

# Land and Freedom

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## Comment and Reflection

IT is comparatively easy to draw a picture of what appears to be on its face the ebb-tide of a civilization. What goes to embellish life is founded on the well-being of the people. Poverty is the foe of all social advance, of spiritual and intellectual as well as material progress. Its benumbing influence extends not only to the lower intellectual strata but reaches up and strikes at every manifestation of genius, at every attempt to enshrine beauty in literature and the arts.

AT first the influence is not recognized. We are so much the slaves of conventional thinking that the last thing to be perceived is a decline in our own artistic and spiritual life. Presumably because we are a part of it we cannot look either in or out, so it comes upon us and passes at least to most persons all unnoticed.

SUPPOSE we take account of the signs of decline which are most obvious and will be most readily admitted. Let us start with literature. We have many clever books, clever but little more, the sensations of a few months. Not a single work of genius among the lot, none that can compare with Dickens, Scott, Thackeray, Eliot, or Reade. Poetry, some of it clever, too, but not a single poet deserving to be compared with the masters. Markham writes no more, Edna St. Vincent Millay, not so good as she was, the current magazine verse almost incomprehensible.

ART almost dead save for the outrages committed by pen and brush that make one shriek. Music bidding farewell to its last great conductor, Toscanini, to whom his country fed castor oil on his refusal to take part in a cheap patriotic production that degraded his art. Self-banished from Italy he might say in behalf of his fellows, "We who are about to die salute you." This despite Mussolini's belated apology for his over-zealous local Fascist official.

IT will be generally agreed, we think, that there has been a marked decline in journalism. It is difficult to feature William R. Hearst as a successor to Dana, Greeley, Watterson, *et al.* And in the field of statesmanship Carter Glass and Cordell Hull stand almost alone. Do we not

recall the time when the old parties could summon outstanding leaders, Democrats like Grover Cleveland and Carlisle, Republicans like Senator Hoar and Congressman Reed, with all their limitations, and many others who might be named. Here the decline is most obvious and will be most readily admitted.

IT may seem like over-simplification to say that this decline springs from poverty. Yet general poverty in material goods inevitably determines the kind of poverty that manifests itself in mediocrity in literature and the arts. There is no escape from it.

WHAT is the hope, if any? We think it resides in the enquiring nature of the young now gradually awakening. We think the system is cracking under their criticism and questioning. The success of the Henry George School is partly due to this new spirit. Ours is a tremendous responsibility. If it be not too late the forces working for the destruction of civilization may be arrested and overcome. We are living in great times. No such opportunity has ever confronted mankind, no such hope has ever blazoned the sky with rainbow promise. The alternative is a future where darkness reigns, and beauty and art and culture decline.

IN the philosophy of freedom is the germ of a new renaissance. Perhaps it is not too late to sound the tocsin call to the struggle that must be waged for liberty. Not merely is it material poverty that must be abolished but that intellectual and spiritual poverty so plainly obvious in every social group, from the lowest to the highest. It is no mere pessimism that impels us to this picture of modern society. Not to recognize it is to walk blindfold in a world where tragic things are happening and where no great voice is raised to call us back to reasonableness. The skies are very dark. All that has been promised by prophets and seers seems to have come to naught. And to it all political economy as it is taught, religion as it is preached, statesmanship as practised, seem to have no answer.

BUT there is hope, and that is in the questioning spirit of the young, as we have said. This questioning

may increase in volume and intensity. If this is to be the system is doomed. Ten thousand graduates of the Henry George School do not seem very formidable in a nation of one hundred and thirty million. But ten thousand who think straight and who are animated by spiritual conviction are to be reckoned with. And as the years go this group will be multiplied many fold. Then something will happen.

## Henry Clay an Advocate of Protection and Low Wages

**H**ENRY CLAY was the Father of the American Protective Tariff. At least he is called so, though there seems some doubt about the paternity. The honor, such as it is, should perhaps go to Henry C. Carey, who expressed a wish that the ocean might be a sea of fire, in which case there would be nothing imported and a perfectly "favorable balance of trade" be forever assured!

But it will be news to most persons that Clay advocated a protective tariff as a device for lowering wages rather than increasing them. He saw that the higher wages prevailing in America were due to the public domain which provided an outlet for labor. He believed that a high tariff would encourage the coming of lower wage laborers for our manufacturers. This school of protection to which he belonged advocated a high tariff to encourage immigration of low paid labor to build up our infant manufacturing. Congressman William D. Kelley, known in the House as "Pig Iron Kelley," said in March, 1872. "Yes men are on the free list. They cost us not even freight. . . . We promote free trade in men and it is the only free trade I am prepared to promote."

From 1810 to 1850 Clay was the protection leader. During this period England was a protection country. Pauperism was wide-spread in Great Britain. Clay argued that if protection made paupers, which he seemed to think it did, it made at the same time enough wealthy men to support them. In the light of what so many people believe, this almost incredible teaching of the Father of American Protection will come as a shock. But it was in March, 1824, that Clay said (and if this meets the eye of any protectionist he is asked to reflect upon it:)

"As to the poor rates, the theme of so much reproach without England and so much regret within it among her speculative writers, the system was a strong proof no less of her unbounded wealth than of her pauperism. What other nation can dispense, in the form of requested charity, the enormous sum, I believe, of ten or twelve millions sterling. The number of British paupers was the result of pressing the principle of population to its utmost limits, by her protecting policy, in the creation of wealth, and in placing the rest of the world under tribute to her industry. Doubtless the condition of England would be

better without paupers (*sic*) if in other respects it remained the same. But in her actual circumstances, the poor system has the salutary effect of an equalizing corrective of the tendency to the concentration of riches, produced by the genius of her political institutions, and by her prohibitory system."

That protection can increase wages is, of course, the shallowest kind of deception. And it is well for a moment to go back to a time when the protectionist school made no such defense of the system but frankly based it upon the need of cheaper labor for our nascent industries.

## What are Monopolies?

**W**HAT are monopolies? According to the sloppy economists who represent current thinking they are Big Business, Corporations, Chain and Department Stores, and Combinations of Capital.

None of these things are monopolies save as they share in natural resources or participate in the receipt of economic rent, or are endowed with special privileges by government.

The only really effective monopoly is the ownership of the earth.

The largely ineffective monopolies are protected industries because, subject to the inroads of competition and at the mercy of other and stronger monopolies, chief among which is the monopoly of the earth, the source of their products.

Railroads are monopolies in so far as they control the rights of way, the ownership of land in strips rather than plots. The United States Steel Company is only a monopoly in so far as it controls the sources of supply. There can be no monopoly in cars, rails or equipment. You cannot monopolize the products of labor.

Capital in a free economy is in a state of flux. So is Labor. They move to the highest bidder. They will flow into channels which offer the greater percentage above the normal return. Edward Atkinson long ago calculated that the difference of one-tenth of one per cent a yard in the cost of manufacture would determine what country would hold the cotton goods trade of the world.

So powerful is competition that it frequently overleaps the barriers created against it and sweeps on its way in the destruction of combinations, as occurred some years ago in the defeat of the attempt to corner cotton.

There is one point to be kept always in mind. That is that there is no real monopoly apart from the monopoly of the earth, or monopoly conferred by government, let us say in the form of patents. Monopolies do not spring spontaneously in the natural operation of industry. They are not inherent in the nature of industry. *But competition is.*

Combinations are something else. These are often mistaken for monopolies by loose thinkers. Despite the size of combinations they are forever at the mercy of