

## EDITORIALS.

### COUNT TOLSTOI ON THE LAND QUESTION.

ON THE first of August last, the London *Times* published an extended paper from the pen of Count Tolstoi, which in many respects we believe to be the most important political and economic manifesto that has come from the pen of the great Russian prophet and iconoclast. This is not saying that we agree with all the premises or conclusions of Count Tolstoi; for here as in most of his other utterances, he seems to us to betray the weakness of many of our noblest reformers who rivet their mental vision on some particular source of evil, injustice or misery, until the single issue fills the mental retina, and henceforth all other reforms appear to them trivial or incidental. Yet in spite of this fact, Count Tolstoi's contribution entitled "The Great Iniquity" is, we think, the most important single economic utterance of the present year. It is in truth the voice of one of the greatest prophet souls of any age crying in the wilderness of political and economic greed, selfishness, ignorance, superstition and error and calling men back to certain fundamental truths which we believe must be recognized and acted upon before there can be any substantial approach to that measure of justice that will make equality of opportunities and of rights something more than an empty shibboleth.

After pointing out the fact that the "intellectuals" of Russia are striving to gain freedom of the press, freedom of speech, the right to hold meetings, and a constitutional government, the Count minimizes the importance of such reforms in a manner that would be incomprehensible coming from the source that it does, were it not for the fact that he has so riveted his mind upon the iniquity of land monopoly that he has lost his sense of moral proportions to such a degree that measures so fundamentally important and vital to progress as freedom of conscience, freedom of the press, freedom of speech and popular constitutional government seem to him trivial or of no special importance. This, it seems to us, no less than his apparent contempt for the

whole machinery of popular government, is the crowning weakness of his manifesto, which in other respects should challenge the thoughtful consideration of all persons having the welfare of the whole people at heart; and we think that he is right when he thus places his finger on the chief single cause of the widespread physical misery of the masses:

"The chief evil from which the whole of the Russian people are unceasingly and cruelly suffering—the fundamental evil from which the Russian people as well as the people of Europe and America are suffering—is the fact that the majority of the people are deprived of the indisputable natural right of every man to use a portion of the land on which he was born. It is sufficient to understand all the criminality, the sinfulness of the situation in this respect, in order to understand that until this atrocity, continually being committed by the owners of the land, shall cease, no political reforms will give freedom and welfare to the people, but that, on the contrary, only the emancipation of the majority of the people from that land slavery in which they are now held can render political reforms, not a plaything and a tool for personal aims in the hands of politicians, but the real expression of the will of the people."

The Count gives a number of pen-pictures illustrating the want, misery and helplessness of the peasants deprived of the land, and he insists that one may "cross all Russia, all its peasant world," and everywhere he will observe "dreadful calamities and sufferings which proceed from the obvious cause that the agricultural masses are deprived of land. Half the Russian peasantry live so that for them the question is not how to improve their position, but only how not to die of hunger, they and their families, and this only because they have no land. Traverse all Russia and ask all the working-people why their life is hard, what they want; and all of them with one voice will say one and the same thing, that which they unceasingly desire and expect, and

for which they unceasingly hope, of which they unceasingly think."

In order to give special emphasis to his proposition, our author quotes extensively from the writings of Henry George. The following paragraphs we quote, as they are so exceptionally pertinent to the discussion with which he is concerned:

"What is man? In the first place, he is an animal, a land animal who cannot live without land. All that man produces comes from the land; all productive labor, in the final analysis, consists in working up land, or materials drawn from land, into such forms as fit them for the satisfaction of human wants and desires. Why, man's very body is drawn from the land. Children of the soil, we come from the land, and to the land we must return. Take away from man all that belongs to the land, and what have you but a disembodied spirit? Therefore he who holds the land on which and from which another man must live is that man's master; and the man is his slave. The man who holds the land on which I must live can command me to life or to death just as absolutely as though I were his chattel. Talk about abolishing slavery—we have not abolished slavery; we have only abolished one rude form of it, chattel slavery. There is a deeper and more insidious form, a more cursed form yet before us to abolish, in this industrial slavery that makes a man a virtual slave, while taunting him and mocking him in the name of freedom.

"Did you ever think of the utter absurdity and strangeness of the fact that all over the civilized world the working classes are the poor classes? Think for a moment how it would strike a rational being who had never been on the earth before, if such an intelligence could come down, and you were to explain to him how we live on earth, how houses and food and clothing and all the many things we need were all produced by work, would he not think that the working people would be the people who lived in the finest houses and had most of everything that work produces? Yet, whether you took him to London or Paris or New York, or even to Burlington, he would find that those called the working people were the people who lived in the poorest houses.

"All this is strange—just think of it. We naturally despise poverty, and it is reasonable that we should. . . . Nature gives to labor, and to labor alone; there must be human work

before any article of wealth can be produced; and in the natural state of things the man who toiled honestly and well would be the rich man, and he who did not work would be poor."

Our author, like all great prophet souls who to the superficial frequently appear pessimists, is essentially an optimist, and he points out the fact, too frequently overlooked, that life is ever moving onward. Things which were once accepted, practiced and considered proper later became abhorrent to the awakened conscience of the world.

"There used to be cannibalism and human sacrifices; there used to be religious prostitution and the murder of weak children and of girls; there used to be bloody revenge and the slaughter of whole populations, judicial tortures, quarterings, burnings at the stake, the lash; and there have been, within our memory, spitzruthens and slavery, which have also disappeared. But if we have outlived these dreadful customs and institutions, this does not prove that there do not exist institutions and customs amongst us which have become as abhorrent to enlightened reason and conscience as those which have in their time been abolished and have become for us only a dreadful remembrance. The way of human perfecting is endless, and at every moment of historical life there are superstitions, deceptions, pernicious and evil institutions already outlived by men and belonging to the past; there are others which appear to us in the far mists of the future; and there are some which we are now living through and whose over-living forms the object of our life. Such in our time is capital punishment and all punishment in general. Such is prostitution, such is flesh-eating, such is the work of militarism, war, and such is the nearest and most obvious evil, private property in land.

"But as people never suddenly freed themselves from all the injustices which had become customary, nor even did so immediately after the more sensitive individuals had recognized their iniquity, but advanced only by leaps, halts, resumings, and again new leaps towards freedom, similar to the struggles of child-birth, so has it been of late with the abolition of slavery, and so is it now with private property in land."

In Russia the vast majority of the people are found on the land, but the division is so inequitable that the millions of peasants are

ever on the verge of starvation, while the royal family, the landed nobility and the favored bureaucrats live in wealth and luxury. Thus we find that the 110,000,000 peasants of Russia own but 35,141,886 acres, while the imperial family alone owns 32,000,000 acres, and the remaining 181,606,519 acres are owned by the landed aristocracy and the members of the bureaucracy. Moreover, the 35,000,000 acres held by the peasants is the poorest tillable land of the empire. In referring to the misery of the millions, arising from their being denied free use of the land, Count Tolstoi says:

"In Russia, where a hundred million of the masses unceasingly suffer from the seizure of the land by private owners, and unceasingly cry out about it, the position of those people who are vainly searching everywhere but where it really is for the means of improving the condition of the people, reminds one exactly of that which takes place on the stage when all the spectators see perfectly well the man who has hidden himself, and the actors themselves ought to see him, but pretend they do not, intentionally distracting each others' attention and seeing everything except that which it is necessary for them to see, but which they do not wish to see."

The evil, of course, is by no means confined to Russia; it obtains all over the civilized world, and in order to illustrate the futility of any scheme of reform or of social or political reorganization that leaves monopoly in land undisturbed, and thus a fruitful field of wealth for the few, our author proceeds as follows:

"People have driven a herd of cows, on the milk products of which they are fed, into an enclosure. The cows have eaten up and trampled the forage in the enclosure, they are hungry, they have chewed each other's tails, they low and moan, imploring to be released from the enclosure and set free in the pastures. But the very men who feed themselves on the milk of these cows have set around the enclosure plantations of mint, of plants for dyeing purposes, and of tobacco; they have cultivated flowers, laid out a racecourse, a park, and a lawn-tennis ground, and they do not let out the cows lest they spoil these arrangements. But the cows bellow, get thin, and the men begin to be afraid that the cows may cease to yield milk, and they invent various means of improving the condition of these cows. They

erect sheds over them, they introduce wet brushes for rubbing the cows, they gild their horns, alter the hour of milking, concern themselves with the housing and treating of invalid and old cows, they invent new and improved methods of milking, they expect that some kind of wonderfully nutritious grass they have sown in the enclosure will grow up, they argue about these and many other varied matters, but they do not, cannot—without disturbing all they have arranged around the enclosure—do the only simple thing necessary for themselves as well as for the cows—to wit, the taking down of the fence and granting the cows their natural freedom of using in plenty the pastures surrounding them.

"Acting thus, men act unreasonably, but there is an explanation of their action; they are sorry for the fate of all they have arranged around the enclosure. But what shall we call those people who have set nothing around the fence, but who, out of imitation of those who do not set free their cows, owing to what they had arranged around the enclosure, also keep their cows inside the fence, and assert that they do so for the welfare of the cows themselves?

"Precisely thus act those Russians, both Governmental and anti-Governmental, who arrange for the Russian people, unceasingly suffering from the want of land, every kind of European institution, forgetting and denying the chief thing: that which alone the Russian people requires—the liberation of the land from private property, the establishment of equal rights on the land for all men.

"For the welfare of the people, we endeavor to abolish the censorship of books, arbitrary banishments, and to organize everywhere schools, common and agricultural, to increase the number of hospitals, to cancel passports and monopolies, to institute strict inspection in the factories, to reward maimed workers, to mark boundaries between properties, to contribute through banks to the purchase of land by peasants, and much else.

"One need only enter into the unceasing sufferings of millions of the people; the dying out from want of the aged, women and children, and of the workers from excessive work and insufficient food—one need only enter into the servitude, the humiliations, all the useless expenditures of strength, into the deprivations, into all the horror of the needless calamities of the Russian rural population

which all proceed from insufficiency of land—in order that it should become quite clear that all such measures as the abolition of censorship, of arbitrary banishment, etc., which are being striven after by the pseudo-defenders of the people, even were they to be realized, would form only the most insignificant drop in the ocean of that want from which the people are suffering.

"But not only do those concerned with the welfare of the people, while inventing alterations, trifling, unimportant, both in quality and quantity, leave a hundred millions of the people in unceasing slavery owing to the seizure of the land—more than this, many of these people, of the most progressive amongst them, desire that the suffering of this people should, by its continual increase, drive them to the necessity—after leaving on their way millions of victims, perished from want and depravity—of exchanging their customary and happy, favorite and reasonable agricultural life for that improved factory life which they have invented for them."

From the above and other similar paragraphs in the paper it seems to us that the Count, though sound on the question of private monopoly in land, has allowed his vision to be so riveted on this great fundamental demand of justice, this requisite of a free state, that he overlooks or minimizes other vital requirements of democracy—of social, political and economic advance. Civilization, thanks to the great revolutionary epoch, has reached a degree of enlightenment that precludes the idea that the leaders in government who are pledged to progress and popular sovereignty will ever abandon as non-essential the fundamental demands of democracy. The failures that have marred and checked the perfect unfoldment of free government have been due to too little democracy. Through inherited reactionary and monarchal ideas and restrictions, privileged and class interests have been enabled to subtly advance in control of the machinery of government, until by corrupt practices and various undemocratic and demoralizing methods of procedure they have checked the orderly progress of government along the lines of fundamental democracy.

To regard constitutional government as something unimportant; to ignore the essential provisions for the maintenance of pure democracy where popular government is established—measures such as the initiative,

referendum and right of recall, for example; to place freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom of the press on the list of non-essentials; to sneer at rational methods of coöperation; to fail to recognize the fact that private-ownership of public utilities is not only the greatest wellspring of corruption in government but also one of the chief sources of the overshadowing wealth of the few, and through this failure to be unable to recognize how imperatively necessary it is for the people to own and operate the natural monopolies; and to regard the intellect-fettering and persecution-fostering curses flowing from the union of church and state as insignificant, even relatively speaking, is, we think, proof positive that the great Russian apostle of moral righteousness has accepted as a sovereign remedy something of first importance, it is true, and something for which all reformers should work, but something which, without the remedies to which we have alluded and other important demands of a programme of progress, would, like all partial remedies, fall fatally short of meeting the requirements of emancipated and enlightened manhood. Indeed, the abolition of land monopoly or the introduction of taxes on land values as advocated by Mr. George would, we think, be entirely impossible of realization unless preceded by several of the important demands which the Count esteems as trivial and non-essential.

Our author believes not only that the land question is the paramount or overshadowing issue in the political, social and economic world, but also that it is the overshadowing religious question. He believes that with the degree of enlightenment now present in all so-called Christian lands, there can be but one answer to the question, Why do not the leaders make the right of the people to the use of the land the paramount issue? and that that answer is to be found in the want of true religion in the hearts of the people. "Without religion," he tells us, "one cannot really love men, and without loving men one cannot know what they require."

With Mazzini he holds that the great reforms always have been and always will be the result of great religious movements.

"And such is the religious movement which is now pending for the Russian people, for all the Russian people, for the working classes deprived of land as well as, and especially for,

the big, medium, and small landowners, and for all those hundreds of thousands of men who, although they do not directly possess land, yet occupy an advantageous position, thanks to the compulsory labor of the people who are deprived of land.

"The religious movement now due among the Russian people consists in undoing the great sin which for a long time has been hurting and is dividing men, not only in Russia, but in all the world.

"In order to serve this great cause, besides thought there must also be something more—a religious feeling—that feeling owing to which in the last century the owners of serfs recognized themselves culpable, and, notwithstanding personal loss and even ruin, sought the means of freeing themselves from the sin which weighed upon them.

"It is this feeling in regard to landed property which must awaken in the well-to-do classes in order that the great work of the liberation of the land should be accomplished; this feeling should awaken in such a degree that people should be ready to sacrifice everything if only they can free themselves from the sin in which they have lived and are living.

"Possessing hundreds, thousands, scores of thousands of acres, trading in land, profiting one way or the other by landed property, and living luxuriously thanks to the oppression of the people, possible through this cruel and obvious injustice—to argue in various committees and assemblies about the improvement of the conditions of the peasant's life without surrendering one's own exclusively advantageous position growing from this injustice, is not only an unkind but a detestable and evil thing, equally condemnable by common sense, honesty and Christianity.

"The emancipation of the serfs in Russia was effected not by Alexander II., but by those men who understood the sin of serfdom and, independently of their own advantages, endeavored to free themselves from it, and it was chiefly effected by such men as Novikoff, Radischeff, the Decembrists, those men who were ready to suffer and did themselves suffer (without making anyone else suffer) in the name of loyalty to that which they recognized as the truth.

"The same must take place in relation to the land.

"I believe that there do now exist such men,

and that they will fulfill that great work not only Russian, but universal, which is before the Russian people.

"The land question has at the present time reached such a state of ripeness as fifty years ago was reached by the question of serfdom. Exactly the same is being repeated.

"Even as now the owners of land talk about the injustice of putting a stop to their criminal ownership, so then people talked about the unlawfulness of depriving owners of their serfs. As then the Church justified the serf right, so now that which occupies the place of the Church—Science—justifies landed property. Just as then slave-owners, realizing their sin more or less, endeavored in various ways without undoing it to mitigate it, and substituted the payment of a ransom by the serfs for direct compulsory work for their masters and moderated their exactions from the peasants, so also now the more sensitive land-owners, feeling their guilt, endeavor to redeem it by renting their land to the peasants on more lenient conditions, by selling it through the peasant banks, by arranging schools for the people, ridiculous houses of recreation, magic-lantern lectures and theaters.

"Exactly the same also is the indifferent attitude of the government to the question. And as then the question was solved, not by those who invented artful devices for the alleviation and improvement of the condition of peasant-life, but by those who, recognizing the urgent necessity of the right solution, did not postpone it indefinitely, did not foresee special difficulties in it, but immediately, straight off, endeavored to arrest the evil, and did not admit the idea that there could be conditions in which evil once recognized must continue, but took that course which under the existing conditions appeared the best—the same now also with the land question.

"The question will be solved, not by those who will endeavor to mitigate the evil or to invent alleviations for the people or to postpone the task of the future, but by those who will understand that, however one may mitigate a wrong, it remains a wrong, and that it is senseless to invent alleviations for a man we are torturing, and that one cannot postpone when people are suffering, but should immediately take the best way of solving the difficulty and immediately apply it in practice. And the more should it be so that the method

of solving the land problem has been elaborated by Henry George to such a degree of perfection that, *under the existing state organization and compulsory taxation* it is impossible to invent any other better, more just, practical and peaceful solution.

"I think (and I would like to contribute to this, in however small a measure) that the removal of this great universal sin—a removal which will form an epoch in the history of mankind—is to be effected precisely by the Russian Slavonian people, who are, by their spiritual and economic character, predestined for this great universal task—that the Russian people should not become proletarians in imitation of the peoples of Europe and America, but, on the contrary, that they should solve the land question at home by the abolition of landed property, and show other nations the way to a rational, free and happy life, outside industrial, factory, or capitalistic coercion and slavery—that in this lies their great historical calling."

"I would like to think that we Russian parasites, reared by and having received leisure for mental work through the people's labor, will understand our sin, and, independently of our personal advantage, in the name of the truth that condemns us, will endeavor to undo it."

Without agreeing with Count Tolstoi in his extreme position as to the self-sufficiency of freedom in the use of the land, to be secured through the practical operation of that system so luminously expounded by Henry George, we believe that this utterance from the greatest Christian in Russia, this manifesto from one of the noblest prophets and apostles of moral progress of this or any other age, is vitally important at the present time, giving emphasis as it does to one of the master-demands of enlightened civilization, of justice and of reason—a demand the realization of which must be striven for by all those who are laboring for a full-orbed democracy based on justice and human rights.

### "LEST WE FORGET."

"Where there is no vision the people perish."  
—*Proverbs*, 29:18.

" . . . . Where shall men hide  
From tyranny and wrong, where life have worth,  
If here the cause succumb? If greed of gold  
Or lust of power or falsehood triumph here,  
The race is lost!"  
—*The Torch-Bearers*, by Arlo Bates.

"Man, at this day, tends to fall into the stomach: man must be replaced in the heart, man must be replaced in the brain. . . . The social question requires to-day, more than ever, to be examined on the side of human dignity."  
—*William Shakespeare*, by Victor Hugo.

"To work for the people,—this is the great and urgent need.

"It is important, at the present time, to bear in mind that the human soul has still greater need of the ideal than of the real.

"It is by the real that we exist; it is by the ideal that we live. Would you realize the difference? Animals exist, man lives."  
—*Ibid.*

#### I. THREE GREAT CRISES IN THE HISTORY OF THE REPUBLIC.

**L**ET NO man be seduced by the siren voice of a false opportunism in a crucial hour like the present. The republic is at the parting of the ways. We are in the midst of

a crisis such as comes to nations and civilizations when the glory of renewed life or the gloom of impending death are the stakes at issue. On but two occasions heretofore have the American people faced great destiny-determining crises as grave as that which confronts us to-day. When the issue of freedom and justice or subserviency to the arbitrary despotism of the throne was clearly drawn, Jefferson, Franklin, Washington, Adams and their great compatriots placed life and all it held dearest on the hazard. They chose death for human rights and progress rather than life with surrender of the cause of justice and the ideal of freedom and self-government. With this choice went the heart and the soul of a great young people, and from that choice issued the Declaration of Independence, the noblest magna charta of freedom that has blossomed on the political highway of civilization.

Again, when the Union was in deadly peril, when the life of the great republic which had emerged from the earlier crisis was threatened, when the basic ideals and principles of democracy—the world-dream of justice and brother-