THE TAP-ROOT OF POVERTY.

Delving After it in the Foundations of Our Economic System.

NATURE'S LAWS ALL RIGHT,

But Those Who Violate Them Need Not Hope to Escape the Penalty.

The Existing Poverty—Two Kinds of Idle—The Laborer's Struggle—George and Bellamy—The Root Evil—What is "Property"?—Ownership of Men—Justice Demanded—The Remedy—Objections Met.

The following is from a recent address delivered in Hamilton, by Mr. John Carrick, and presents a statement of the claims of those who advocate Land Nationalization or the Single Tax:

In these days few observing men escape a struggle with the problem offered by the question of poverty. It waylays the thinker at the street corners, peers at him from broken windows and squalid tenements, and the pinched faces of its child-victims visit him in his dreams and wistfully plead for its solution. It follows him like an animated interrogation point, and in proportion to the broadness of his mind and the goodness of his heart he becomes anxious to discover why it is that in a land of plenty, with bursting granaries and storehouses so full of goods that the factories are periodically shut down to reduce the supply, thousands able to work and eager to give their labor in exchange for those very products should be debarred the opportunity and doomed to want; why it is that while thousands upon thousands toil day after day, year after year, with scarcely a break in the monotony of strained exertion, yet are (even if fortunate enough to obtain constant employment) barely able to support the loved ones dependent upon them, there should be others who though never adding a dollar to the world's wealth nor doing an hour's useful labor, eat, drink, wear and use the choicest products of the labor of others; and who, strange to say, although rioting in luxury, continue to accumulate wealth and the power to utilize the productive capacities of their fellows. He asks himself why it is that diseased public opinion awards the

ADVANTAGES, THE HONORS AND THE RESPECT

to the successful idle, while the idler who does not so well succeed in living upon his fellows, but who may even be anxious to live by his own exertions, is termed a tramp and hounded down by the dogs of law. If he is given to close reasoning he may even wonder at the inconsistency which sends to jail the pauper who begs a few pennies from the compassionate, while it looks up with respect to him who so influences legislation as to divert to his own pocket a proportion of the earnings of others without their consent. He will not find it an easy matter to square the results of his observations with first principles, but he will readily conclude that the condition which presents itself is not the result of obedience to natural laws, but rather of their violation; that, therefore, the evils we deplore are not irremediable, and that the first duty of the economist is to discover wherein we have transgressed those laws in order that we may, with as much expedition as possible, get our car back into the grooves of the celestial wheels.

THE QUESTION OF THE DAY.

The question of poverty—absolute and relative—is pre-eminently the problem of the day. Altruist and egoist, from different but distantly allied motives, study it. It is felt to be a question of prime importance, not only to material but as well to mental, moral and religious progress. Men dislike poverty as they dislike anything that causes pain to themselves or those they love. Rev. Washington Gladden affects to view poverty as a blessing, but I have noticed that few sane people strive after it; and I can but marvel at the characterization of any condition as a "blessing" which, according to the same writer, is brought about by "laziness, inefficiency, waste, mismanagement and injurious indulgence." Now, were poverty recognized as a blessing, the philosopher or economist who would seek to abolish it and its attendant sorrow and suffering would properly be viewed as an undesirable citizen. Rev. Dr. Howard Crosby, in an article in the "Forum," referring to those who deny that the Creator is to blame for the widespread poverty of the day and who seek to bring about a better condition, says: "It is not the fact of poverty that troubles these people, but shere envy"; and to his own satisfaction he traces all poverty to

LIQUOR, LAZINESS AND IMPROVIDENCE.

The rev. gentleman's opinion is frank almost to brutality, but the economist is undisturbed; he is content to deal with facts and reasons, knowing that in the result of his work lies his justification. He can afford to have charity.

But allowing all that should fairly be conceded to incompetence, sloth, prodigality and intemperance—and I am prepared to make large concessions—there still remain the hard facts that thousands upon thousands who would willingly avert poverty by laboring fail to get employment, and that millions who labor steadily and industriously have.

A LIFE-LONG STRUGGLE

to keep the wolf from the door; a struggle rendered more sad by the knowledge that in event of their death or incapacity their loved ones will be thrown upon the charity of the world. No wonder then that thinking men of humane impulses should strive to discover and extirpate the root of the evil. The cause is not to be found in the niggardliness of nature. The earth produces enough and to spare, and modern methods of transportation, storage and distribution provide means of supplying sectional or temporary shortage. Moreover, were the idle employed the abundance would be increased. Why, then, it it that all have not plenty? Why is it that with the vastly increased capacities for production arising from the advance in intelligence and invention we have yet want among the producers, the opportunity to labor regarded as a boon, and the wedge of distinction cleaving asunder society into plutocrat and proletariat classes? The one class numerically weak but strong in wealth—from whence? and earned by whom?—; the other numerically as strong as it is financially weak, feeling that it suffers a grievous wrong, but unable to discover and apply the remedy, groping after light, seeking protection in organizations which—sometimes good, often bad, in their results—at least indicate clearly enough the keen sense of injustice and the desire to improve. The situation is a grave one; it would be a dangerous one were it not for the growth of education, a liberal franchise which gives the worker the knowledge that he has a voice in making the laws, and the more important fact that at heart the masses are not so depraved as they are sometimes depicted. A remedy is urgently required, and in spite of the sneers of the thoughtless and the innuendoes of the interested the number of its seekers multiply.

GEORGE AND BELLAMY.

Among those interested in economics perhaps no subjects to-day receive more attention than those of the Nationalization of Land, of which Mr. Henry George is the chief exponent, and the State Socialism of the Edward Bellamy school. It is not my purpose here to enter upon a discussion of Mr. Bellamy's theory. I only wish to say in passing that the two propositions are essentially different—irreconcilably antagonistic in principle—having nothing in common save the wish of the promoters to benefit their fellows. Mr. Bellamy's contemplates the extinction of the individual in the State, and the assumption by the State of all the functions of ownership, management and employment. It views competition as an evil to be got rid of, and exalts the representatives of the people (the Government) to such a degree of infallibility as to make them incapable of the errors which prevent success even under the stimuli of self-interest and competition. The advocates of Land Nationalization, or the Single Tax, on the contrary, see in competition

GREAT NATURAL LAW

operative n every department of the creation, and, when not interfered with by human enactments, operating to the benefit of the race. They see in *natural* competition a law as invariable as that of gravitation, as necessary to the mundane economy, and, which, like it, can only be resisted at great cost. They do not propose to resist it. What they do propose instead of more paternal legislation is less interference with the liberty of the individual. Our laws, not those of the Creator, are at fault. They ask that competition be restored to a natural basis; that the advantages given to some by man-made laws be restored to mankind as a whole; that within the individual sphere we shall say to corporate power: "Hands off!" In short that the right of the people to the natural opportunities shall be restored to them. They ask, why should the people be deprived of their birthright and then be taxed to give effect to the deprivation? Why should they who produce in abundance not reap abundantly? Why should men willing to work need alms? Whose is the earth—the Lord's or the landlords'?

THE ROOT EVIL.

Let us for a moment forget the complexity of the laws with which we have surrounded ourselves, and turn our consideration to first principles. When the wise man has to decide upon a course or an action he tries it by the canons of Right. I ask you now to bury ideas of temporary expediency, or rather while we view these matters to bear in mind that what is right is always expedient.

Underlying this whole question, we who advocate the Single Tax contend, is the evil of deprivation of natural opportunities—private property in land. We contend that it is not only inexpedient but contrary to every principle of justice that Nature's bounty to all men—the elements—should become the exclusive property of any man or set of men; that to give to one class the land of the earth, which is necessary to the life of the race, is to handicap the others in the competition which Nature insists upon; that in the nature of things land is not property, and that even if we who live to-day were to alienate our birth-right in the natural opportunities we would have no right to disinherit posterity. We contend that to take from the individual his right to the soil is to compel him to purchase the right to live and labor with a portion of his earnings, and is to that extent an assertion of ownership of man by man, less obtrudent but no more admissable than the principle of chattel slavery. Let us glance at

THE NATURE OF LAND.

It is limited in extent; uncreated by man; incapable of being by his efforts materially increased or diminished; necessary to human existence. Man can no more live without access to land than he can live without air, because land is the ultimate upon which labor is exerted and from which sustenance is derived. Ownership of land involves ownership of men. Had Robinson Crusoe been able to enforce land laws such as we respect to-day he would have been as truly master of Friday as ever Louisiana Planter was of Negro slave. Give a few men the land of the Nation and the ability to enforce the land laws and they, for all practical purposes, become as much the owners of the rest as if they had bid them off the auction block; with the added advantage that whereas the chattel slave-owner stood to lose by under-feeding, overwork and abuse, the landlords face no such contingency. Increase of population means more demand for their lands, lower wages if they hire; poor crops mean higher prices for them and a lighter meal for the laborer; even war means to them higher rents. Land is necessary to life; to deprive a child of his interest in the land is to rob him of his birthright. To contend otherwise is to assert that all are not equal before God's law and that some come into the world with a better right to His bounties than others.

LAND NOT PROPERTY.

I have said that in the nature of things land is not property. All ideas of property spring from the right of a man to himself—from liberty. As a man is owner of himself he is naturally owner of all that he produces by the use of his own faculties. All titles to ownership are derived from this first principle, the title of a man to himself, and the recognition of any other title would destroy this one. The right of ownership by reason of production excludes all other titles; and if production gives the producer exclusive title, then it follows that no one can own that which he has not produed or procured from the holder of the title. Man did not create the earth; no man can show a producer's title to a foot of it; no man can convey a higher title than that which he himself possesses; therefore all claims to absolute ownership of land are inconsistent with first principles. In this connection it would be interesting to trace the gradual progress of the alienation of the rights of the whole people in the soil, but time forbids. The Brehon code, having reference to the necessity of access to the land, declared: "Land is perpetual man." Fisher says:

"It may not be out of place here to allude to the use of the word *property* with reference to land; *property*—from *proprium*, my own—is something pertaining to man. I have a property in myself. I have the right to be free. All that proceeds from myself, my thoughts, my writings, my works, are property; but no man made land, and therefore land is not property."

There is no reason that can be urged, beyond the purely physical one, why the water and the air of the planet should not have been parcelled out and made the private property of the few with as much of right and justice as can be adduced to excuse the prevalent idea of private ownership of the soil.

TITLES TO THE SOIL.

I cannot diverge to-night to deal with the various kinds of titles under which the world's lands are held. It is enough if you admit that all of God's children are entitled to life and are equal before His law, to stamp all titles to exclusive ownership of the soil as spurious. As a fact, however, they are all founded in discovery, force or fraud. Title by discovery is the only one for which a defence, on principle, is attempted. But discovery by whom? and of how much? Did the title to America vest in the Mound Builders? Or in the North American Indians? Or in the Norsemen? Or in whom did it vest? Did Columbus' discovery invalidate that title? How much territory does discovery entitle to?—an acre? a hundred acres? a county? a province? a continent? If Crusoe's Island had been half a million square miles in extent would he have been entitled to tribute, as land-owner, from all-comers, and to transmit the title to his heirs? Isn't it absurd! Ownership of the land, I have said,

MEANS OWNERSHIP OF THE MEN,

who of necessity live on the land. In the ultimate it is but another form of slavery, already measurably realized in some of the older and more populous countries. In all cases it gives the power to absorb the earnings of the masses who labor. In Britain, at this day, a small proportion of the population—about 30,000—have the legal right to turn five-sixths of the people of the kingdom upon the streets (which do belong to all), and the owners of the coal lands can say to the workers, "That coal is ours. Come to our terms as to wages and hours of labor or not a pound shall be mined. While you starve in idleness a coal famine will benefit us in the higher prices it ensures." The few own the earth; the many have only air and water. The experiences of the older countries ought to be a lesson to us while reform is yet easy. Here the spareness of population has hitherto masked the evil, but it is growing daily.

JUSTICE MUST BE DONE.

"But," you say, "how are you going to remedy the evil? You cannot with justice take the land from its present holders and parcel it out in equal shares to all." No, nor would such a course be desirable were it practicable. But it is impracticable to do justice by any kind of arbitrary division. Any scheme of amelioration must be one capable of constant adjustment, without disturbance to holders of land, to the ever changing circumstances of population. Every child born into the world has as much right to the soil as has the Duke of Westminster or Jay Gould, or Vanderbilt; but every one does not work land, and an equitable distribution, were such possible, would be destroyed every time a child was born into the world. Fixity of possession is a desideratum, as conducing to productiveness and improvement, and the sacredness of the rights of the holder to all that he owns must be respected. This we propose to secure while restoring to the people their birthright in the soil, without dispossessing anybody, without any shock to society, and without any worse result than the opening up of many opportunities to labor, and enforcing on the drones the too long suspended sentence: "He that worketh not neither shall he eat."

THE REMEDY PROPOSED.

And how is it to be done?

We propose to do it by taxation. We propose that instead of taxes on land, houses, goods and chattels, poll tax, income tax, customs and excise taxes, a simple tax on land values be levied, taking for the benefit of the community that value which is added to the land, irrespective of improvements, by the presence of the population. We propose that the unearned increment, which now goes to enrich the land owner and speculator, be used to relieve labor, production, commerce and improvement of the burdens now imposed upon them. "But," the objector may say, "that is only a roundabout way of taking a man's property by taxation." Discriminate. We would give him all he has produced, all he has in improvements in and upon the land, all he owns, free from impost, but in lieu of all other taxes, direct and indirect, we would take for the common fund, in taxes (economic rent), that value which he neither did nor could produce but which is added to the land by the community irrespective of any expenditure or effort on his part. Is it wrong to ask that those who produce shall possess? Or is it unnatural that those in the enjoyment of unearned incomes should strenuously oppose the realization of such a measure of justice?

HOW THE SPECULATOR IS FAVORED.

Speculation in land is an evil beside which the gambling of the stock exchanges has no economic significance. I have no natural right to hold land for the purpose of obliging another to pay me toll before I permit him to turn it to productive use. Economically it is an evil because it creates fictitious values and diverts the money of the producers to the pockets of those who add nothing to the sum of the world's wealth but play dog-in-the-manger to those who improve and produce. Our system of taxation is distinctively favorable to the speculator as against the producer. I need not go outside of the city for examples; you have all met with them. Go to one of our land speculators who holds valuable property—or rather property of varying value, low when assessed, high when you buy—and secure a small lot. It may have been in very bad shape. You drain it, level it, enclose it, erect a house on it and in other ways add to the appearance of that part of the city. How is your labor and expenditure appreciated? Compare your tax bill with the last one paid by the speculator and you will see! Next year you sod your front, plant some trees, add a fountain, and presto again

UP GO YOUR TAXES,

Until you almost feel that your improvements are in the nature of an offence against the community and wish you had let your money lie in the bank and rented. All this time the neighboring lots held by Mr. Speculator remain unimproved, but when a buyer comes along he is asked a higher price for them because of the labor and money you have expended upon your lot and for which you are so heavily taxed! You do the work and expend the money; you are heavily taxed. The speculator takes the profits on the sale of your lot, and pays low taxes, yet pockets the benefit resulting from your investment and labor, in the increased prices which he demands for the neighboring lots upon which he has neither toiled an hour nor spent a shilling. Why do speculators often bind purchasers of lots to build houses of a specified character? To secure a good class of houses for the city? Oh, no! Not at all! Every good house erected enhances the value of the neighboring lots; and this value, which he does not create, our land and tax laws enable him to divert to his own use.

A LAW AGAINST IMPROVEMENTS.

There are lots in this city to-day of great value, carrying mere rookeries, but assessed comparatively low and paying their owners a good income. Some of the owners would gladly erect better and more creditable structures, but upon making a prospective estimate they discover that the interest on the necessary outlay, plus the annual tax which the city would compel them to pay on a fine new building, would leave them no better off than at present. The system of taxing a man according to what he owns, or rather according to his industry and productiveness, tends to repress production and to discourage improvement. I am glad to see that following the statutory exemption of farm stock the city has decided to exempt manufacturing plant. This is a step in the right direction, but the goal must be the exemption of all improvements, whether the plant of the manufacturer or the cottage of the artizan. There will be no shortage if the community collects its own by the tax on the land values.

TAX SPECULATIVE VALUES.

But it is said it would be hard on the farmer. It would not. Being a tax on the value produced by the presence of the population it would fall most heavily on the most populous centres. The rural neighborhoods would not be materially affected, save that it would prevent the locking up of farm lands for purposes of speculation. Farms equally eligible would pay the same tax whether one starved his farm, stacked his grain, lived in a hut and hoarded his money, or improved his land, built good barns and fences and dwelt in a country mansion. "But you would destroy speculative values," you say. Yes, we would crush out speculation as a form of gambling in natural opportunities; we would tax the speculative values into the coffers of the community. But that would not be a calamity. The land would be as good and there would be as much of it as before. It would be worth just as much for any useful purpose as if you had paid twice the price to a speculator. That eminent authority, Fisher, says:

"Natural laws forbid middlemen, who do nothing to make the land productive, and yet subsist upon the labor of the farmer, and receive as rent part of the produce of his toil."

And again:

Land does not represent *capital*, but the improvements upon it do. A man does not purchase land. He buys the right of possession. In any transfer of land there is no locking up of capital, because one man receives exactly the amount the other expends. * * * The land does not become either more or less productive by reason of the transfer from one person to another; it is the withdrawal of labor that affects its productiveness.

OBJECTIONS MET.

I have heard it said that if the landholder failed to pay the tax he would be in danger of being dispossessed. That is true, but it is not a valid objection. If for a certain length of time the tax was not paid, procedure would be taken by tax sale to make collection, and there is no reason why the rights of the holder to all the proceeds of such sale, over the arrears and costs, should not be as fully secured under the Single Tax system as they are in the case of tax sales now. The Single Tax would be a cheap tax, because it would free commerce and production from many burdens and turn out an army of office-holding tax-eaters to earn a living by productive labor. It would be an easy tax to collect, and would in that way alone save millions. It would take away the premium we now pay to dishonesty, idleness and speculation, and abolish our fines on production, improvement and exchange. It would be a scientifically correct and honest tax, because it would take the share of all in the natural heritage for the benefit of all, instead of excluding the great majority from that heritage and heavily taxing them afterwards. Again, it has been objected that in substituting the single tax on land values for our present inequitable, complex and expensive system, which puts a penalty on the man who makes two blades of grass grow where only one grew before, we would act unjustly in that all save holders of land would escape taxation. This objection indicates a total failure to grasp the underlying principle of the theory of Land Nationalization. If each has an interest in the land, it matters not by whom it is held, the taking by the State, as representing all, of even the whole annual value of the right of each would be equitable and just. That all do not work land has no relevancy to the argument. That many should be deprived of their share of nature's endowment is surely no reason why they should be forced to give a considerable percentage of what they earn under such disadvantageous conditions in municipal, customs, inland revenue and other burdensome taxes.

THE GREAT LAW OF COMPENSATION.

There is a great law of compensation running through nature. Let no man think he can divorce cause and consequence that he can do wrong and escape the penalty. The laws of Nature are the laws God. He is not mocked. It takes more than a Dominion or a Provincial Act to repeal this law:

It will not be contemned of any one,
Who thwarts it loses, and who serves it gains;
The hidden good it pays with peace and bliss,
The hidden ill with pains.
It seeth everything and marketh all;
Do right, it recompenseth; do one wrong,
The equal retribution must be paid
Tho' Dharma tarry long.
It knows not wrath nor pardon, utter true
Its faultless balance weighs;
Times are as naught; to-morrow it will judge,
Or after many days.
By this the slayer's knife did stab himself,
The unjust judge hath lost his own defender;
The false tongue dooms its lie; the creeping thief
And spoiler rob to render.
Such is the law that moves to righteousness,
Which none at last can turn aside or stay;
The heart of it is love; the end of it
Is peace and consummation sweet. Obey!

EFFICACY OF THE REMEDY.

Perhaps if you are prepared to acknowledge the justice and wisdom of the principle for which I contend you may yet question its efficacy as a remedy for the prevailing poverty. I ask you to pause and consider that the question of poverty to-day is not one of production. Production, both actual and in proportion to the labor expended never was more abundant; the Earth was never more fruitful. There is enough wealth to make all comfortable and yet lessen toil. The evil is one of distribution. Competition is rendered unnatural by the fact that an element necessary to labor and to life is made the property of the few, while the many are compelled to pay tribute to that few for permission to labor, and are again taxed to maintain governmental institutions of a frequently prodigal and extravagant character.

WHO EARNED THE SPECULATOR'S PROFITS?

Every dollar made by the land speculator represents so much of the product of labor. Who produced it? Not the speculator. He is to society what the wolf is to the sheepfold. His business is to levy toll on progress; to prey upon the producers. If he adds a cent's worth to the sum of the world's wealth it is in the capacity of a producer. Speculation never made a dollar that was not taken from some man's earnings. Bear that in mind. The producer is always impoverished by exactly the sum taken by the speculator. He is a hole in the pocket of labor; a constant poor relation who might well be dispensed with. The single tax would be death to his craft, because it would destroy the speculative values, and labor would profit by relief from the direct and indirect imposts which, even in this young country, form a heavy and increasing burden. Taxation removed from production and exchange, which it always affects restrictively, and placed upon land values, would stimulate production, because it would not then be profitable to hold valuable land idle. There would be no speculative increase in value to look forward to, and the tax would be the same on lots equally eligible whether covered with thistles, producing abundant crops, or as the site of a factory employing its thousands. It would vastly multiply opportunities for the utilization of labor and it would therefore tend to better wages. It would, in short, reform distribution.

A DEFINITE ISSUE.

Weigh the proposition: A tax on produce tends to restrict production; a tax on commerce tends to discourage exchange; both lead to less work and lower wages. A tax on land values tends to bring land into use, to increase production and, logically, to more employment at better wages, which means more general comfort. The evil in regard to the distribution of wealth—the system by which those who produce not are enabled to possess themselves of a goodly share of the products of the earners—once corrected, and the right of each to all of his earnings not only admitted but given effect in practice; and the conditions which have made the right to labor a boon, reversed, the results cannot but be most beneficent. Competition will then be natural; the laborer worthy of his hire, as we now admit, will not be cheated out of a great portion of it; and if misfortune still make calls upon our charity we shall be the better able to extend it without fear of pauperization when we have founded our economy on Justice. These gross extremes of wealth and poverty will rapidly disappear, and if millionaires become fewer general comfort and happiness will increase, and ere long men will look back and marvel that the very association of idleness and riches and toil and poverty had not long ago pointed us to a solution of the problem.

NOT A REVOLUTIONARY PROPOSAL.

We are nearer the remedy than many imagine. Did time permit I might trace the easy stages by which in Britain duties to the community attaching to the exclusive possession of land have been by interested law-makers shifted to weaker shoulders, and how the idea of the sacredness of property in land has been propagated. Let me point out to you, however, that no citizen under the British Crown *owns* land. The ownership vests in the Crown as representing the whole people—not a few of them. A statute of Edward III., in force to-day, asserts:

"That the King is the universal lord and original proprietor of all land in his kingdom, and that no man doth or can possess any part of it but what has mediately or immediately been derived as a gift from him to be held on feodal service.

And Fisher, referring to this, says

No lawyer will assert for any English subject a higher title than tenancy-in-fee, which bears the impress of *holding* and denies the assertion of *ownership*.

THE WORLD MOVES.

We do not ask to invalidate any titles to the land, or to interfere with its sale or bequest. We simply propose that natural conditions be restored and the right of the people as now recognized in law be made operative in practice; and that the shackles be stricken off and the fines removed from labor, production and exchange.

It was to be expected that a cause which antagonizes such vast interests as does that of Land Nationalization would meet with the bitterest opposition. What Wendell Phillips, William Lloyd Garrison and their handful of abolitionist friends did for the chattel slaves of the South, the Georges, the McGlynns and their daily increasing host of followers propose to do for the world's economic bondsmen, and in the