

any good from it, look where you please. Go out to the new lands, where my attention was first called to it, or go to the heart of the capital of the world—London. Everywhere, when your eyes are once opened, you will see its inequality and you will see its absurdity. You do not have to go farther than Burlington. You have here a most beautiful site for a city, but the city itself, as compared with what it might be, is a miserable straggling town. A gentleman showed me today a big hole alongside one of your streets. The place has been filled up all around it, and this hole is left. It is neither pretty nor useful. Why does that hole stay there? Well, it stays there because somebody claims it as his private property. There is a man, this gentleman told me, who wished to grade another lot, and wanted somewhere to put the dirt he took off it, and he offered to buy this hole so that he might fill it up. Now,

it would have been a good thing for Burlington to have it filled up, a good thing for you all—your town would look better, and you yourselves would be in no danger of tumbling into it some dark night. Why, my friend pointed out to me another similar hole in which water had collected, and told me that two children had been drowned there. And he likewise told me that a drunken man some years ago had fallen into such a hole, and had brought a suit against the city which cost you taxpayers some \$11,000. Clearly it is to the interests of you all to have that particular hole I am talking of filled up. The man who wanted to fill it up offered the hole-owner \$300. But the hole-owner refused the offer, and declares he will hold out until he can get \$1,000; and, in the meanwhile, that unsightly and dangerous hole must remain. That is but an illustration of private property in land.

“No Tax and a Pension for Everybody”

You may see the same thing all over this country. See how injuriously in the agricultural districts this thing of private property in land effects the roads and the distances between the people. A man does not take what land he wants, what he can use; but he takes all he can get, and the consequence is that his next neighbor has to go further along, people are separated from each other further than they ought to be, to the increased difficulty of production, to the loss of neighborhood and companionship. They have more roads to maintain than they can decently maintain; they must do more work to get the same results, and life is in every way harder and drearier.

When you come to the cities, it is just the other way. In the country the people are too much scattered; in the great cities they are too crowded. Go to a city like New York, and there they are jammed together like sardines in a box, living family upon family, one above the other. It is an utterly unnatural and unwholesome life. How can you have anything like a home in a tenement of two or three rooms? How can children be brought up healthily with no place to play? Two or three weeks ago I read of a New York judge who fined two little boys five dollars for playing hop-scotch on the street—where else could they play? Private property in land had robbed them of all place to play. Even a temperance man, who had investigated the subject, said that in his opinion the gin palaces of London were a positive good in this, that they en-

abled the people whose abodes were dark and squalid rooms to see a little brightness, and thus prevent them from going wholly mad.

What is the reason for this overcrowding of cities? There is no natural reason. Take New York, one-half of its area is not built upon. Why, then, must people crowd together as they do there? Simply because of private ownership of land. There is plenty of room to build houses, and plenty of people who want to build houses, but before anybody can build a house a blackmail price must be paid to some dog-in-the-manger. It costs, in many cases, more to get vacant ground upon which to build a house than it does to build the house. And then what happens to the man who pays this blackmail and builds a house? Down comes the tax-gatherer and fines him for building the house.

It is so all over the United States—the men who improve, the men who turn the prairie into farms, and the desert into gardens, the men who beautify your cities, are taxed and fined for having done these things. Now, nothing is clearer than that the people of New York want more houses; and I think that even here in Burlington you could get along with more houses. Why, then, should you fine a man that builds one? Look all over this country—the bulk of the taxation rests upon the improver; the man who puts up a building or establishes a factory, or cultivates a farm, he is taxed for it; and not merely taxed for it, but I think, in nine cases out of ten, the land

which he uses, the bare land, is taxed more than the adjoining lot, or the adjoining 160 acres that some speculator is holding as a mere dog-in-the-manger, not using it himself, and not allowing anybody else to use it.

I am talking too long; but let me, in a few words, point out the way of getting rid of land monopoly, securing the right of all to the elements which are necessary for life. We could not divide the land. In a rude state of society, as among the ancient Hebrews, giving each family its lot, and making it inalienable, we might secure something like equality. But in a complex civilization that will not suffice. It is not, however, necessary to divide up the land. All that is necessary is to divide up the income that comes from the land. In that way we can secure absolute equality; nor could the adoption of this principle involve any rude shock or violent change. It can be brought about gradually and easily by abolishing the taxes that now rest upon capital, labor, and improvements, and raising all our public revenues by the taxation of land values; and the longer you think of it the clearer you will see that in every possible way it will be a benefit.

Now, supposing we should abolish all other taxes, direct and indirect, substituting for them a tax upon land values, what would be the effect? In the first place, it would be to kill speculative values. It would be to remove from the newer parts of the country the bulk of the taxation, and put it on the richer parts. It would be to exempt the pioneer from taxation, and make the larger cities pay more of it. It would be to relieve energy and enterprise, capital and labor, from all those burdens that now bear upon them. What a start that would give to production! In the second place, we could, from the value of land, not merely pay all the present expenses of government, but we could do infinitely more. In the city of San Francisco, James Lick left a few blocks of ground to be used for public purposes there, and the rent amounts to so much, that out of it will be built the largest telescope in the world, large public baths, and other public buildings, and various costly monuments. If, instead of these few blocks, the whole value of the land upon which the city is built had accrued to San Francisco, what could she not do?

So in this little town, where land values are very low as compared with such cities as Chicago and San Francisco, you could do many things for mutual benefit and public improvement did you appropriate to public purposes the land values that now go to individuals. You could have a great free library; you could

have an art gallery; you could get yourselves a public park, a magnificent public park too. You have here one of the finest natural sites for a beautiful town that I know of, and I have traveled much. You might make on this site a city that it would be a pleasure to live in. You will not, as you go now—oh! no! Why, the very fact that you have a magnificent view here will cause somebody to hold on all the more tightly to the land that commands this view, and charge higher prices for it. The State of New York wants to buy a strip of land so as to enable the people to see the Niagara, but what a price she must pay for it! Look at all the great cities; in Philadelphia, for instance, in order to build their great city hall they had to block up the only two wide streets they had in the city. Everywhere you go you may see how private property in land prevents public as well as private improvement.

But I have no time to enter further into details. I can only ask you to think upon this thing, and the more you will see its desirability. As an English friend of mine puts it, "No taxes and a pension for everybody"; and why should it not be? To take land values for public purposes is not really to impose a tax, but to take for public purposes a value created by the community. And out of the fund which would thus accrue from the common property, we might, without degradation to anybody, provide enough actually to secure from want all who were deprived of their natural protectors, or met with accident; or any man who should grow so old that he could not work. All prating that is heard from some quarters about its hurting the common people to give them what they do not work for is humbug. The truth is, that anything that injures self-respect, degrades, does harm; but if you give it as a right, as something to which every citizen is entitled, it does not degrade. Charity schools do degrade the children that are sent to them, but public schools do not.

But all such benefits as these; while great, would be incidental. The great thing would be that the reform I propose would tend to open opportunities to labor and enable men to provide employment for themselves. That is the great advantage. We should gain the enormous productive power that is going to waste all over the country, the power of idle hands that would gladly be at work. And that removed, then you would see wages begin to mount.

It is not that everyone would turn farmer, or everyone build himself a house if he had an opportunity for doing so, but so

many could, and would, as to relieve the pressure on the labor market and provide employment for all others. And as wages mounted to the higher levels then you would see the productive power increased. The country where wages are high is the country of greatest productive power. Where wages are highest there will invention be most active; there will labor be most intelligent; there will be the greatest yield for the expenditure of exertion.

The more you think of it the more clearly you will see what I say is true. I cannot hope to convince you in talking for an hour or two, but I shall be content if I shall put you upon inquiry. Think for yourselves; ask yourselves whether this widespread fact of poverty is not a crime, and a crime for which everyone of us, man and woman, who does not do what he or she can do to call attention to it and to do away with it, is responsible.

**Let the standard be lifted that all may see it;
Let the advance be sounded that all may hear it.
Let those who would fall back, fall back,
Let those who would oppose, oppose—
Everywhere are those who will rally.
The stars in their courses fight against Sisera!**

HENRY
GEORGE

Sisera was the Cananite general who led King Jabin's army against the rebels of Israel when they demanded the immediate restoration of the land to the people. The prophetess Deborah, who foretold his death, composed a great song for the victory, in which occurs—"The stars in their courses fought against Sisera!" (Judges).

SHORTSIGHTED is the philosophy which counts on selfishness as the master motive of human action. It is blind to facts of which the world is full. It sees not the present, and reads not the past aright. If you would move men to action, to what shall you appeal? Not to their pockets, but to their patriotism, not to selfishness, but to sympathy. Self-interest is, as it were, a mechanical force—potent, it is true; capable of large and wide results. But there is in human nature what may be likened to a chemical force; which melts and fuses and overwhelms; to which nothing seems impossible. "All that a man hath will he give for his life"—that is self-interest. But in loyalty to higher impulses men will give even life.

It is not selfishness that enriches the annals of every people with heroes and saints. It is not selfishness that on every page of the world's history bursts out in sudden splendor of noble deeds or sheds the soft radiance of benignant lives. It was not selfishness that turned Gautama's back to his royal home or bade the Maid of Orleans lift the sword from the altar; that held the Three Hundred in the Pass of Thermopylae, or gathered into Winkelried's bosom the sheaf of spears; that chained Vincent de Paul to the bench of the galley, or brought little starving children, during the Indian famine, tottering to the relief stations with yet weaker starvelings in their arms. Call it religion, patriotism, sympathy, the enthusiasm for humanity, or the love of God—give it what name you will; there is yet a force which overcomes and drives out selfishness; a force which is the electricity of the moral universe; a force beside which all others are weak. Everywhere that men have lived it has shown its power, and today, as ever, the world is full of it. To be pitied is the man who has never seen and never felt it. Look around! among common men and women, amid the care and the struggle of daily life, in the jar of the noisy street and amid the squalor where want hides—every here and there is the darkness lighted with the tremulous play of its lambent flames. He who has not seen it has walked with shut eyes. He who looks may see, as says Plutarch, that "the soul has a principle of kindness in itself, and is born to love, as well as to perceive, think, or remember."

—Henry George.

Let the time-servers, the demagogues, the compromisers, to whom nothing is right and nothing is wrong, but who are always seeking to find some half-way house between right and wrong—let them all go their ways. Any cause which can lay hold of a great truth is the stronger without them. If the earnest men among the Irish leaders abandon their present half-hearted, illogical position, and take their stand frankly and firmly upon the principle that the youngest child of the poorest peasant has as good a right to tread the soil and breathe the air of Ireland as the eldest son of the proudest duke, they will have put their fight on the right line. Present defeat will but pave the way for future victory, and each step won makes easier the next. Their position will be not only logically defensible, but will prove the stronger the more it is discussed; for private property in land—which never arises from the natural perceptions of men, but springs historically from usurpation and robbery—is something so utterly absurd, so outrageously unjust, so clearly a waste of productive forces and a barrier to the most profitable

use of natural opportunities, so thoroughly opposed to all sound maxims of public policy, so glaringly in the way of further progress, that it is only tolerated because the majority of men never think about it or hear it questioned. Once fairly arraign it, and it must be condemned; once call upon its advocates to exhibit its claims, and their cause is lost in advance. —H. G.

It seems to me certain that the moral faculties constitute a truer guide than the intellectual faculties, and that what, in reality, we should never forget, is not that the moral faculties are untrustworthy, but that those faculties may be dulled by refusal to heed them, and distorted by the promptings of selfishness. So true, so ineradicable is the moral sense, that where selfishness or passion would outrage it, the intellectual faculties are always called upon to supply excuse. No unjust war was ever begun without some pretense of asserting right or redressing wrong, or, despite themselves, of doing some good to the conquered. No petty thief but makes for himself some justification. It is doubtful if any deliberate wrong is ever committed, it is certain no wrongful course of action is ever continued, without the framing of some theory which may dull or placate the moral sense.

And while as to things apprehended solely by the intellectual faculties the greatest diversities of perception have obtained and still obtain among men, and those perceptions constantly change with the growth of knowledge, there is a striking consensus of moral perceptions. In all stages of social development, and under all forms of religion, no matter how distorted by selfish motives and intellectual perversions, truth, justice, and benevolence have ever been esteemed, and all our intellectual progress has given us no higher moral ideals than have obtained among primitive peoples. —Henry George.

OMITTED FROM THE SPOON RIVER ANTHOLOGY

(Without apology to Edgar Lee Masters, but with the feeling rather that he owes an apology for the omission.)

I was the leading single taxer in
Spoon River.

I organized its first singletax club
I once saw Henry George himself
And I knew Louis F. Post
And Daniel Kiefer.

I wrote articles for the press
About taxation problems,
Was a fluent talker
And could prove the falsities of
Karl Marx to anybody
But a socialist.

I was called the John Z. White
Of Spoon River.

We had a flourishing club,
With after dinner lectures and
discussions

Once a month—regular.
And weekly luncheons at which
we discussed the shipping bill
or the currency question
And entertained any noted person
Who came to Spoon River.

Singletax became favorably known
To the Better Elements of Society.
The congregational minister
Preached a sermon on it.
We had a debate at the high
school,
"Resolved that single singletax is
scientific."

We had an exclusive membership
Of cultured persons
Tirelessly devoted to the cause of
Rational taxation.

If I had lived another year
I would have gone to the legis-
lature

Where I could have scrutinized
Every measure
In its relation to the Philosophy
Of singletax.

But there arose in our midst
A band of irresponsible agitators
Who stirred up the people
To open the land!
They were emotionalists
And would not discuss calmly a
compromise with those who do
not care for the immediate
Practise of their preaching.

They ranted about the army of
disemployed,
About women driven to prostitu-
tion,
Men toiling for a pittance,
Children as wage slaves,
Babes starving.
They joined with socialists,
Anarchists, syndicalists, I.W.W's:
People like that!

With anybody who would struggle
To change the land tenure
To use and occupancy
Right away!

I opposed them eloquently
And with stratagem
For their radical demands
Would alienate from our Cause
The growing tolerance of the
corporations and business men,
The interest of the politicians
And the curiosity of club women,
Bankers, leading citizens, the
daily press
Would view us with distrust.

Could anything be worse
For the success of a Forward
Movement?
I tried to rally the old war horses
To stand by their colors
And preserve the sacred
And respectable
Singletax philosophy
In unsullied purity
From these anarchists
And disturbers.

But the agitators
Had the voting strength,
So Mrs. Jonesburg and I resigned
And started a Singletax Philo-
mathic Society
For the discussion of proper
methods
To alleviate poverty
Three-quarters of an inch a year
Without causing any annoyance
To Existing Conditions.

If I had lived
We might have rehabilitated
Singletax in respectable circles.
But the idea
Of unscientific people
Led by agitators
Demanding the whole earth
Immediately!
Was too great a shock.

They said I died
Of heart failure.
But I don't understand that
For the autopsy surgeons
Couldn't find such an organ
And said it had probably
Been absorbed
In my brain development.