

# Land and Freedom

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## Current Comment

**I**N *America*, that well edited weekly organ of Catholic thought, Rev. M. J. Smith, S. J., says:

What member of the "white collar" class would be rash enough to build a home of his own at the price such an undertaking involves today?

No increase in salary adequate to such an enterprise can reasonably be expected.

*No legislation competent to cope with the problem is even proposed.* No disposition to adjust the high cost of living to fit the average clerk's income is discernable in the markets of life's necessities. The best that the small salaried man can hope for is a decent flat for his growing family, but a flat is not a home. *Without true homes our priceless heritage of freedom shrinks;* without genuine homes, religion wanes. The nation needs the growing family; religion blesses it. Its only natural and secure harbor is the home.

**I**T is gratifying to find religious publications discussing the problem in this spirit. The Catholic Church numbers among its adherents an overwhelming proportion of what we call the "working class"—the wage workers of the nation. Very intimately are its own growth and stability bound up with the welfare of this class; religion cannot flourish in such surroundings as hedge in so many families in centers of civilization, and from this the church must suffer both in the number and character of its members. Father Smith has stated the problem clearly.

**B**UT he is mistaken in saying that no legislation competent to cope with the problem is even proposed. None, it is true, in our legislatures; there the remedy is not even whispered. But it was proposed by Bishop Nulty, of Meath, Ireland, many years ago; it forms the substance of an elaborate treatise in a work entitled *Progress and Poverty*, and it is put forward by many earnest minded men and women in our own day as a remedy for the conditions Father Smith describes. Surely he is not unacquainted with it.

**T**HERE are poor in all churches, but the Catholic Church is preeminently the church of the poor—that is her enviable distinction. It is among her glorious traditions that her comforting hand has soothed their sorrows, has ministered to them in their sickness, has watched over and aided in their struggles; no other agency was so much a part of their lives, none bore so intimate a relation to them. It is small wonder that those whose lives

are dedicated to her service should begin to concern themselves not merely with the problems of the individual poor, but with the larger problem that concerns them as a class, and whose special interests, if they can be called special, will be found to include the welfare of all classes.

**T**HE legislation to cope with the problem *has* been proposed; the solution is ready. And it has been declared by the learned doctors of the great Catholic University at Washington, D. C., to contain nothing contrary to Catholic teachings. Any Catholic is at liberty to accept or reject it. Will not *America* open its columns to the discussion of the real remedy for the housing problem—and thus bring about a condition in which the ideal home may be something which every young couple may hope to realize, and where the religious ties that bind them to the Church may have room to grow in their affections?

**P**RESIDENT GREEN, of the American Federation of Labor, has announced that he will ask the next Congress to withdraw the tariff protection on textiles owing to the movement of the New England textile manufacturers to reduce wages. And why not? Is not the tariff supposed to protect American labor? Surely it is not to protect American "profits"? Yet obviously the purpose is by increasing profits to enable the manufacturer to pay higher wages. These profits pass from the consumer who pays them to the manufacturer, and the manufacturer pays part of these higher profits in higher wages. This is the theory. That it doesn't work that way is nothing to the Republican politicians who every four years appeal to the workers to keep them in power in order that the tariff may be retained in all its preposterous schedules—Schedule K being the most preposterous of them all.

**O**F course, manufacturers proceed on no such theory that where profits are increased, increased wages follow as a consequence. They pay only such wages as they are compelled to pay. These are regulated by conditions of the labor market, not at all by the earnings of the mills or the prices obtainable. The tariff may and frequently does enable them to reap greater profits through increased prices—and that is what the tariff is for. And if here and there some generous manufacturer raises wages because he has made larger profits, he is a rare bird and his example is not generally emulated.