AN INQUIRY INTO THE INSTITUTIONAL CAUSES OF CRIME

- by -

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THE AUTHOR

Louis Freeland Post was born November 15, 1849 on a farm in northwestern New Jersey between Danville and Vienna. He was the first child of Eugene J. and Elizabeth Freeland Post. On the Post side he was a descendant of Stephan Post who came from England to Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1633 and afterwards settled at Saybrook, Connecticut.

Post attended two country schools and another in New York City. At fourteen he quit the New York City school to work in a pawnshop. This job was of short duration. This was followed by working eighteen months as a printer's apprentice on the Hackettstown (N.J.) Gazette. Printing jobs in New York City and on "The Brooklyn Union" followed. Post left "The Brooklyn Union" job in 1866. Shortly after Post entered a New York City law office and after three years in 1870 he was admitted to the bar.

Post became clerk to the United States District Attorney at Charleston, South Carolina. This official was also a state senator in the reconstruction legislature and Post acted as secretary of three legislative committees assisting the District Attorney in the codification of the South Carolina laws. He assisted in prosecuting cases against Ku Klux Klaners.

During the South Carolina period of his life Post married Anna Johnson of Hackettstown July 6, 1871.

In 1874 Post returned to New York and served as an Assistant United States District Attorney for the southern district for a year and a half and then entered private practice.

From 1880 to 1882 Post was an editorial writer of a morning penny paper, "Truth". While writing for "Truth" Post published a criticism of the writings

of Henry George, but this was the start of a fast friendship between the two, and Post became a leading protagonist of Georgist Philosophy. When Henry George ran for mayor of New York City in 1886, Post edited the campaign daily "The Leader".

During the succeeding six years Post was successively editorial writer, news editor and editor of the "Standard", the weekly of the Georgist Movement.

From 1892 to 1897 Post lectured widely on the Georgist Philosophy.

He became an editorial writer on "The Cleveland Record".

Post's first wife died in 1891 and he married for a second time Alice Thacher on December 2, 1893.

In 1898 Post and his wife established and edited "The Public" of Chicago which was a journal of liberal opinion with a Georgist point of view. This publication grew in fifteen years to a circulation of 10,000 copies weekly.

Post served on the Chicago School Board during the mayorality of Edward F. Dunne.

In 1908 and in 1910 Post journeyed to Great Britain and helped David Lloyd George and the Liberals in their political campaigns.

In June, 1913 Post was appointed as Assistant Secretary of Labor and continued in this office through President Woodrow Wilson's two administrations.

After leaving public office Post continued to live in Washington. He died on January 10, 1928.

In personal appearance Post was short and square shouldered, erect and vigorous.

The cause of crime is a matter that has been the subject of considerable discussion and also, we are told, of thought on the part of criminologists or of those who profess to be such. But their efforts seem to be consciously or unconsciously directed toward fixing the blame on something else than the one cause that lies plainly in view of all. Some learned ones have made exceedingly labored attempts to put the blame on what they call "degeneracy". Others have mentioned heredity as a cause. Others have placed the blame on lack of religion or lack of moral training, and still others on the liquor or drug habit. All of these speak of the criminal as though he were of a different breed from the rest of us, leaving the impression that we righteous ones would not have been guilty of the crimes committed by these "degenerates" even had we grown up in their environment. We are given to understand that the brains we possess, the religion or moral philosophy we hold, the temperate habits to which we cling are means of keeping us from becoming criminals. We are asked to believe that we would not have committed burglary or highway robbery, even if we had been reared amidst surroundings where experience proves beyond question that other means of avoiding starvation are not always available and even when available do not always enable one to maintain self respect to the same extent as an independent criminal career. We are left to infer that our descent from a line of high-browed ancestors, the high brows which we ourselves possess, our religious or moral training, our abstemious habits, all or any of these would have induced us, had occasion arisen, to quietly lie down and starve, to calmly observe the sufferings of loved ones, or to meekly submit to insult and humiliation while a way to escape all this appeared to be open.

It is possible that some of us actually would follow such a course but it does not seem very probable.

Then again we are left to infer that we would not do such a thing as embezzle funds entrusted to us. We are assured of this even though on further investigation the "degenerate" or "victim of heredity" who has committed such a crime was himself a high brow descended from a high browed line, with as religious or moral a training as any of us had and as temperate in his habits. If we looked a little closer into such a case we might see that there were circumstances beyond his control that weakened his power of resistance. Could we righteous ones have resisted more successfully? Perhaps we had better not be too sure.

It is refreshing therefore to those who want to know the truth to see the cause of crime discussed in the clear and logical manner characteristic of all the writings of Louis F. Post. It is pleasing to note that he forces us to look at the cause right underneath our noses, the cause we would have liked to overlook, that we wanted others to overlook also and therefore tried to divert their attention by leading them on a false trail.

To those who prefer not to know the truth, who want to remain in ignorance, whose love of the real cause of crime is greater than hate of the effect, the writings of Mr. Post will not appeal. Before reading what he has to say the one into whose hands this has come must first consider whether or not he is ready to follow truth wherever she will lead. If he is, then let him proceed. If not, he has read far enough, if he has read this far.

INSTITUTIONAL CAUSES OF CRIME

I.

Isn't it true that crime springs from poverty? Not from poverty when and where all are poor, to be sure; nor in every instance from poverty of the individual offender; but from social poverty—that is, the social condition of abject and hopeless want, in the midst of plenty to the point even of luxury.

Each of us naturally tries to escape this social condition. Each may indeed be generous enough to desire that all shall escape. But if one cannot escape the slough of poverty without thrusting others in, who is there that won't sacrifice his neighbor? And he who makes that selfish sacrifice, he who thrusts others into poverty in order to escape himself, isn't it he that is labelled "criminal"?—provided, of course, that he resorts to methods that are under social condemnation and gets found out.

Of predatory crime, at any rate, there seems little room for any other explanation than poverty in social conditions where plenty abounds. Were this social condition unknown and unfeared, what motive would there be for theft of any species? And how could there be predatory crime if there were no motive for theft?

Though it be true that predatory crime is often inspired by love of adventure rather than sordid greed for spoils, the spoils being only trophies—like a bear's skin to the strenuous hunter, or a province to the militant conqueror, or ransoms to the brigand chief—nevertheless poverty where plenty abounds, and the horror that the fear of it engenders, seem to lie beneath all things else in the regions of furacious impulses. Isn't there a notable lessening of

predatory crime, not only when war offers opportunity for reputable exploits, but also when general prosperity invites to useful adventure? And isn't there a notable increase in crime when hard times augment the difficulty of earning an honest living? These undeniable facts of common observation, of vastly more importance than a whole volume of petty facts which are difficult to prove and doubtful of interpretation, go far to indicate that poverty inspires the adventurous type of predatory crime as well as that which is only sordid.

Testimony to the same effect is abundant along the whole history of criminal adventure. The careers of those old highwaymen of English heath who robbed the rich and gave to the poor are highly significant of the influence of poverty in originating adventurous crime. The story of American trampdom is rich in evidence of like import, for it was not until poverty in America became general and for a gowing proportion of the people inevitable that the adventurous tramp got to be a type.

Similar tetimony comes from Mexico. It was his appreciation of the true impulse to criminal adventure that enabled President Diaz to suppress Mexican brigandage. When he came to the Presidency, brigandage had long made travel in Mexico insecure and the possession of property dangerous. So inclusive and defiant was it that an army of troops could not have suppressed it. But President Diaz caused it to suppress itself. He is quoted as having made an address to a council of brigand leaders in which he said: "You fellows don't like to do anything but fight. But all you get out of it is a living, and sometimes it is a miserable living. If you will fight for me, I will see that you are given a better living than you get

now, that you have good horses and that you live in the mountains as you please. All I ask of you is that you obey my orders as to when to fight." The criminal banditti were thereby turned into soldiers of the Diaz regime. This incident, which is valuable in its suggestiveness whether it be fact or fiction, is borrowed from a writer who concludes that "crime is only a misdirected energy." Let us add that the primary influence which misdirects this energy is poverty in contrast with plenty.

But though it be admitted that poverty accounts for predatory crime, for that which is adventurous as well as that which is sordid, it may not be admitted that poverty accounts for other forms of crime. If you reflect, however, upon what you know, you will have to admit that crimes of passion, both homicidal and sexual, are often obviously attributable to the malign influences of poverty. When this cause is not obvious, a little investigation beneath the surface is almost certain to reveal it. Homicidal passions usually develop from some unfair reaching out for property, a reaching out that would be childish but for the spectre of want in the midst of wealth. And who shall say that this is not also true of sexual crime? The coarse and brutal kinds of sexual criminality which we find in the slums, are so immediately associated with poverty that the relation of cause and effect is unmistakable. Isn't it almost as obvious, too, with the more subtle sexual crimes of the over-rich? Rich **roues** could not buy vicious indulgences if there were no poor men's daughters to be tempted out of environments of want into lives of luxury.

Let us be careful not to ignore the point that poverty of the crime-breeding sort is that which comes in contrast with abundance. Were all without wealth,

envy and lust would lose themselves in the noble passions that common privations always stimulate. If all had wealth, we should look upon predatory criminals with the amiable contempt with which we regard greedy boors who hustle for the first drink of lemonade at a picnic where there is plenty for all. But inasmuch as a few have wealth in superabundance, which comes to them for the most part as tribute, and others are in a constant struggle to keep themselves and those they love out of the slough of poverty, society is infested with criminals.

Are we told that crime is a product of heredity, or of environment, or of both? This does not affect the contention. These hereditary tendencies disappear when there are no great contrasts of want with wealth to stimulate them. The influences of environment are away from crime if they are not vitiated by the contrasts of wealth with poverty. Criminal tendencies are stimulated or checked as poverty is more or less imminent and repugnant, as the fear of poverty is more or less intense, and as useful or innocent opportunities for escape from it are less or more inviting. Even in amusements, the youthful vitality which makes a daring yachtsman of the rich man's son, may, with no more evil intent make a daring criminal of the poor man's son.

An anecdote used to be current in New York—so dreadfully current that it would have been called a "chestnut" if this bit of slang had been in vogue—an anecdote about a business man's mortifying experience with phrenology. It illustrates the point and we venture a repetition of it.

Strolling up Broadway at the close of a busy day downtown, the business man of this threadbare story dropped in at Fowler and Wells' to amuse himself

with the new fad of which they were the leading demonstrators. He was a wealthy man, as wealthiness went in that humble commercial era, and he had a distinguished name; but as half-tone portraits had not been invented, his features were unfamiliar to the public and the phrenologist didn't recognize him. To that extent, therefore, the conditions were favorable to a phrenological test, but how true the resulting character chart may have been, only the subject himself could have known, even if he might be considered an impartial judge.

As the story goes the chart was in no wise deficient in candor. A present day psychologist could hardly be expected to discover in a star convict any finer assortment of criminal propensities than that phrenologist ascribed to his wealthy and distinguished and correspondingly respected subject. No species of predatory crime seemed from that reading of this virtuous business man's bumps to be alien to his propensities. He had the impulses of a sneak, the daring of a burglar, the skill and tact of a forger, and the conscience of a mummy.

In its day this overworked anecdote was interpreted as a huge joke on phrenology. But isn't it possible, and this without passing any judgment whatever upon the merits of phrenology, that in fact the joke was on the business man? May it not have been that the phrenologist, uninfluenced by any knowledge of his client's reputation, had either read or guessed at the good man's propensities aright?

We say "good man" deliberately, for we are not implying that the mortified hero of that anecdote was a hypocrite. Neither are we hinting that his idea of honesty was of the piratical business type of our

own day, the idea, namely, that if you live a conventionally respectable life, are true to your crowd, your ring, your class, or your associates, as you choose to designate them, and keep out of the penitentiary, you may do anything you please. We mean simply that while the criminal propensities charted by the phrenologist may have actually existed in that business man, circumstances had enabled him to cultivate them profitably to himself in ways that seemed useful to society instead of detrimental. May he not have been somewhat like those bandits of Mexico, who needed only opportunity for profitable and energetic usefulness, to turn from a career of venturesome lawbreaking to one of social service?

Perhaps this view might find further confirmation in a comparison of the propensities with the activities of detectives. May it not be that the old saw about setting a thief to catch a thief is a wise one with reference not alone to skill, but also to psychological adaptation? Isn't it a reasonable inference that the natural qualifications of a born detective are such as would have made him a criminal if the opportunity to chase criminals had not offered a more satisfactory career of adventure in eluding poverty? We offer this observation only suggestively, and in no sense assertively. Whether true or not, it makes little difference to the point under consideration, which is that poverty in conditions of plenty is the mother of crime—or may be the stepmother.

Nor are we trying to prove this with minute circumstantiality. We only submit it as an incontrovertible general fact of human experience and observation. In the anecdote about Chief Justice Marshall and Judge Story, Marshall is made habitually to say of the cases argued before them—"Story, the

law of this case is so and so; you look up the authorities." Similarly we assert that crime springs from poverty in conditions of contrast with wealth, telling those who doubt it to look up the facts. In our judgment they will find few facts to discredit the assertion and none to controvert it.

II.

But what then? What has that to do with institutional causes of crime? Is poverty an institution?

No; poverty itself, individual want, is not an institution. But poverty as a social phenomenon, poverty in the midst of plenty, the poverty that inevitably engulfs so many in spite of their industry and usefulness, this conception of poverty, whether it be an institution or not, is certainly institutional.

The condition of poverty from which it is impossible for all to escape; the condition of poverty that would persist for some though all were industrious and thrifty; the poverty that falls to those who lose the race, run they never so fast; the poverty that falls to those who lose the game, play they never so well; the poverty for the many who work, when and where there is luxury for the few of leisure—this is the poverty that generates crime, and this poverty is distinctly a product of social institutions.

One of the great speculative philosophers of our civilization, probably the greatest that America has produced—Henry James the elder—summarized the whole matter in his lecture of sixty years ago on "Democracy and Its Issues," when he said: "If the institutions of society do not incessantly endeavor to lift all men up out of the slough of natural destitution, and equalize culture, refinement, and comfort among them, they are not faithful to the divine intent and must fall into disuse. It is nothing

but this legalized injustice among men, this organized and chronic inequality among them, which begets what are termed the 'dangerous classes' in the European communities. These communities tolerate a privileged class; that is to say they will insure a child born of one parentage, a good education, good manners, a graceful development in every respect, sumptuous lodging, sumptuous food, sumptuous clothing; and they will insure another child born of an opposite parentage, the complete want of all these things; and yet they wonder at the existence of a dangerous class among them. Let them change these institutions, let them insure all the children born among them a precisely equal social advantage and estimation, and they will soon see the dangerous classes disappear. They will soon destroy the sole existing motive to crime; for crime is always directed against mere arbitrary advantage. I admit that a man whose passions have been wounded by another, even without blame on the part of that other, may be tempted, in the anguish of disappointment, to blaspheme his innocent rival, anl even take his life on occasion. But this is not the criminality society chiefly suffers from. Men willingly bear with the injury springing out of a wounded self-love, knowing their own liability to need the same forgiveness. It is deliberate, systematic crime from which society suffers, crime that gives name to large classes and localities; and this criminality is the product exclusively of vicious legislation, of institutions which insist upon distributing the bounties of Providence unequally."

It is easy to say that every man is responsible for his own poverty. Most of us who have eluded both poverty and the penitentiary are over-glib in attributing the poverty of others to their personal in-

competency or vicious propensities. But this is confusing effect with cause. Trite is the saying that every one may make an honest living if he wants to. Most of us who say it doubtless believe it until we ourselves feel the pinch of poverty, and then we attribute our misfortune to hard luck or hard times. Very good, but let us remember that with armies of people there is hard luck or hard times all the time.

That personal qualities are factors in enabling the possessors to escape the slough of poverty is doubtless true. But these qualities fail unless they are exceptional.

The man of common or ordinary qualities never becomes rich, except by accident, and he is pretty lucky if he escapes being poor. Men of exceptional qualities, it is true, need not be poor, provided their qualities are adapted to the money-making tendencies of the period—high finance it may be in one period and high-sea piracy in another.

When physical strength is the desideratum for success, men of exceptional physical strength succeed. But there are often conditions in which the strong man fails and the puny man triumphs. Why? Not from superior muscular ability, of course, but from superior ability of the kind that pays. The puny man's superiority fits the circumstances.

A bulldog is more powerful than a cat, but if superiority in the catching of mice were the measure of success, the cat would be rich and the bulldog poor—unless the dog had a way of sharing all the mice that cats catch.

Able lawyers with a nice sense of honor would fail while inferior lawyers without sense of honor would succeed, if perversion of the law instead of its

just administration were the object of having a lawyer.

Not only ability but adaptability is necessary to escape poverty. But the real question is not whether individual abilities are factors in determining instances of individual poverty. It is whether poverty as a dreadful social condition in the midst of plenty is due to social institutions.

III.

We all agree, of course, that poverty is lack of wealth, just as we agree that darkness is lack of light. It is therefore a condition into which every one is born, for every one comes naked into the world.

But the same God—the same natural law, if you prefer this form—which brings us into the world poor even unto nakedness, endows each of us with the capability even in our own persons, and furnishes us with the opportunity in our natural and social environment, of abolishing our individual poverty. In primitive circumstances this is obvious. We have only to apply our capabilities to the earth, the fruits of which are abundant if we but foster them. This gives only a meager living, to be sure—primitive and monotonous, probably, rather than meager. But add to our natural environment our developed and developing social environment, and our powers to abolish poverty multiply. By uniting our abilities with those of our fellows, through cooperation—division of labor we call it—we make the planet yield us an abundance for all, and in such variety as to enable us to live civilized instead of primitive lives.

Intelligent men who reflect know that under social conditions every man who lives by work contributes

to production more than the share he gets from production. If this were not so there would be nothing for those who don't work; for it is only by work, somebody's work, that anybody can live. That everybody does not work we all know. The criminal doesn't work until he is caught and imprisoned. The privileged classes do not work for what they get from their privileges, though they are seldom caught. Then there is a class that does not work and is not privileged. We call this class the unemployed. It would be truer to call it the disemployed, for it is prevented from working—prevented by institutions which discourage honest work, and while punishing conventional crime encourage the economic spoliation that generates crime.

Since the disemployed are dependent for a livelihood upon their work, and as a class are continuously denied opportunity to work, their condition exemplifies the poverty that generates crime.

Their class is continually changing in its personnel. If it were not it would die off. The disemployed individual today may have a job tomorrow or next week, and the employed individual of today may be out of work in a day or two. But the disemployed class simply as a human mass, is constant. In good times it contracts, in hard times it expands, but in all times it is visible to such of us as are willing to see —to all of us but those optimists of whom Kipling writes that "when their own front door is closed they'll swear the whole world's warm."

This disemployed mass is the generating cause of crime. Men seek crime to get out of it; men commit crime to keep out of it; men become habituated to criminal living because criminal living and impoverished living for the many where there is luxurious

living for others, are by action and reaction affiliated.

The constancy of the disemployed class is attributable to social institutions. It is a disemployed class because social institutions close the door of opportunity that nature leaves open.

IV.

Shall we enumerate the social institutions which close that door of opportunity?

It might not be practicable to name them all. But we can point to two fundamental ones—so fundamental that if every other were abolished these two would soon reproduce crime-fostering conditions. Indeed, one of them is so much more fundamental even than the other, that if all the rest were abolished this alone would re-establish the poverty that generates crime.

The two institutions to which we allude—or rather the two classes of institutions—are those that obstruct industrial interchanges, commonly called trade, and those that interfere with a square deal in the use of the planet upon which we live.

Any social institution which interferes with trade —and we do not mean protective tariffs alone, for they interfere only with international trade in commodities—any such institution checks cooperation in the production of wealth, and any check upon production of wealth helps to make disemployed men.

We should see it easily enough were we to contemplate the effect of prohibiting all trade. If there were no trade at all there would be no demand for workers, and if there were no demand for workers no one would have work to do except as he might do it for himself crudely, as the savage does.

Precisely what this extreme of trade restriction

would do, anything less than the extreme would do with a difference only in degree. Make trade restriction greater than it is, and the disemployed class would increase; make trade freer, and the disemployed class would diminish.

This is not an allusion to the absurd notion that a class of employers is necessary to employment. It is an allusion to the fact that our industry is specialized, and that an arbitrary check upon any specialty is by action and reaction a check upon all. Workers are not employed by an employing class. Except as employers are also workers, they are parasites upon industry. Workers are employed by one another. They employ one another by means of trading the products of their respective specialties. To check this trade is to check mutual employment. But to check mutual employment is to **increase** the disemployed class, to lessen the check is to **diminish** the disemployed class.

As the disemployed class increases or diminishes, so do criminal statistics rise or fall. This no guess. Nor is it alone an inference from general principle. It is demonstrated by experience. Crime increases with hard times and diminishes with good times. Didn't most of us see this in the '90s? Didn't some of us see it in the '70s? Don't we read about it in the late '30s and early '40s? in the period from 1809 down into the early '20s, and in the period from 1784 down to 1809? Don't we see it now? (April, 1908).

But restrictions upon trade constitute only one or two great causes of disemployment with its consequent poverty and crime; and that is the least fundamental of the two. Even if trade of all kinds were absolutely free, the other social institution that makes disemployment would be as effective in that respect

as both institutions together before.

Civilized life demands not only that men shall be untrammelled in exchanging their products, but also that they shall be untrammelled and equal in the right to the use of the planet. For it is from the planet, and upon the planet, and by means of the planet that men must live, whether they live without trade or with trade.

Just as the individual man is dependent upon the earth for a solitary or primitive livelihood, so cooperative man is dependent upon the earth for the highest cooperative life. Indeed, there are but two primary factors in any phase of our planetary existence—man and the planet. All else is secondary—division of labor, trade, government—all these are secondary.

Think of what would happen if all institutional causes of disemployment were abolished except the institution of monopoly of the planet.

At first prosperity would be tremendous. Everybody would be busy at making and trading, and enthusiastic over their work and in the enjoyment of its results. There would be no disemployed class and consequently no impoverished class; and if this condition lasted a generation or two, fear of poverty also might disappear and with it the criminal class.

But it wouldn't last a generation or two if the institution of planet monopoly remained. We should have a boom, a great land boom, but the boom would burst. Why? For the same reason that the land booms of towns and cities and even of nations burst when the pressure of planet-owning conditions snaps the tension of speculative prosperity.

Prosperity makes demand for land. If it is local prosperity the demand is for town sites; if the pros-

perity is general, the demand is for all kinds of land, from farming sites to mineral deposits and city lots; and under all kinds of title, from simple deeds to options and stock certificates. Prices soar, not only the prices of products but the prices of land—of space on the planet. The rising price of products soon check prices of products, but it doesn't check the price of land. On the contrary it raises it, for the greater production and the speculation which it stimulates make demands for more land. For foodstuffs or machinery or any other labor product to double in value is phenomenal even under the greatest pressure; but land doubles and quadruples again and again. Most labor products are cheaper now than when Manhattan Island sold for $26. But what of the value of American land? After a while the cost of production, including the pressure of the speculative prices of land, the source of all production, will in any period of speculative prosperity make production unprofitable, and then credit will crumble and the crash come. This is the underlying explanation of all industrial crashes.

Other explanations may be true as far as they go, but they don't go to the bottom. This alone explains every bursted boom, from Chicago in the '40s to Seattle in the '90s; it explains the depression of 1784, which was followed by the booming times beginning with 1791; it explains the depression of 1809 which extended into the '20s, that of 1837 which extended into the '40s, that of 1857 which was checked by the Civil War of 1861, that of 1893 which continued until 1898, and that of 1907 which is now upon us (April, (1908).

What these phenomena have shown us in little we

should see enormously magnified if all the institutional causes of poverty were abolished except the institution of land monopoly—the monopoly of the planet. The inflated values of the planet would fall in the general crash just as they did in Chicago in the '40s and in Seattle in the '90s; but they would recover and rise higher as prosperity revived and production increased, just as they have done in Chicago and Seattle. But what of the disemployed? The burdening of industry by the owners of the natural **sine qua non** of industry, the planet itself, would create a disemployed class if the old one had passed away, and would maintain it if it had not passed away; and in that disinherited and outraged class the culture of crime germs would still go on.

In the monopoly of the planet, therefore, we may find the underlying and all inclusive institutional cause of crime.

Not that there are no other institutional causes. There may be many. Not that there are no hereditary, educational, or other personal causes. There are many. But in a generalization of causes, this one either comprehends most of the others, or would do duty for them all if the other social causes were abolished and all the personal causes were cured.

V.

Mankind has not been insensible to the evil character of planet monopoly. As far back as the history goes it tells us of an appreciation by our ancestors of the importance of equality of the right to the use of the earth. They understood it in Rome long before the Gracchi. The landlords of England understood it when they enclosed the common lands. To secure this equality of right has been a part of the American struggle for liberty. We thought we had succeeded

when we established free trade in land. We thought for generations of every American as his own landlord. But we are now slowly and painfully learning that through the inevitable operation of the law of economic rent in a progressive society, land values advance. Thus we are recreating through real estate transactions a more powerful land oligarchy than that of the feudal barons—an oligarchy all the more powerful because it strengthens with natural law instead of human leadership.

It strengthens as the flood does, gathering force as it flows. Feudal landlordism has passed away, but capitalistic landlordism has taken its place. Feudalistic landlordism governed through personal relationships, plainly and brutally; capitalistic landlordism governs by economic pressure and convulsion with the subtlety and severity of natural law.

How to check this evil is evident enough to some, but we shall not discuss that phase of the matter now. Readers who are in earnest about ridding society of the criminal class will study institutional causes of crime as a practical question, and with at least as much care as they study what they may suppose to be hereditary causes.

If they do that, they will enevitably conclude that most of our crime has an institutional origin; that is, that it is in the nature of spasmodic reaction, responsible and irresponsible, against society by individuals for crimes that society continues to commit upon individuals.

Whoever reaches this conclusion will be driven by his own good sense to the further one, that the mother institution of all is planet monopoly, and will look seriously for the remedy. If he does look for

the remedy—really look for it—he will find it even if he has to read Henry George's "Progress and Poverty" before he sees it clearly.

VI.

Our object here is not to suggest remedies for crime or antidotes for any of its causes. It is only to help awaken those who may be studying crime without regard to its social causes. We would awaken them if we could, to the necessity of looking for social causes. We would also awaken them to the realization that those causes must be removed before any really valuable diagnosis of other causes (if others independently exist)—can be made. Our function, in other words, recalls the remark of his servant to that absent-minded philosopher who had dropped into an easy chair for reflection and was interrupted by the squalling of a cat. "Throw that cat out," said the philosopher to the servant. "Why, sir," replied the servant, "you are sitting on the cat." So long as the social institution of planet monopoly allows idle appropriators of property produced by labor to sit upon its laborious producers, just so long will the serenity of society be disturbed, and the disturbance take the form of crime.