

and strangeness of the fact that, all over the civilized world, the working classes are the poor classes? Go into any city in the world, and get into a cab, and ask the man to drive you to where the working people live; he won't take you to where the fine houses are; he will take you, on the contrary, into the squalid quarters, the poorer quarters. Did you ever think how curious that is? Think for a moment how it would strike a rational being who had never been on the earth before, if such an intelligence could come down, and you were to explain to him how we live on earth, how houses, and food and clothing, and all the many things we need, are all produced by work, would he not think that the working people would be the people who lived in the finest houses and had most of everything that work produces? Yet, whether you took him to London or Paris, or New York, or even to Burlington, he would find that those called working people were the people who lived in the poorest houses.

All this is strange—just think of it. We naturally despise poverty; and it is reasonable that we should. I do not say—I distinctly repudiate it—that the people who are poor are poor always from their own fault, or even in most cases; but it ought to be so. If any good man or woman had the power to create a world, it would be a sort of a world in which no one would be poor unless he was lazy or vicious. But that is just precisely the kind of a world that this is; that is just precisely the

kind of a world that the Creator has made. Nature gives to labor, and to labor alone; there must be human work before any article of wealth can be produced; and, in a natural state of things, the man who toiled honestly and well would be the rich man, and he who did not work would be poor. We have so reversed the order of nature, that we are accustomed to think of a working-man as a poor man.

And if you trace it out I believe you will see that the primary cause of this is that we compel those who work to pay others for permission to do so. You buy a coat, a horse, a house; there you are paying the seller for labor exerted, for something that he has produced, or that he has got from the man who did produce it; but when you pay a man for land, what are you paying him for? You pay him for something that no man produced; you pay him for something that was here before man was, or for a value that was created, not by him individually, but by the community of which you are a part. What is the reason that the land here, where we stand tonight, is worth more than it was twenty-five years ago? What is the reason that land in the center of New York, that once could be bought by the mile for a jug of whisky, is now worth so much that, tho you were to cover it with gold, you would not have its value? Is it not because of the increase of population? Take away that population, and where would the value of the land be?

Look at it in any way you please.

## At the Bottom of Social Questions

We talk about over-production. How can there be such a thing as over-production while people want? All these things that are said to be over-produced are desired by many people. Why do they not get them? They do not get them because they have not the means to buy them; not that they do not want them. Why have they not the means to buy them? They earn too little. When great masses of men have to work for an average of \$1.40 a day, it is no wonder that great quantities of goods cannot be sold.

Now, why is it that men have to work for such low wages? Because, if they were to demand higher wages, there are plenty of unemployed men ready to step into their places. It is this mass of unemployed men who compel that fierce competition that drives wages down to the point of bare subsistence. Why is it that there are men who cannot get employ-

ment? Did you ever think what a strange thing it is that men cannot find employment? Adam had no difficulty in finding employment; neither had Robinson Crusoe; the finding of employment was the last thing that troubled them.

If men cannot find an employer, why can they not employ themselves? Simply because they are shut out from the element on which human labor can alone be exerted; men are compelled to compete with each other for the wages of an employer, because they have been robbed of the natural opportunities of employing themselves; because they cannot find a piece of God's world on which to work without paying some other human creature for the privilege.

I do not mean to say that, even after you had set right this fundamental injustice, there would not be many things to do; but this I do

mean to say, that our treatment of land lies at the bottom of all social questions. This I do mean to say, that, do what you please, reform as you may, you never can get rid of widespread poverty so long as the element on which, and from which, all men must live is made the private property of some men. It is utterly impossible. Reform government—get taxes down to the minimum—build railways; institute co-operative stores; divide profits, if you choose, between employers and employed—and what will be the result? The result will be that land will increase in value—that will be the result—that and nothing else. Experience shows this. Do not all improvements simply increase the value of land—the price that some must pay others for the privilege of living?

Consider the matter. I say it with all reverence, and merely say it because I wish to impress a truth upon your minds—it is utterly impossible, so long as His laws are what they are, that God Himself could relieve poverty—utterly impossible. Think of it, and you will see. Men pray to the Almighty to relieve poverty. But poverty comes not from God's laws—it is blasphemy of the worst kind to say that; it comes from man's injustice to his fellows. Supposing the Almighty were to hear the prayer, how could He carry out the requests so long as His laws are what they are? Consider—the Almighty gives us nothing of the things that constitute wealth; He merely gives us the raw material, which must be utilized by man to produce wealth. Does He not give us enough of that now? How could He relieve poverty even if He were to give us more? Supposing in answer to these prayers, he were to increase the power of the sun, or the virtues of the soil? Supposing He were to make plants more prolific, or animals to produce after their kind more abundantly? Who would get the benefit of it? Take a country where land is completely monopolized, as it is in most of the civilized countries—who would get the benefit of it? Simply the land-owners. And even if God, in answer to prayer, were to send down out of the heavens those things that men require, who would get the benefit?

In the Old Testament we are told that, when the Israelites journeyed thru the desert, they were hungered, and that God sent down out of the heavens—manna. There was enough for all of them, and they all took it and were relieved. But, supposing that desert had been held as private property, as the soil of Great Britain is held; as the soil even of our new States is being held. Supposing that one

of the Israelites had a square mile, and another one had twenty square miles, and another one had a hundred square miles, and the great majority of the Israelites did not have enough to set the soles of their feet upon, which they could call their own—what would become of the manna? What good would it have done to the majority? Not a whit. Tho God had sent down manna enough for all, that manna would have been the property of the landholders; they would have employed some of the others, perhaps, to gather it up in heaps for them, and would have sold it to the hungry brethren. Consider it; this purchase and sale of manna might have gone on until the majority of the Israelites had given up all they had, even to the clothes off their backs. What then? Well, then they would not have had anything left with which to buy manna, and the consequence would have been that while they went hungry the manna would be lying in great heaps, and the landowners would be complaining about the over-production of manna. There would have been a great harvest of manna and hungry people, just precisely the phenomenon that we see today.

I cannot go over all the points I would like to; but I wish to call your attention to the utter absurdity of private property in land! Why, consider it—the idea of a man selling the earth—the earth, our common mother. A man selling that which no man produced. A man passing title from one generation to another. Why, it is the most absurd thing in the world. Did you ever think of this? What right has a dead man to land? For whom was this earth created? It was created for the living, certainly not for the dead. Well, now, we treat it as tho it was created for the dead. Where do our land titles come from? They come from men who, for the most part, have passed and gone. Here, in this new country, you get a little nearer the original source; but go to the Eastern States, and go over the Atlantic. There you may clearly see the power that comes from land-ownership.

As I say, the man that owns the land is the master of those who must live on it. Here is a modern instance: you who are familiar with the history of the Scottish church know that in the forties there was a disruption in the church. You who have read Hugh Miller's work on "The Cruise of the Betsy" know something about it; how a great body, led by Dr. Chalmers, came out from the Established Church and said they would set up a Free Church. In the Established Church were a great many of the landowners. Some of them, like the

Duke of Buccleuch, owning miles and miles of land on which no common Scotsman had a right to put his foot save by the Duke of Buccleuch's permission. These landowners refused not only to allow these Free Churchmen to have ground upon which to erect a church, but they would not let them stand on their land and worship God. You who have read "The Cruise of the Betsy" know that it is the story of a clergyman who was obliged to make his home in a boat on the wild sea, because he was not allowed to have land

enough to live on. In many places the people had to take the Sacrament with the tide coming to their knees—many a man lost his life worshipping on the roads, in the rain and snow. They were not permitted to go on Mr. Landlord's land and worship God, and had to take to the roads. The Duke of Buccleuch stood out for seven years, compelling people to worship on the roads, until finally, relenting a little, he allowed them to do so in a gravel pit; whereupon they passed a resolution of thanks to his Grace.

## Not Land, but Its Income and Value

But that is not what I wanted to tell you. The thing that struck me was this significant fact: as soon as the disruption occurred the Free Church, composed of a great many able men, at once sent a deputation to the landlords to ask permission for Scotsmen to worship God in Scotland and in their own way. This deputation set out for London—they had to go to London, England, to get permission for Scotsmen to worship God in Scotland and in their own native home!

But that is not the most absurd thing. In one place, when they were refused land upon which to stand and worship God, the late landowner had died and his estate was in the hands of the trustees, and the answer of the trustees was that, so far as they were concerned, they would exceedingly like to allow them to have a place to put up a church to worship, but they could not conscientiously do it, because they knew that such a course would be very displeasing to the late Mr. Monaltie! Now, this dead man had gone to heaven, let us hope; at any rate he had gone away from this world, but, lest it might displease him, men yet living could not worship God. Is it possible for absurdity to go any further?

You may say that those Scottish people are a very absurd people, but they are not a whit more so than we are: I read only a little while ago of some Long Island fishermen who had been paying a rent for the privilege of fishing there, a certain part of the catch. They paid it because they believed that James II., a dead man centuries ago, a man who never put his foot in America, a king who was kicked off the English throne, had said they had to pay it, and they got up a committee, went to the county town and searched the records. They could not find anything in the records to show that James II. had ever ordered that they should give any of their fish to anybody, and

so they refused to pay any longer. But if they had found that James II. had really said they should, they would have gone on paying. Can anything be more absurd?

There is a square in New York—Stuyvesant Square—it is locked up at six o'clock every evening, even on long summer evenings. Why is it locked up? Why are the children not allowed to play there? Why, because old Mr. Stuyvesant, dead and gone I don't know how many years ago, so willed it. Now, can anything be more absurd? Yet that is not any more absurd than our land titles. From whom do they come? Dead man after dead man. Suppose you get on the cars here going to Council Bluffs or Chicago. You find a passenger with his baggage strewn over the seats. You say, "Will you give me a seat, if you please, sir?" He replies, "No; I bought this seat." "Bought this seat? From whom did you buy it?" "I bought it from the man who got out at the last station." That is the way we manage this earth of ours.

Is it not a self-evident truth, as Thomas Jefferson said, that "the land belongs in usufruct to the living," and that they who have died have left it, and have no power to say how it shall be disposed of? Title to land! Where can a man get any title which makes the earth his property?

There is a sacred right to property—sacred because ordained by the laws of nature, that is to say, by the law of God, and necessary to social order and civilization. That is the right of property in things produced by labor; it rests on the right of a man to himself. That which a man produces, that is his against all the world, to give or to keep, to lend, to sell or to bequeath; but how can he get such a right to land when it was here before he came? Individual claims to land rest only on appropriation. I read in a recent number of the "Nine-