

CROSBY TO TOLSTOY.

The Dedication of "Plain Talk in Psalm and Parable,"
by Ernest Crosby.

Hail, Tolstoy, bold, archaic shape,
Rude pattern of the man to be,
From 'neath whose rugged traits escape
Hints of a manhood fair and free.

I read a meaning in your face,
A message wafted from above,
Prophetic of an equal race
Fused into one by robust love.

Like some quaint statue long concealed,
Deep buried in Mycenae's mart,
Wherein we clearly see revealed
The promise of Hellenic art,

So stand you; while aloof and proud,
The world that scribbles, prates, and frets
Seems but a simpering, futile crowd
Of Dresden china statuettes.

Like John the Baptist, once more scan
The signs that mark the dawn of day.
Forerunner of the Perfect Man,
Make straight His path, prepare the way.

The desert too is your abode,
Your garb and fare of little worth;
Thus ever has the Spirit showed
The coming reign of heaven on earth.

Not in kings' houses may we greet
The prophets whom the world shall bless,
To lay my verses at your feet
I seek you in the wilderness.

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LEO TOLSTOY ON THE SINGLE TAX.

A Letter Written by Leo Tolstoy, from Moscow, to B.
Eulenstein, at Berlin, Under Date of April 27,
1894. As Printed in the Sterling
Library Leaflet of October
8, 1894.

Respected Sir: In answer to your letter of the 23d of March, I hasten, with peculiar pleasure, to inform you as follows:

I have known Henry George since the appearance of his "Social Problems." I read it, and was struck with the correctness of its fundamental thought, its extraordinary clearness, which is lacking so much in scientific literature, its common sense, its power of analysis, and, particularly for scientific literature, the exceptional Christian spirit with which the whole book is permeated. When I had finished this book, I then read his earlier work, "Progress and Poverty," and learned to appreciate still more what Henry George has accomplished.

You ask my opinion about what Henry George has accomplished with reference to the question of landed property and his system of the single-tax. My opinion is as follows:

Humanity is constantly progressing in the knowledge of social laws and the establishment of conditions of living which correspond with this increased learning. And, therefore, in every period in the life of humanity there takes place on the one hand a clearing of conceptions, and on the other hand a realization in life of that which has become clear to us through enlightenment.

Towards the end of the last and in the beginning of the present century there occurred throughout Christendom the process of clearing the minds with reference to the working classes who lived in various forms of slavery, and the process of establishing new forms, corresponding with the enlightened spirit of the age; the abolishing of slavery and the replacing of the same by the wage system. At the present time the clearing of ideas is in process, with reference to the use of land, and soon, it seems to me, must begin the process of a realization of the clarified conceptions.

In these processes, which in our time are the main tasks in social economy, Henry George was, and is, pioneer and leader of the movement. It is this which gives him his great eminence. He has, through his most excellent works, materially contributed to the clearing of the conceptions of men with reference to this question, as also to a practical solution of the same.

It is remarkable that in raising this question of the abolition of this notoriously outrageous system of private property in land, the same thing is repeated which, if I remember rightly, occurred when the abolition of slavery in Russia and in America, was in question. The governments, and the leading classes, realizing in the very depth of their souls that the solving of the land question means the solving of all social questions, which would deprive them at once of all their special privileges, and that this question is *the question* of the day, make it appear as if they were greatly disturbed over the welfare of the people, and while they introduce savings banks, inspection of factories, income tax, and even the eight hour working day, they ignore very carefully the land question; and with the aid of a politico-economic science which is devoted to their interest, and will prove anything they want proven, they insist that the expropriation of land would be useless, hurtful, nay, even impossible.

The very same thing now occurs which occurred when slavery was in question. The people have long felt that this condition cannot last long; that slavery is an awful, soul-harassing anachronism; but nevertheless a quasi-religion proved that either slavery was necessary, or that the time had not come yet to abolish it. Now the same thing occurs with reference to the land question, only with this difference, that political economy takes the place of religion.

One would have thought that, to every intelligent man, it must be as clear as day that possession of land by people who do not use it, who refuse hundreds, aye, thousands of starving families the occupation of this land, is as immoral as it is infamous—just like the possession of slaves. Nevertheless, we see cultivated, refined, English, Austrian, Prussian, and Russian aristocrats enjoy this cruel, abominable privilege, and, supported by the ready sophistries which a politico-economic science furnishes them for their excuse, they are not only not ashamed of it, but pride themselves on their possessions.

Now the great merit of Henry George consists in this, that he dissolves into nothingness all these sophistries, which are produced in defense of private property in land, so that the defenders of it do not dare to debate any more, but carefully evade this question, and purposely ignore it with silence. But Henry George has also driven them from this attitude of evasion. And in this, again, lies his great merit. Henry George did not content himself with making this question perfectly clear, so that only those with closed eyes can fail to see the unreasonableness and immorality of private property in land. Henry George was also the first who showed the possibility of solving this question. He was the first who gave a clear and straight answer to the common objections which are brought forward by the enemies of all progress, and which culminate in the assertion that the demands of progress are chimerical, impractical, and wild phantoms which one can and may answer with silence. The plan of Henry George silences these objections and puts the question in such a shape that even to-morrow committees could be appointed for the examination and trial of the plan and its crystallization into law.

In Russia, for instance, we could commence to-morrow to examine the question of buying out the land, or its expropriation without compensation for the purpose of nationalization, and it could be adjusted after various changes in the same way as, 33 years ago, the question of freeing the serfs was decided.

The necessity for a change in their condition has been made clear to the people, and also its possibility (changes and improvements may be made in the details of the single-tax system, but the fundamental idea is certainly feasible), they cannot, therefore, refrain from acting accordingly.

It is only necessary that the fundamental idea of the nationalization of land shall become public opinion.

As I see from your letter and your books you sent me your efforts are in this direction. I sympathize with you with all my heart, and wish you the best of success; for my life is devoted to the same work, which I consider my most sacred duty.

Very respectfully,

LEO TOLSTOY.

AS TOLSTOY VIEWS THE WORLD AT EIGHTY YEARS.

Portions of a Letter Written by Herman Bernstein from St. Petersburg, July 20. Published in the New York Times of August 9.

I left St. Petersburg on the day after the first convention of the representatives of the Russian press. The cream of Russian publicists had come together for the purpose of considering the most adequate ways and means of celebrating the eightieth anniversary of Tolstoy's birth. Young men and old, men and women, offered suggestions of how best to honor the man who is at present the Russian people's only pride. They spoke with boundless enthusiasm, with fire, with the zeal and earnestness with which an enslaved people, suddenly set free, speak of freedom.

A young journalist rose and in a forceful speech declared that the most suitable means of honoring Tolstoy would be for the entire Russian press on the 28th day of August, the birthday of Tolstoy, to condemn the wholesale executions that are being committed daily in the Russian Empire and to make a general appeal that these death sentences be abolished.

But Russia—all Russia, except the government, the Holy Synod, and the Black Hundreds—seems to have forgotten for a while its helplessness and its misery in its preparations to do honor to Tolstoy. The people throughout Russia are infinitely more interested in the Tolstoy celebration than in the work of the Russian "Parliament." Only from time to time the Union of the Real Russian People, composed of bands of dark reactionaries, in their organs, which are patronized by the Government, but which are ignored by the people, attack Tolstoy in the vilest terms, branding him as an anti-Christ and a traitor. The Church has done all in its power to hinder the jubilee, and on the day that I started for Yasnaya Polyana I read in the newspapers that the St. Petersburg authorities had refused to legalize a society which was to be formed in honor of Tolstoy and which was to be known as the Leo Tolstoy Society.

On the way to Tula, in the train, a stout, red-faced "man with long hair"—a Russian priest—was seated opposite me. Eager to hear a Russian priest's view concerning conditions in Russia, and particularly his opinion of Tolstoy, I entered into conversation with him. When I told him that I was going to see Tolstoy I noticed how his face suddenly brightened, his red cheeks turned still redder, and bending over to me he said in a low voice, so as not to be overheard by the other passengers:

"You are a happy man. * * * When you see that saintliest man in Russia, tell him that you met a Russian village priest who sends him greetings from the bottom of his heart. Tell him that the priest you met bowed his head with