change, but will rather find another door closed against them, and this in many cases the last door to employment.

Pharisees

I am far from wishing that any of my readers should join in that pharisaical denunciation of trades-unions common among those who, while quick to point out the injustice of trades-unions in denying to others the equal right to work, are themselves supporters of that more primary injustice that denies the equal right to the standing place and natural material necessary to work. What I wish to point out is that trades-unionism, while it may be a partial palliative, is not a remedy; that it has not that moral character which could alone justify one in urging it as good in itself.

VIII

Wageworkers Who Are Often Forgotten

It is often assumed that the labor question is a question between wageworkers and their employers. But working for wages is not the primary or exclusive occupation of labor. Primarily, men work for themselves without the intervention of an employer. And the primary source of wages is in the earnings of labor, the man who works for himself and consumes his own products, receiving his wages in the fruits of his labor. Are not fishermen, boatmen, cab drivers, peddlers, working farmers—all, in short, of the many workers who get their wages directly by the sale of their services or products without the medium of an employer, as much laborers as those who work for the specific wages of an employer? In considering remedies, these workers are very seldom thought of. Yet in reality the laborers who work for themselves are the first to be considered, since what men will be willing to accept from employers depends manifestly on what they can get by working for themselves.

Employers Pressed by Competition

It is assumed that all employers are rich men, who might raise wages much higher were they not so grasping. But is it not the fact that the great majority of employers are in reality as much pressed by competition as their workmen, many of them constantly on the verge of failure? Such employers could not possibly raise the wages they pay, however they might wish to, unless all others were compelled to do so.

Rich and Poor

It is assumed that there are in the natural order two classes, the rich and the poor, and that laborers naturally belong to the poor. It is true that there are differences in capacity, in diligence, in health and in strength, that may produce differences in fortune. These, however, are not the differences that divide men into rich and poor. The natural differences in powers and aptitudes are certainly not greater than are natural differences in stature. But while it is only by selecting giants and dwarfs that we can find men twice as tall as others, yet, in the difference between rich and poor that exists today, we find some men richer than other men by the thousand fold and the million fold.

Those Who Hold the Toll Gates, and Those Who Pay Toll

Nowhere do these differences between wealth and poverty coincide with differences in individual powers and aptitudes. The real difference between rich and poor is the difference between those who hold the toll gates and those who pay toll; between tribute receivers and tribute yielders.

To assume that laborers, even ordinary manual laborers, are naturally poor, is to ignore the fact that labor is the producer of wealth, and attribute to the natural law of the Creator an injustice that comes from man's impious violation of his benevolent intention. In the rudest stage of the arts it is possible, where justice prevails, for all well men to earn a living. With the laborsaving appliances of our time, it should be possible for all to earn much more. And so, to say that

poverty is no disgrace, is to convey an unreasonable implication. For poverty ought to be a disgrace, since in a condition of social justice it would, where unsought from religious motives or unimposed by unavoidable misfortune, imply recklessness or laziness.

What Gives Wealth Its Curse

Sympathy often seems to be exclusively directed to the poor, the workers. Ought this to be so? Are not the rich to be pitied also?

When Christ told the rich young man who sought him to sell all he had and give it to the poor, he was not thinking of the poor, but of the young man. And I doubt not that among the rich, and especially among the self-made rich, there are many who at times at least feel keenly the folly of their riches and fear for the dangers and temptations to which these expose their children. But the strength of long habit, the promptings of pride, the excitement of making and holding what has become for them the counters in a game of cards, the family expectations that have assumed the character of rights, and the real difficulty they find in making any good use of their wealth, bind them to their burden, like a weary donkey to his pack.

Men who are sure of getting food when they shall need it eat only what appetite dictates. But with the sparse tribes who exist in the verge of the habitable globe life is either a famine or a feast. Enduring hunger for days, the fear of it prompts them to gorge like anacondas when successful in their quest of game. And so, what gives wealth its curse is what drives men to seek it, what makes it so envied and admired—the fear of want. As the unduly rich are the corollary of the unduly poor, so is the soul-destroying quality of riches but the reflex of the want that embrutes and degrades. The real evil lies in the injustice from which unnatural possession and unnatural deprivation both spring.

Rich and Poor Are Alike Victims

But this injustice can hardly be charged on individuals or

classes. The existence of private property in land is a great social wrong from which society at large suffers, and of which the very rich and the very poor are alike victims, though at the opposite extremes. Seeing this, it seems to us like a violation of Christian charity to speak of the rich as though they individually were responsible for the sufferings of the poor. Yet many do this, while at the same time insisting that the cause of monstrous wealth and degrading poverty shall not be touched. Here is a man with a disfiguring and dangerous excrescence. One physician would kindly, gently, but firmly remove it. Another insists that it shall not be removed, but at the same time holds up the poor victim to hatred and ridicule. Which is right?

IX

In seeking to restore all men to their equal and natural rights we do not seek the benefit of any class, but of all. For we both know by faith and see by fact that injustice can profit no one and that justice must benefit all.

Equality of Opportunity

Nor do we seek any "futile and ridiculous equality." We recognize that there must always be differences and inequalities. In so far as these are in conformity with the moral law, in so far as they do not violate the command, "Thou shalt not steal," we are content. We do not seek to better God's work; we seek only to do His will. The equality we would bring about is not the equality of fortune, but the equality of natural opportunity; the equality that reason and religion alike proclaim—the equality in usufruct of all His children to the bounty of Our Father Who art in Heaven.

And in taking for the uses of society what we clearly see is the great fund intended for society in the divine order, we would not levy the slightest tax on the possessors of wealth, no matter how rich they might be. Not only do we deem such taxes a violation of the right of property, but we see that by

virtue of beautiful adaptations in the economic laws of the Creator, it is impossible for anyone honestly to acquire wealth without at the same time adding to the wealth of the world.

The Right to Life

To persist in a wrong, to refuse to undo it, is always to become involved in other wrongs. Those who defend private property in land, and thereby deny the first and most important of all human rights, the equal right to the material substratum of life, are compelled to one of two courses. Either they must, as do those whose gospel is "Devil take the hindermost," deny the equal right to life, and by some theory like that to which the English clergyman Malthus has given his name, assert that nature (they do not venture to say God) brings into the world more men than there is provision for; or, they must, as does the Socialist, assert as rights what in themselves are wrongs.

There are many who deny the equality of right to the material basis of life, and yet conscious that there is a right to live, assert the right of laborers to employment and their right to receive from their employers a certain indefinite wage.

Mistaken Rights

No such rights exist. No one has a right to demand employment of another, or to demand higher wages than the other is willing to give, or in any way to put pressure on another to make him raise such wages against his will. There can be no better moral justification for such demands on employers by workingmen than there would be for employers demanding that workingmen shall be compelled to work for them when they do not want to, and to accept wages lower than they are willing to take. Any seeming justification springs from a prior wrong, the denial to workingmen of their natural rights, and can in the last analysis only rest on that supreme dictate of self-preservation that under extraordinary circumstances makes pardonable what in itself is theft, or sacrilege, or even murder.

Rights in Extremes

A fugitive slave with the bloodhounds of his pursuers baying at his heels would, in true Christian morals, be held blameless if he seized the first horse he came across, even though to take it he had to knock down the rider. But this is not to justify horse-stealing as an ordinary means of traveling.

When his disciples were hungry, Christ permitted them to pluck corn on the Sabbath day. But he never denied the sanctity of the Sabbath by asserting that it was under ordinary circumstances a proper time to gather corn.

He justified David, who, when pressed by hunger, committed what ordinarily would be sacrilege, by taking from the temple the loaves of proposition. But in this he was far from saying that the robbing of temples was a proper way of getting a living.

The True Natural Right

The natural right which each man has is not that of demanding employment or wages from another man; but that of employing himself—that of applying by his own labor to the inexhaustible storehouse which the Creator has, in the land, provided for all men. Were that storehouse open, as by the single tax we would open it, the natural demand for labor would keep pace with the supply, the man who sold labor and the man who bought it would become free exchangers for mutual advantage, and all cause for dispute between workman and employer would be gone.

The Only Just Rate of Wages

For then, all being free to employ themselves, the mere opportunity to labor would cease to seem a boon; and since no one would work for another for less, all things considered, than he could earn by working for himself, wages would necessarily rise to their full value, and the relations of workman and employer would be regulated by mutual interest and convenience.

This is the only way in which they can be satisfactorily regulated.

It is often assumed that there is some just rate of wages that employers ought to be willing to pay and that laborers should be content to receive, and it is supposed that if this were secured there would be an end of strife. This rate is that which will give workingmen a frugal living, and perhaps enable them by hard work and strict economy to lay by a little something.

But how can a just rate of wages be fixed without the "higgling of the market" any more than the just price of corn, or pigs, or ships, or paintings can be so fixed? And would not arbitrary regulation in the one case as in the other check that interplay that most effectively promotes the economical adjustment of productive forces? Why should buyers of labor, any more than buyers of commodities, be called on to pay higher prices than in a free market they are compelled to pay? Why should the sellers of labor be content with anything less than in a free market they can obtain? Why should workingmen be content with frugal fare when the world is so rich? Why should they be satisfied with a lifetime of toil and stinting when the world is so beautiful? Why should they not also desire to gratify the higher instincts, the finer tastes? Why should they be forever content to travel in the steerage when others find the cabin more enjoyable?

Animal Needs

Nor will they. The ferment of our time does not arise merely from the fact that workingmen find it harder to live on the same scale of comfort. It is also and perhaps still more largely due to the increase of their desires with an improved scale of comfort. This increase of desire must continue. For workingmen are men. And man is the unsatisfied animal.

He is not an ox of whom it may be said, so much grass, so much grain, so much water, and a little salt, and he will be content. On the contrary, the more he gets the more he craves. When he has enough food, then he wants better food. When he gets a shelter, then he wants a more commodious one.

Mental and Spiritual Desires

When his animal needs are satisfied, then mental and spiritual desires arise. This restless discontent is of the nature of man—of that nobler nature that raises him above the animals by so immeasurable a gulf, and shows him to be indeed created in the likeness of God. It is not to be quarrelled with, for it is the motor of all progress. It is this that has raised St. Peter's dome, and on dull, dead canvas made the angelic face of the Madonna to glow; it is this that has weighed suns and analyzed stars, and opened page after page of the wonderful works of creative intelligence; it is this that has narrowed the Atlantic to an ocean ferry, and trained the lightning to carry our messages to the remotest lands; it is this that is opening to us possibilities beside which all that our modern civilization has as yet accomplished seem small. Nor can it be repressed save by degrading and imbruting men; by reducing Europe to Asia.

Not Charity but Justice

Hence, short of what wages may be earned when all restrictions on labor are removed and access to natural opportunities on equal terms secured to all, it is impossible to fix any rate of wages that will be deemed just, or any rate of wages that can prevent workingmen striving to get more. So far from it making workingmen more contented to improve their condition a little, it is certain to make them more discontented.

Nor is it asking justice when employers are asked to pay their workingmen more than they are compelled to pay—more than they could get others to do the work for. It is asking charity. For the surplus that the rich employer thus gives is not in reality wages, it is essentially alms.

X

Charity Cannot Cure Poverty

In speaking of the practical measures for the improvement

of the condition of labor, I have not mentioned charity. But there is nothing practical in such recommendation as a cure for poverty, nor will anyone so consider it. If it were possible for the giving of alms to abolish poverty, there would be no poverty in Christendom.

Charity is indeed a noble and beautiful virtue, grateful to man and approved by God. But charity must be built on justice. It cannot supersede justice.

What is wrong with the condition of labor through the Christian world is that labor is robbed. And while the continuance of that robbery is sanctioned, it is idle to urge charity.

All that charity can do where injustice exists is here and there to somewhat mollify the effects of injustice. It cannot cure them. Nor is even what little it can do without evil. For what may be called the superimposed, and in this sense, secondary virtues, work evil where the fundamental or primary virtues are absent. Thus sobriety is a virtue and diligence is a virtue. But a sober and diligent thief is all the more dangerous. Thus patience is a virtue. But patience under wrong is the condoning of wrong. Thus it is a virtue to seek knowledge and to endeavor to cultivate the mental powers. But the wicked man becomes more capable of evil by reason of his intelligence. Devils we always think of as intelligent.

Charity Based Upon Injustice Works Evil

And thus that pseudo charity that discards and denies justice works evil. On the one side, it demoralizes its recipients, outraging human dignity, and turning into beggars and paupers men who, to become self-supporting, self-respecting citizens only need the restitution of what God has given them. On the other side, it acts as an anodyne to the conscience of those who are living on the robbery of their fellows, and fosters that moral delusion and spiritual pride that Christ doubtless had in mind when He said it was easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. For it leads men steeped in injustice, and using their money and their influence to bolster up injus-

tice, to think that in giving alms they are doing something more than their duty towards man, so deserve to be very well thought of by God, and in a vague way to attribute to their own goodness what really belongs to God's goodness.

The Churches and Charity

But worse perhaps than all else is the way in which this substituting of vague injunctions to charity for the clear-cut demands of justice opens an easy means for the professed teachers of the Christian religion of all branches and communions to placate Mammon while persuading themselves that they are serving God. Had the English clergy not subordinated the teaching of justice to the teaching of charity—to go no further in illustrating a principle of which the whole history of Christendom from Constantine's time to our own is witness—the Tudor tyranny would never have arisen, and the separation of the Church been averted; had the clergy of France never substituted charity for justice, the monstrous iniquities of the ancient regime would never have brought the horrors of the great revolution; and in my own country, had those who should have preached justice not satisfied themselves with preaching kindness, chattel slavery could never have demanded the holocaust of our Civil War.

No; as faith without works is dead, as men cannot give to God His due while denying to their fellows the rights He gave them, so charity unsupported by justice can do nothing to solve the problem of the existing condition of labor. Though the rich were to "bestow all their goods to feed the poor and give their bodies to be burned," poverty would continue while property in land continues.

What Can the Rich Man Do?

Take the case of the rich man today who is honestly desirous of devoting his wealth to the improvement of the condition of labor. What can he do? Bestow his wealth on those who need it? He may help some who deserve it, but will not improve general conditions. And against the good he may do will be the danger of doing harm.

Build churches? Under the shadow of churches poverty festers, and the vice that is born of it breeds.

Build schools and colleges? Save as it may lead men to see the iniquity of private property in land, increased education can effect nothing for mere laborers, for as education is diffused the wages of education sink.

Establish hospitals? Why, already it seems to laborers that there are too many seeking work, and to save and prolong life is to add to the pressure.

Build model tenements? Unless he cheapens house accommodation, he but drives further the class he would benefit, and as he cheapens house accommodation he brings more to seek employment and cheapens wages.

Institute laboratories, scientific schools, workshops for physical experiments? He but stimulates invention and discovery, the very forces that, acting on a society based on private property in land, are crushing labor as between the upper and the nether millstone.

Promote emigration from places where wages are low to places where they are somewhat higher? If he does, even those whom he at first helps to emigrate will soon turn on him to demand that such emigration shall be stopped as reducing their wages.

Give away what land he may have, or refuse to take rent for it, or let it at lower rents than the market price? He will simply make new landowners or partial landowners; he may make some individuals the richer, but he will do nothing to improve the general condition of labor.

Or, bethinking himself of those public-spirited citizens of classic times who spent great sums in improving their native cities, shall he try to beautify the city of his birth or adoption? Let him widen and straighten narrow and crooked streets, let him build parks and erect fountains, let him open tramways and bring in railways, or in any way make beautiful and attractive his chosen city, and what will be the result? Must it not be that those who appropriate God's bounty will take his also? Will it not be that the value of land will go up, and that the net result of his benefactions will be an increase of

rents and a bounty to landowners? Why, even the mere announcement that he is going to do such things will start speculation and send up the value of land by leaps and bounds.

What, then, can the rich man do to improve the condition of labor?

He can do nothing at all except to use his strength for the abolition of the great primary wrong that robs men of their birthright. The justice of God laughs at the attempts of men to substitute anything else for it.

The Industrial Revolution of Today

The truth for which we stand must be heard. It can never be stifled; it must go on conquering and to conquer.

Forty years ago slavery seemed stronger in the United States than ever before, and the market price of slaves—both working slaves and breeding slaves—was higher than it had ever been before, for the title of the owner seemed growing more secure. In the shadow of the hall where the equal rights of man had been solemnly proclaimed, the manacled fugitive was dragged back to bondage, and on what to American tradition was our Marathon of freedom, the slave master boasted that he would yet call the roll of his chattels.

Yet forty years ago, though the party that was to place Abraham Lincoln in the presidential chair had not been formed, and nearly a decade was yet to pass ere the signal gun was to ring out, slavery, as we may now see, was doomed.

Today a wider, deeper, more beneficent revolution is brooding, not over one country, but over the world. God's truth impels it, and forces mightier than He has ever before given to man, urge it on. It is no more in the power of vested wrong to stay it, than it is in man's power to stay the sun. The stars in their courses fight against Sisera, and in the ferment of today, to him who hath ears to hear, the doom of industrial slavery is sealed.