

# Slavery Then and Now

By HENRY GEORGE

The coarse, brutal form of slavery which makes labor itself subject of property is only advantageous to the owner where population is sparse and land is open. Where the available land is all "fenced-in," where there is a body of disinherited men, who, though their right to their own power of labor is legally acknowledged, have no right to anything upon which that power of labor can be exerted—have no right, in fact, to as much of the earth as they may stand or lie down upon, save as they buy from week to week or month to month permission to use it—then the possession of the passive factor of production, land, gives as efficient and much more economical a command of the active factor, labor, as the actual legal ownership of men, with all its incidental powers of restraint and punishment.

Thirty years ago the owner of a thousand slaves in Georgia or Mississippi would be at this time of the year enjoying himself in a northern watering place or in Europe, living in luxurious idleness upon the difference between what the labor of his slaves produced and what he was obliged to return to them in the way of food, clothing, shelter, medical attendance,

overseers to keep them at work, and expense of recapture if they ran away. Chattel slavery has now been abolished in the United States, but men of the same kind are living in luxury at watering places or in Europe, without doing any work themselves, by virtue of the ownership of city lots, agricultural lands or mineral resources, for the use of which they levy toll upon the produce of labor.

In the one case as in the other products and services are obtained without the giving of products or services in return. To extort the labor for which he gave no return and which enabled him to live luxuriously without doing any work, the slave owner of 1857 had the power to flog, to iron and to pursue with bloodhounds. The land owner of 1887 has no need of these powers, for he has all that is necessary in the power of eviction, and how sufficient is that power, where population becomes somewhat dense and land is all "fenced in," we may see from what it means in such countries as Ireland, where a sentence of eviction has, with little exaggeration, been said to mean a sentence of death.

Signed: Henry George.

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