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A SYLLABUS OF  
"Progress and Poverty"

*By* LOUIS F. POST



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[NOTE.—I have often heard it said that "Progress and Poverty" ought to be condensed in order to enable those who have no time to master so large a book to lightly familiarize themselves with its reasonings; but this is impossible because "Progress and Poverty" is itself a remarkable condensation. This is probably one of the reasons why so many readers of the book fail to fully grasp the chain of its reasoning, and that after one reading and sometimes after several, there are apt to arise in their minds objections which seem new, but which are fully answered in the book itself. A still stronger reason for this arises from the very strength and clearness of the argument. To most readers who have made no previous study of political economy it is as if they passed through a forest under the lead of an experienced guide. The way seems at the time not only perfectly obvious, but the only possible way to take, and they fail to note the bearings and land marks of the path they have traveled. But when memory of the details of the journey begins to fade away and they try to travel over the path alone or to lead others over it, they come to difficulties they cannot remember to have encountered. "Progress and Poverty" is pre-eminently what one of its earliest critics said of it—not a book to be merely read, but a book to be studied.

While a condensation of the work is impossible, it has seemed to me that an abstract of the leading principles of its constructive argument would be extremely useful to its readers who may desire to study it, and might induce others to become readers, if not students. Much of the book is necessarily taken up with the work of demolishing false theories that have blocked the way and usurped the true theory; this I have passed by, and eliminating argument and illustration, have endeavored by a brief syllabus to bring into relief the thread of the constructive inquiry. In doing so I have endeavored to preserve as much as possible the language of the author.

LOUIS F. POST.]

#### INTRODUCTORY.—THE PROBLEM.

What is the cause of recurring industrial depressions in which capital wastes while labor stands idle, and there is widespread want with a seeming excess in productive forces? That there must be a common cause is shown from the existence of these conditions in all progressive countries, and that that cause is either material progress or something connected with material progress is shown by the fact that the phenomena which we speak of as industrial depressions are but intensifications of phenomena which accompany material progress. WHAT IS THE LAW WHICH ASSOCIATES POVERTY WITH PROGRESS AND INCREASES WANT WITH ADVANCING WEALTH? It must be within the province of political economy to discover it. Political economy is a science which in the sequence of certain phenomena seeks to trace mutual relations and to identify cause and effect, just as the physical sciences seek to do in other sets of phenomena. Its processes consist simply in identification and separation, and its premises are axioms of every-day life which may be reduced to the metaphysical expression of the physical law that motion seeks the line of least resistance, viz., that MEN SEEK TO GRATIFY THEIR DESIRES WITH THE LEAST EXERTION.

## BOOK I.—WAGES AND CAPITAL.

CHAPTER I.—The cause which produces poverty in the midst of advancing wealth is the cause which exhibits itself in the tendency of wages to a minimum. In compact form, therefore, the inquiry is: WHY, IN SPITE OF INCREASE IN PRODUCTIVE POWER, DO WAGES TEND TO A MINIMUM WHICH WILL GIVE BUT A BARE LIVING?

CHAPTER II.—Let us first fix the meaning of our terms: WAGES includes all returns for exertion, as distinguished from returns for the use of capital and returns for the use of land.—CAPITAL includes things which are neither land nor labor, but which have resulted from the union of land and labor, and are devoted to the aid of further production. Nothing can be capital that is not wealth. But all wealth is not capital. Only that part of wealth is capital which is devoted to the aid of production, *i. e.*, wealth in course of transmutation or exchange.—Only such things are WEALTH the production of which increases and the destruction of which decreases aggregate wealth. These things consist of natural products that have been secured, moved, combined, separated, or in other ways modified by human exertion so as to fit them for the satisfaction of human desires.—LAND includes the whole material universe outside of man himself, for it is only by having access to land that man can come in contact with or use nature. It embraces all natural materials, forces and opportunities, and is the field or environment in which man finds himself, the storehouse from which his needs must be supplied, the raw material upon which, and the forces with which, alone his labor can act.

CHAPTER III.—WAGES ARE PRODUCED BY THE LABOR FOR WHICH THEY ARE PAID. When the laborer is his own employer this is plain enough. It is equally plain when, though working for another or with another's capital, he receives his wages in kind. Also when the wages, though estimated in kind, are paid in money. And it is no less true when the wages are fixed. The payment of wages always implies the previous rendering of labor, and the rendering of labor implies the production of wealth, which, if it is to be exchanged or used in production, is capital; therefore, the paying out of capital in wages presupposes a production of capital by the labor. It is never as an employer that any one needs capital; when he needs capital it is because he is not only an employer of labor, but a merchant or speculator in or an accumulator of the products of labor.

CHAPTER IV.—Before a work which will not immediately result in wealth available for subsistence can be carried on it is not necessary that there exist such a stock of subsistence as will support the laborers during the process; it is only necessary that there be, somewhere within the circle of exchange, a contemporaneous production of sufficient subsistence for the laborers and a willingness to exchange this for the thing on which the labor is being bestowed. Consumption is supported by contemporaneous production and THE DEMAND FOR CONSUMPTION DETERMINES THE DIRECTION IN WHICH LABOR WILL BE EXPENDED IN PRODUCTION. Each laborer in aiding in the production of what other producers want is directing other labor to the production of the things he wants—in effect, producing them himself. If he makes jack knives and eats wheat, the wheat is as much the

produce of his labor as if he had grown it for himself and left wheat growers to make their own jack knives.

CHAPTER V.—Capital increases the power of labor, (1) by enabling labor to apply itself in more effective ways; (2) by enabling labor to avail itself of the reproductive forces of nature; and (3) by permitting the division of labor. Capital does not supply the materials which labor works up into wealth; they are supplied by nature. It does not advance wages; they are produced by labor. It does not maintain laborers; they are maintained by their labor; exchanging what they produce for what they need. Capital, therefore, does not limit industry; the only limit to industry being the access to natural material.

#### BOOK II.—POPULATION AND SUBSISTENCE.

Chapter I. of this book is devoted to an explanation of the Malthusian theory that population naturally tends to increase faster than subsistence; Chapter II. to an investigation of the facts on which that theory rests; Chapter III. to a consideration of the analogies with which it is illustrated and defended; and Chapter IV. to a presentation of the facts which disprove the theory. These chapters show not only that the tendency of wages to a minimum is not due to growth of population, but that growth of population actually increases productive power, and therefore ought to make wages higher.

#### BOOK III.—THE LAWS OF DISTRIBUTION.

CHAPTER I.—The answer to our inquiry cannot be found in the laws of production, and must be sought in the laws of distribution. The factors of production

are land, labor and capital, and the whole produce is primarily distributed into three corresponding parts. Three terms are therefore needed, each of which shall clearly express one of these parts to the exclusion of the others. RENT expresses the first, which goes to the owners of LAND; WAGES the second, which constitutes the return to LABOR; and INTEREST the third, which is the return for the use of CAPITAL. The income of any individual may be made up from any one, two or all three of these sources, but in seeking the laws of distribution they must be kept separate.

CHAPTER II.—The term "rent" differs from the word as ordinarily used. It is narrower, because it does not include payments for the use of buildings, etc., and broader because it may exist where the same person is both owner and user of land. It is also expressed in a selling price, which is rent commuted or capitalized. Rent is the share in products of labor which exclusive right to the use of land gives to the owner. As to THE LAW OF RENT, the accepted dictum of the current political economy has the self-evident character of a geometric axiom. It is: THE RENT OF LAND IS DETERMINED BY THE EXCESS OF ITS PRODUCE OVER THAT WHICH THE SAME APPLICATION CAN SECURE FROM THE LEAST PRODUCTIVE LAND IN USE. This law applies to land used for other purposes than agriculture and to all natural agencies. It may be better understood in this form: THE OWNERSHIP OF A NATURAL AGENT OF PRODUCTION WILL GIVE THE POWER OF APPROPRIATING SO MUCH OF THE WEALTH PRODUCED BY THE EXERTION OF LABOR AND CAPITAL UPON IT AS EXCEEDS THE RETURN WHICH THE SAME APPLICATION OF LABOR AND CAPITAL COULD SECURE IN THE LEAST

PRODUCTIVE OCCUPATION IN WHICH THEY FREELY ENGAGE. This is the same thing, for there is no occupation in which labor and capital can engage which does not require the use of land. The law of rent is the law of competition, and rests upon the fundamental principle that "men seek to gratify their desires with the least exertion." ITS COROLLARIES ARE THE LAW OF WAGES AND OF INTEREST. No matter what production results from the application of labor and capital, these two factors will receive only such part as they could have produced on land free to them without the payment of rent; for

As  $\text{Produce} = \text{Rent} + \text{Wages} + \text{Interest}$ ; therefore,  
 $\text{Produce} - \text{Rent} = \text{Wages} + \text{Interest}$ .

Thus wages and interest depend upon what is left after rent is taken out, and no matter what be the increase in productive power, if the increase in rent keeps pace with it, neither wages nor interest can increase.

CHAPTER III.—"Interest" includes all returns for the use of capital, and not merely those that pass from borrower to lender; and it excludes compensation for risk which is only an equalization of return between different employments of capital.

Production falls into three modes, viz.: ADAPTING, or changing natural products, either in form or place, to fit them for the satisfaction of human desire; GROWING, or utilizing the vital forces of nature; EXCHANGING, so as to add to the general sum of wealth the higher powers of those natural forces which vary with locality, or those human forces which vary with situation, occupation or character. In the first mode capital is not absolutely necessary; in the others it is.

IN ADAPTING, the benefit of capital is in the use; in GROWING and EXCHANGING, the benefit is in the increase. Primarily benefits which arise from use go to labor, and benefits which arise from increase go to capital; but the division of labor and interchangeability of wealth necessitates an averaging of benefits, whereby capital engaged in growing or exchanging will obtain, not the whole increase, but the increase minus what is sufficient to give to the labor so engaged such reward as it could have secured if exerted in adapting; and labor exerted in adapting will get, not the whole return, but the return minus such part as is necessary to give to capital the increase it could have secured in growing or exchanging. Interest is not arbitrary, but natural.

CHAPTER IV.—The belief that interest is the robbery of industry is in large part due to a failure to discriminate between what is really capital and what is not, and between profits which are properly interest and profits which arise from other sources than the use of capital. Nothing can be capital, let it always be remembered, that is not wealth—that is to say, nothing can be capital that does not consist of actual tangible things (not the spontaneous offerings of nature) which have in themselves, and not by proxy, the power of directly or indirectly ministering to human desire.

CHAPTER V.—Under conditions of freedom the maximum of interest (which is fixed by the average power of increase belonging to capital generally), will be the increase of the capital; and the minimum, the mere replacement of the capital.

If wages fall, interest must fall, else it becomes more profitable to turn labor into capital than to apply it directly; if interest falls, wages must fall, else the increment of capital is checked. Thus the principle that "men seek to gratify their desires with the least exertion" operates to establish and maintain an equilibrium between wages and interest.

Under the operation of the same principle, the general rate of interest will be determined by the return to capital upon the poorest land to which capital is freely applied—that is to say, upon the best land open to it without the payment of rent. Thus THE LAW OF INTEREST INDEPENDENTLY SOUGHT MEETS AND HARMONIZES WITH THE LAW OF RENT.

CHAPTER VI.—Wages vary with the differing powers of individuals and as between occupations; but there is a general relation between all wages, and in their degrees wages rise and fall in obedience to a common law. The principle that "men seek to gratify their desires with the least exertion" brings to an equality the reward for equal exertions under similar circumstances. In conditions of freedom the terms on which one man can hire others to work for him will be fixed by what the men could make if laboring for themselves. If wages are temporarily carried either above or below this line a tendency to carry them back at once arises. But wealth is the product of two factors, land and labor; and what a given amount of labor will yield will vary with the powers of the land to which it is applied. This being the case, the principle that "men seek to gratify their desires with the least exertion" will fix wages at the produce of such labor at the point of highest natural productiveness open to it,

which, under existing conditions, is the lowest point at which production continues. Thus the wages an employer must pay will be measured by the lowest point of natural productiveness to which production extends, and wages, as a proportion of the produce, will rise or fall as this point rises or falls. Hence, the proportion of wealth going to wages depends upon the margin of production or upon the produce which labor can obtain at the highest point of natural productiveness open to it without the payment of rent. Thus THE LAW OF WAGES, INDEPENDENTLY SOUGHT, MEETS AND HARMONIZES WITH THE LAW OF RENT.

Where land is free and labor is unassisted by capital, the whole produce will go to labor as wages.

Where land is free and labor is assisted by capital, wages will consist of the whole produce less that part necessary to induce the storing up of labor or capital.

Where land is subject to ownership and rent arises, wages will be fixed by what labor could secure from the highest natural opportunities open to it without the payment of rent.

Where natural opportunities are all monopolized, wages may be forced by competition among laborers to the minimum at which laborers will consent to reproduce.

CHAPTER VII.—Thus the laws of distribution are corollaries of each other. The fundamental law that "men seek to gratify their desires with the least exertion" becomes, when viewed in its relation to land, the law of rent; in relation to capital, the law of interest; in relation to labor, the law of wages. And the harmony and correlation of these laws are perfect.

RENT DEPENDS ON THE MARGIN OF PRODUCTION, rising as the margin falls and falling as it rises.

WAGES DEPEND ON THE MARGIN OF PRODUCTION, falling as the margin falls and rising as it rises.

INTEREST (its ratio with wages being fixed by the net power of increase which attaches to capital) DEPENDS ON THE MARGIN OF PRODUCTION, falling as the margin falls and rising as it rises.

CHAPTER VIII.—THE FAILURE OF WAGES AS A PROPORTION OF THE PRODUCT OF LABOR, TO INCREASE WITH INCREASING PRODUCTIVE POWER, IS DUE TO THE INCREASE OF RENT. Three things unite in production—

Land, Labor and Capital.

Three parties divide the produce—

The Landowner, the Laborer and the Capitalist.

If with this increase of production wages are no more and interest no more, it is a necessary inference that rent swallows the whole gain. And the facts agree with this inference.

#### BOOK IV.—EFFECT OF MATERIAL PROGRESS UPON THE DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH.

CHAPTER I.—But what causes rent to advance as material progress goes on? The changes which constitute or contribute to material progress are three: (1) increase of population; (2) improvements in the arts of production and exchange; (3) improvements in knowledge, education, government, police, manners and morals, so far as they increase the power of producing wealth. To ascertain the effect of these changes on the distribution

of wealth, consider the first apart from the second and third, and the second and third (which are in effect the same) apart from the first.

CHAPTER II.—Increase of population increases rent and consequently diminishes the proportion of the produce which goes to capital and labor, in two ways: (1) By lowering the margin of cultivation; and (2) by bringing out in land special capabilities otherwise latent, and by attracting special capabilities to particular lands.

CHAPTER III.—The PRIMARY effect of improvements in the arts is to increase the power of labor in the production of wealth; which, the demand for wealth being unsatisfied, will be utilized in procuring more wealth. But, as land is necessary for the production of wealth, the SECONDARY effect is to extend the margin of production to lands of less natural productiveness, or, on the same lands, to a point of lower natural productiveness.

CHAPTER IV.—The confident EXPECTATION OF FUTURE ENHANCEMENT OF LAND VALUES which arises from the steady increase of rent in all progressive communities, leads to the holding of land out of use or out of its best use for a higher price, and produces the effects of a combination among land holders whereby the margin is forced farther than required by the necessities of production. This is the force evolved by material progress which TENDS constantly to increase rent in greater ratio than progress increases production, and thus constantly tends, as material progress goes on and productive power increases, TO REDUCE WAGES, NOT MERELY AS A PROPORTION, BUT ABSOLUTELY.



## BOOK V.—THE PROBLEM SOLVED.

CHAPTER I.—The main cause of periodical industrial depressions is the manner in which the speculative advance in land values cuts down the earnings of labor and capital and checks production. In a progressive community land constantly increases in value; this induces speculation in which future increase is anticipated; and when land values are carried beyond the point at which they leave to labor and capital their accustomed returns, production begins to stop, or, what in a progressive community is the same thing, fails to increase proportionately, owing to the failure of new increments of labor and capital to find employment at the accustomed rates. The stoppage at some points shows itself at other points in a cessation of demand, which checks production there, and thus the paralysis communicates itself through all the interlacings of industry and commerce, resulting in phenomena that seem to show over-production or under-consumption, according to the standpoint from which they are viewed. The depression continues until (1) the speculative advance in land values is lost; or (2) the efficiency of labor increases sufficiently to make the normal rent line overtake the speculative rent line; or (3) labor and capital become reconciled to smaller returns; or (4) all three of these causes co-operate to produce a new equilibrium, at which a new season of activity ensues, followed by an advance of rent, further speculation in land, another check upon production, and the same round over again.

CHAPTER II.—The reason why, in spite of the increase of productive power, wages constantly tend to a minimum which will give but a bare living is that WITH INCREASE

IN PRODUCTIVE POWER, RENT TENDS TO EVEN GREATER INCREASE, THUS PRODUCING A CONSTANT TENDENCY TO THE FORCING DOWN OF WAGES.

The direct tendency of advancing civilization is to increase the power of human labor to satisfy human desires, to extirpate poverty, and to banish want and the fear of want; but labor cannot reap the benefits because they are intercepted. Land being necessary to labor and being reduced to private ownership, every increase in the productive power of labor but increases rent—the price labor must pay for the opportunity to utilize its powers. And, begotten of the continuous advance of rents, arises a speculative tendency which discounts the effect of future improvements by a still further advance of rents and tends to drive wages to the point at which the laborer can just live.

## BOOK VI.—THE REMEDY.

CHAPTER I.—The remedies more or less relied on may be divided into six classes:

(1) GREATER ECONOMY IN GOVERNMENT.—This would reduce taxation and be equivalent to an increase in the power of net production, the advantage of which would go ultimately to the owners of the land.

(2) DIFFUSION OF EDUCATION AND IMPROVED HABITS OF INDUSTRY AND THRIFT.—These also, if general, would simply increase the power of net production.—The fallacy of this remedy is similar to that which would be involved in the assertion that every one of a number of competitors might win a race. That one might is true, but that all might is impossible. Industry, skill, frugality and intelligence can avail the individual only in so far as they are superior to the general level.

(3) COMBINATIONS OF WORKMEN.—These can advance wages; but not to any extent or with any permanence unless the combination includes all laborers. Such a combination is practically impossible, and the raising of wages in particular occupations is a task the difficulty of which progressively increases, for the higher they are raised above their normal line with other wages the stronger are the tendencies to bring them back.

(4) CO-OPERATION.—Co-operation is of two kinds, co-operation in supply and co-operation in production. Co-operation in supply only reduces the cost of exchanges, while co-operation in production is but the substitution of proportionate for fixed wages. At the best the effect of either would be but to increase the power of net production, and add to rent.

(5) GOVERNMENTAL DIRECTION AND INTERFERENCE.—Whatever savors of regulation and restriction is in itself bad, and should not be resorted to if there is any other mode of accomplishing the same end.

(6) A MORE GENERAL DISTRIBUTION OF LAND.—The general tendency to production on a large scale shows that measures which merely permit or facilitate greater subdivision of land would be inoperative and that those which would compel it would have a tendency to check production. But there is the further and fatal objection that it would not reduce rent and therefore could not increase wages. It might make the comfortable classes larger, but would not improve the condition of those in the lowest class.

CHAPTER II.—There is but one way to remove an evil, and that is to remove its cause. Poverty deepens as wealth increases, and wages are forced down while

productive power grows, because land, which is the source of all wealth and the field of all labor, is monopolized. The remedy, then, for the unjust distribution of wealth, and for all the evils which flow from it, is to MAKE LAND COMMON PROPERTY.

#### BOOK VII.—JUSTICE OF THE REMEDY.

CHAPTER I.—The rightful basis of property is, primarily, the right of a man to himself, to the use of his own powers and the fruits of his own exertions. What he produces is his own as against all the world, to use, to exchange, or to give. Hence there is in the ownership of things produced by human exertion a clear title from the original producer. Not only is there no other natural right from which any other title can be derived, but the recognition of any other title is inconsistent with and destructive of this. WHEN NON-PRODUCERS CAN CLAIM AS RENT A PORTION OF THE WEALTH CREATED BY PRODUCERS, THE RIGHT OF THE PRODUCERS TO THE FRUITS OF THEIR LABOR IS TO THAT EXTENT DENIED.

CHAPTER II.—If chattel slavery be unjust, then is private property in land unjust. The ownership of land will always give the ownership of men to a degree measured by the necessity (real or artificial) for the use of land. This is but a statement in different form of the law of rent.

CHAPTER III.—It is not right that there should be any concern about compensating the proprietors of land. Private ownership of land is not merely a robbery in the past; it is a robbery in the present, for rent is not drawn from the produce of the past, but is a toll levied on labor constantly and continuously.

CHAPTER IV.—The common right to land has everywhere been primarily recognized, and private ownership has nowhere grown up save as the result of usurpation.

CHAPTER V.—The American people have failed to see the essential injustice of private property in land because they have not felt its full effects. Our superiority of condition over that of the old world has sprung from unfenced land—our public domain. But the republic has entered upon a new era, an era in which the monopoly of the land will tell with accelerating effect. The public domain is receding. Property in land is concentrating. The proportion of our people who have no legal right to the land on which they live is becoming steadily larger. We did not establish the republic when we declared the unalienable rights of man, nor abolish slavery when we ratified the Fourteenth amendment; and unless we come back to first principles and acknowledge the equal right of all to land, our free institutions will be in vain, our common schools will be in vain, our discoveries and inventions will but add to the force that presses the masses down.

#### BOOK VIII.—APPLICATION OF THE REMEDY.

CHAPTER I.—What is necessary for the use of land is not its private ownership, but the security of improvements. If we give improvers that security, we may safely abolish private ownership of land. Treating land as private property stands in the way of its proper use. Were it treated as public property it would be used and improved as soon as there was need for its use or improvement; but, being treated as private property, the

individual owner is permitted to prevent others from using or improving what he cannot or will not use or improve himself. If the best use of land be the test, then private property in land is condemned, as it is condemned by every other consideration.

CHAPTER II.—A question of method remains. Justice would be satisfied and all economic requirements met by abolishing private titles, declaring all land public property, and letting it out to the highest bidder under such conditions as would sacredly guard the private right to improvements. But this would involve a needless shock, and a needless extension of governmental machinery. We may best assert the common right to land, by taking rent for public uses. We already take some rent in taxation; we have only to make a few simple changes in our modes of taxation to take it all. What I therefore propose is to appropriate rent by taxation, and as taxation of rent or land values must necessarily be increased just as we abolish other taxes, we may put the proposition into practical form by proposing to ABOLISH ALL TAXATION SAVE THAT UPON LAND VALUES.

CHAPTER III.—The best tax must—(1) bear as lightly as possible upon production, so as least to check the increase of the general fund from which taxes must be paid and the community maintained; (2) be easily and cheaply collected, and fall as directly as may be upon the ultimate payers, so as to take from the people as little as possible in addition to what it yields the government; (3) be certain, so as to give the least opportunity for tyranny or corruption on the part of officials and the least temptation to law-breaking and evasion

on the part of the tax payers; and (4) bear equally, so as to give no citizen an advantage or put any at a disadvantage as compared with others. To these conditions the tax upon land values conforms, and it is the only important mode of taxation that does.

CHAPTER IV.—The grounds for concluding that the tax on land values is the best tax have been admitted expressly or tacitly by all economists of standing since the determination of the nature and law of rent, including Ricardo, McCullough, John Stuart Mill and Fawcett; and the French economists of the last century, headed by Quesnay and Turgot, proposed it.

#### BOOK IX.—EFFECTS OF THE REMEDY.

CHAPTER I.—To abolish all taxation save that upon land values would lift the whole enormous weight of taxation from productive industry. It would open new opportunities, for no one would care to hold land unless to use it, and land now withheld from use would everywhere, not merely on the frontiers, but in what are now called well settled districts, be thrown open to improvement. This would apply not alone to agricultural land, but all land. The bonus that, wherever labor is most productive, must now be paid before labor can be exerted would disappear. In the labor market competition would no longer be one-sided, for into the labor market would have entered the greatest of all competitors for the employment of labor, a competitor whose demand cannot be satisfied until want is satisfied—the demand of labor itself.

CHAPTER II.—To relieve labor and capital from all taxation and to throw the burden upon rent would be, as far as it went, to counteract the tendency to inequality; and if it went so far as to take in taxation the whole of rent, the cause of inequality would be wholly destroyed. The wealth produced in every community would then be divided into two portions. One part, representing the result of individual effort in production, would be distributed in wages and interest between individual producers, according to the part each had taken in the work of production. The other part, representing the increased power with which the community as a whole aids the individual, would go to the community as a whole, to be distributed in public benefits to all its members. Thus, increase of rent, the very cause which now tends to produce inequality as material progress goes on, would then tend to produce greater and greater equality.

CHAPTER III.—ALL CLASSES WHOSE INTERESTS AS LAND OWNERS DO NOT LARGELY EXCEED THEIR INTERESTS AS LABORERS OR CAPITALISTS, OR BOTH, WOULD DIRECTLY GAIN. Take the homestead owner or the farmer: The selling value of his land would diminish—theoretically, it would entirely disappear; but his land would serve his purpose as well as ever. And as the value of other land would disappear in the same ratio, he would retain the same security of having land that he has now, while if he wanted more land he would be a gainer even in the matter of land. In other things he would be much the gainer. Though he would have more taxes to pay on his land, his house and improvements, all his personal

property, all that he eats, drinks and wears, would be exempt, while his earnings would be largely increased by the rise in wages and increased briskness of trade.

CHAPTER IV.—Greater simplicity would be possible in government. In the administration of justice there would be a saving of strain. Public debts would disappear and standing armies would not be needed. And the simplicity of government would make possible, without danger, the assumption of functions now pressing for recognition, such as the operation of telegraphs and railroads. Government would gradually change its character from repression to co-operation.

#### BOOK X.—THE LAW OF HUMAN PROGRESS.

CHAPTER I.—If the conclusion that land should be common property is correct, it will fall under a higher generalization. Let it be tested by recommencing the inquiry from a higher standpoint. WHAT IS THE LAW OF HUMAN PROGRESS? The prevailing belief is that the progress of civilization is the result of forces which slowly change the character and improve and elevate the powers of man; that the difference between civilized man and the savage is of a long race education which has become permanently fixed in mental organization; and that this improvement tends to go on increasingly to a higher and higher civilization. This theory may explain the difference between the savage and the civilized man; but it does not account for the civilizations that have progressed so far and then stopped, nor for the civilizations that have gone back. Every civilization has had its period of vigorous growth, of arrest and stagnation, its decline and fall. The earth is the

tomb of dead empires no less than of dead men. Shall we, therefore, say there is a national or race life, as there is an individual life? Such analogies are superficial. While its members are constantly reproduced, in all the fresh vigor of childhood, a community cannot grow old as does a man by the decay of his powers. Yet in this analogy lurks the recognition of an obvious truth—the truth that the obstacles which finally bring progress to a halt are raised by the course of progress; that what has destroyed all previous civilizations has been the conditions produced by the growth of civilization itself. Any valid theory of human progress must account for this.

CHAPTER II.—The differences between the people of communities in different places and at different times, which we call differences of civilization, are not differences which inhere in the individuals, but differences which inhere in the society. Social environment is the matrix in which mind unfolds, and from which it takes its stamp. In this way skill is transmitted and knowledge stored up; and human progress goes on as the advances made by one generation are secured as the common stock of the next, and made the starting point for new advances.

CHAPTER III.—The incentives to progress are the desires inherent in human nature which, short of infinity, can never be satisfied. MIND IS THE INSTRUMENT BY WHICH MAN ADVANCES, and by which each advance is secured and made the vantage ground for new advances. Men tend to advance in proportion to the mental power expended in progression. BUT THE MENTAL POWER WHICH CAN BE DEVOTED TO PROGRESS IS ONLY WHAT IS

LEFT AFTER WHAT IS REQUIRED FOR NON-PROGRESSIVE PURPOSES. These non-progressive purposes are maintenance and conflict. MAINTENANCE means not only the support of existence, but the keeping up of the social condition and the holding of advances already gained. CONFLICT means not merely warfare and preparation for warfare, but all expenditure of mental power in seeking the gratification of desire at the expense of others, and in resistance to such aggression. As mental power is only set free for higher uses than maintenance, by association in communities, which permits division of labor, ASSOCIATION IS THE FIRST ESSENTIAL OF PROGRESS. And, as the wasteful expenditure of mental power in conflict becomes greater or less as the moral law which accords to each an equality of rights is ignored or recognized, EQUALITY IS THE SECOND ESSENTIAL OF PROGRESS. Thus, ASSOCIATION IN EQUALITY IS THE LAW OF HUMAN PROGRESS. Men tend to progress as they come closer together, but just as inequality of condition or power is developed, this tendency to progression is lessened, checked, and finally reversed.

CHAPTER IV.—A civilization like ours must either advance or go back; it cannot stand still. What has destroyed every previous civilization has been the tendency to the unequal distribution of wealth and power. This same tendency, operating with increasing force, is observable in our civilization today, showing itself in every progressive community, and with greater intensity the more progressive the community. Wages and interest tend constantly to fall, rent to rise; the rich to become very much richer, the poor to become more helpless and hopeless; the middle class to be swept away.

CHAPTER V.—The evils arising from the unjust and unequal distribution of wealth are not incidents of progress, but tendencies which must bring progress to a halt. They will not cure themselves, but must, unless the cause is removed, sweep us back into barbarism. But they are not imposed by natural laws; they spring solely from social maladjustments which ignore natural laws. And in removing their cause by making land common property in the way proposed, we shall be giving an enormous impetus to progress. We cannot go on prating of the inalienable rights of man and then denying the inalienable right to the bounty of the Creator. Even now in old bottles the new wine begins to ferment and elemental forces gather for the strife! But if, while there is yet time, we turn to JUSTICE and obey her, if we trust LIBERTY and follow her, the dangers that threaten will disappear and the forces that menace will turn to agencies of elevation.

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#### CONCLUSION.—THE PROBLEM OF INDIVIDUAL LIFE.

Behind the problems of social life lies the problem of individual life. The yearning for a further life is natural and deep; but to the great majority of men on whom mere creeds have lost their hold, it seems a vain and childish hope. The ideas that thus destroy the hope of a future life have their source in those doctrines of political and social science which teach that there is a tendency to the production of more human beings than can be provided for; that vice and misery are the result of natural laws, and the means by which advance goes

28 *A Syllabus of "Progress and Poverty."*

on; and that human progress is by a slow race development. We have met these doctrines, and in seeing their fallacy we destroy the nightmare which is banishing from the modern world the belief in a future life. All difficulties are not removed, for turn which way we may, we come to what we cannot comprehend; but difficulties are removed which seem conclusive and insuperable. And thus hope springs up—the hope that is the heart of all religions. The poets have sung it, the seers have told it, and in its deepest pulses the heart of man throbs responsive to its truth.

