

Profits of Faith and Courage!

MR. R. W. THORP of Charleston, So. Carolina, who is a well-known and practised writer, in a letter to our good friend A. H. Jenkins, of this city, writes as follows:

I have always hammered away at the things which Henry George despised and wrote about, and this sometimes makes powerful enemies. However, the real causes of these deplorable social diseases, i. e., the pyramiding of land values, had never entered my train of thought before I read "Progress and Poverty," so I was really as far away from a solution of the problems as the most ignorant.

"Many are called, but few are chosen," and this spiritual law will hold good with the readers of this book—though many read it, how many will read it intelligently enough to understand it? Many people go to the theatre and laugh at tragedy, thinking it comedy, and vice versa; such is the limitation of the human brain.

A coincidence occurred while I was reading this book which, while very common, struck me forcibly and made me laugh. You will recall my writing and telling you about one John Newman of Seattle, an old Alaskan gold-hunter, whose life I wrote up in a series of articles? A few days ago Newman sent me a lot of material, clippings from papers, etc. In one of the latter I saw where his wife had a notice. It seems that twenty years ago she bought a small piece of land in Seattle for \$2,000. A few weeks ago she sold it to the Washington Athletic Club for \$267,000. This is a nice profit, but the part that got me is that Newman, who is great on having "monuments" erected, got permission from the club to put a copper plate with an inscription on it, at the entrance of the fine new building they were putting on the newly acquired site. The inscription reads: "*To the Memory of Hannah Newman, who, with courage and with faith in our city's growth, held this land for twenty years, etc.*" I don't imagine it took a great deal of courage, and perhaps little faith, to hold this land for a rise in value. Most men toil for a lifetime without accumulating one-twentieth of the sum Mrs. Newman received for sitting down and watching the city build in toward her holdings. I noted yesterday in the local paper that one of our state legislators (from Charleston) is the author of a bill now pressing "to remove all taxes from real estate."

On Barren Ground

WHAT you have to say in your article in *The New Freeman* of January 7 on "The Laborer and His Hire" prompts me to tell of an experience I had recently. I attended a luncheon of the League for Industrial Democracy, and afterward the question, "Can Industry Be Civilized?" was discussed by several able speakers, who, while they were all desirous of bettering industrial conditions, differed widely in their viewpoints. But while they severely criticized existing conditions, they had very little to offer in the way of improvement, and most of that little lay in the direction of governmental restrictions of and interference with industry, most of which, to my thinking,

would make matters worse rather than better. The last speaker, a labor leader whose work had been among the soft-coal miners, was especially pessimistic. He said I didn't know what was the matter with industry or how to remedy it, and after many talks with the mine owners he was convinced that while they were well-meaning and desirous of better things, they were just as ignorant as I was of the real cause of the trouble and how it was to be cured. He ended by saying that he had about reached the conclusion that nothing less than a war between capital and labor and the smashing of the whole system would help matters.

One of the speakers had touched on the land question but even he did not press the righting of this wrong as our primary need. So at the close, I very briefly pointed out that the basic wrong of our civilization lay in its denial of the equal rights of all men to the use of the earth; that unemployment and poverty and misery were the inevitable results of this denial; and that until we had righted this wrong and put all men on an absolute equality as regards natural resources it was impossible to tell what further steps were needed, if indeed any further steps would be needed.

There was an audience of from 100 to 200 persons, a presumably interested in bettering living conditions. By my brief remarks were received in dead silence. Evidently the remedy I offered did not appeal to them in the least. One of the previous speakers had told the story of a pious slaver whose ship, with a full cargo of slaves, was near sunk in a terrific storm. In his diary the slaver told how he had thanked God for His merciful kindness in delivering him from the storm. The speaker commented on the fact that this God-fearing man was totally blind to the iniquity of his business, and made the point that we had progressed a lot since that day. Thinking things over afterwards, I doubted this. For here was an intelligent audience apparently blind to a social crime as clearly wrong as chattel slavery itself and much more far-reaching. If they saw any wrong in the system, evidently they thought of very little moment; and as for considering the abolition of land monopoly as a cure for our industrial evils—it was like Elisha's "dip-seven-times-in-Jordan" cure for Naaman's leprosy, too absurdly simple to be even thought of.

So after my experience I fear that your well-meant advice to the labor leaders, ably as you have expressed it will but prove to be good seed sown on barren ground. For the labor leaders of the day are, alas! "blind leaders of the blind."

—HAROLD SUDELL, in Letter to *The New Freeman*.

THE equal right of all men to the use of land is as clear as their equal right to breathe the air—it is a right proclaimed by the fact of their existence. For we can not suppose that some men have a right to be in this world and others no right.—HENRY GEORGE.