

subsequent consent of parliament (i.e. of the people) that this theft of the public domain and its natural revenue has been continued to our day. If, then, we find the consequence intolerable, can there be any other cure than to remove the cause? Restore the land to the people; or restore the land rent, which amounts to the same thing. But how?

By gradually abolishing the taxes now levied on the products of labor, and placing them upon the rental value of the land, until that value is the only or single subject of taxation, and the whole of it is absorbed for the use of the community.

This is the language of practical politics, but it means practical ethics as well. Let the reader who has accompanied me so far proceed now to investigate this proposal of the Single Tax, which he may do readily in the works of Henry George and many other writers. If he feels disposed to such investigation my object in writing these Little Essays is accomplished.

The End.

THE ABOLITION OF POVERTY BY THE RESTORATION OF EQUAL RIGHTS TO THE USE OF THE EARTH.

AN APPEAL TO THE WHITE SLAVES OF LANDLORDISM.

By GUSTAV BÜSCHER, of Zurich, Switzerland.

(Translated expressly for *The Single Tax Review*.)

IN TWELVE CHAPTERS.

- I. A LETTER INSTEAD OF A PREFACE.
- II. THE CAUSE OF POVERTY.
- III. PROPERTY AND SLAVERY.
- IV. THE REWARD OF DOING NOTHING.
- V. FATHERLAND AND FREEDOM.
- VI. HISTORICAL SKETCH OF PRIVATE OWNERSHIP OF LAND.
- VII. HOW THE EQUAL RIGHT TO THE USE OF THE EARTH MAY BE RESTORED
BY THE TAXATION OF LAND VALUES.
- VIII. THE TAXATION OF LAND VALUES COMPARED WITH OTHER TAXES.
- IX. HOW IT WOULD BENEFIT THE WORKERS.
- X. HOW IT WOULD BENEFIT INDUSTRY, BUSINESS AND ENTERPRISE.
- XI. HOW IT WOULD BENEFIT FARMERS AND PEASANTRY.
- XII. AN APPEAL TO THE READER.

V.

FATHERLAND AND FREEDOM.

To love the Fatherland is, according to the newspapers of the rich, incumbent on every good citizen; to defend the Fatherland the most sacred

duty of man, of the poor as well as the rich. To deny this is to be branded as disloyal, as a traitor who deserves the contempt of every loyal citizen.

But there is a flaw in this argument. The Fatherland, the land in which we live, is the private property of the rich. So that when the poor are asked to love the Fatherland, they are really asked to love the private property of the rich.

You who pose as Patriots, tell us, then, is it right that the Fatherland should be made private property? Is it right that the poor should pay taxes and allow themselves to be shot down for the Fatherland, and in the mean time have to pay continuously increasing rent for the privilege of living in it? Are the poor to love a Fatherland in which there is not a square foot of earth they can call their own? Can you, without blushing, preach patriotism to the people who are hunted from one rack-rented lodging to another, who can find no healthy home for their pale-faced, hollow cheeked children? Is this sort of patriotism anything else than the most unworthy and disgraceful deception of the people?

Would that the landless, the disinherited, should ask you definitely why they should love the Fatherland; that they should ask themselves why they should allow themselves to be shot down in order to defend the property of the rich! To love the Fatherland and to defend the Fatherland, surely this is the imperative duty of those to whom the Fatherland belongs.

Swiss patriots may say that in Switzerland things are very different. Switzerland is a free country. The poor in Switzerland already have all the rights the people of other countries have yet to fight for. They have the right to reject any law that does not please them. Even though they may own only a few bits of shabby, dilapidated furniture, they work from early morn till late at night in dirty factories and from the burden of continuous work are too weary, dejected and stupified to read a book or to understand a newspaper; still they have the right every three years to throw a vote in the ballot box, and to decide whether Jones or Brown shall be the deputy who in the Federal Council shall be the marionette in the hands of the political wire-pullers. Moreover they have a right to vote whether the federated States shall forbid Jewish butchers to kill their cattle according to their custom, their French fellow citizens to drink absinthe, or whether the Government shall have the chief control or make use of the water-power of the country. And after they have voted, about things of which they really understand nothing, as the rich folk desire, they have once again given proof of their political understanding—of their political ripeness. What can they want more?

True it is that the Constitution of the Federated States of Switzerland guarantee the poor people, in the name of Almighty God, many fine-sounding Freedoms and Rights, which cost the rich people nothing. But in no single word does it refer to the one fundamental and inalienable human right which would secure them their due share of the good things of this earth. We can only wonder at the blindness and stupidity of a people who, without thought,

allow themselves to be so easily swindled out of their primary, preeminent and most vital right.

What is the use of picturing the Constitution as an eternal bond of union to promote "the unity, the power and the honor" of the Federated States, and then sell the land of the Federated States to the highest bidder? What is the use of assuring equal rights to invisible, intangible things, while making everything that is visible and tangible the subjects of the gambling speculations of the rich? Are people free who have come to regard every opportunity to work as a boon for which they have reason to be thankful? Has ever a people been so grossly deceived? The whole of Switzerland is for sale, if only a buyer can be found. If some multi-millionaire so desired, he could buy up almost the whole of Switzerland and convert it into a desert, and the Constitution, framed to promote "the power, the honor and the unity" of the Federated States, could not be invoked to hinder him.

Fable tells us of a pious pirate, who nailed to the mast of his ship a tablet containing all the commandments, with the exception of the seventh, "Thou shalt not steal," which did not suit his calling. Of the same kind are the democratic Constitutions of our times, which with fine sounding words guarantee freedom and equality and all human rights, with the exception of that one which alone has any value to the poor.

It is no wonder that the masses of the people have lost their illusions about and are unwillingly turning from Republicanism and Democracy. They have more than enough of those useless intangible rights which help them nothing. They have lost confidence in those democratic politicians who know only how to fight for abstract things, but who cowardly turn away when it is a question of attacking the power of wealth based upon legalized wrong. Extend the rights of the people, cry our democrats, but they mean by it only an increase of official positions to which but few or none of them can aspire. That the people have a right to the land, they either ignore entirely, or would fain postpone the struggle for this fundamental right to the remote future.

And you few idealists, who take seriously the words freedom and right, do not believe that the Swiss Democracy can continue to be maintained if you repudiate the most fundamental and vital of human rights? Do you really think that empty forms can fetter the spirit of Democracy? You yourselves know well enough how much of this spirit has already vanished in our Swiss Democracy, how our politics are animated by the lowest business instincts, how little is left of the ideal of republican unselfishness. Unselfishness in the politics of our democratic Free States is as rare as is reason in a mad-house.

Will you look on quiescently while blind class hatred and progress-hating reaction are fighting for the mastery? Do you hope by a thousand little palliatives to plaster over this wound in the heart of the people? This is not possible!

The question how undeserved poverty can be abolished must decide the future of the Swiss Democracy, as every other Democracy. If this problem cannot be solved by the judgment of the human conscience, then all your

piecemeal legislation is useless. If there is no wrong to be removed, no right to be restored, then it is needless that we concern ourselves with the Social Question.

Will you grant your people only such equality and freedom as costs you no money, involves no sacrifice? Will you glorify to them their political freedom while meanly withdrawing from them their economic freedom, equality of opportunities in the field of material and industrial life? Then your Democracy becomes but a specious imposition, your vaunted freedom but a mocking counterfeit. Then you prove that those are right who avow that the roots of your patriotism are to be found only in your money bags, that all your fine speeches are but a fraudulent deception of the masses of the people.

VI.

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF PROPERTY IN LAND.

The opponents of the equal right of all to the use of the earth are especially fond of appealing to the fact that the private ownership of the land has been established in every civilized community. They ask, is this not a proof that the unrestricted private ownership of land is necessary to progress and civilization?

As well might they have said two hundred years ago—There is no progressive civilization without slavery or serfdom, and triumphantly ask, is this not a proof that slavery is necessary to progress and civilization?

But it is not true that there never was a progressive civilization without the unequal distribution of property in land, such as exists today. History proves the very opposite. History teaches us that where there has been an equitable and equal distribution of property, more especially of property in land, there civilization has developed and flourished, and that everywhere it has decayed and perished when uprooted from the nourishing foundations of Justice and Equality. True it is that the original equality of property in land has everywhere soon been disturbed; but it is not true that such disturbance was beneficial, or was ever necessary to the well being of mankind.

Tell us of any period in history when the unequal distribution of landed property was not the direct cause of social discontent, uprisings and revolutions; tell us of a Nation where the land was private property and the masses of the people prosperous and contented. Such a period and such a Nation cannot be found in the pages of history.

The greatest thinkers have recognised and declared that the land should not be made the private property of the few; the greatest efforts of the wisest law-givers have always been directed to securing an equitable and equal distribution of property in land. To this end were directed all the Mosaic laws, with their year of Jubilee, with their commandment that the land should not be sold for ever, but remain a family possession; to this end were directed the reforms of Lycurgus and Solon, out of which blossomed the civilization of the Greeks; to this end were no less directed the original laws of ancient

Rome, out of which grew the power of the Roman people. The history of Rome is the classical example of the strength that springs from an equitable distribution of landed property, and of the weakness and ruin that follow the disregard of justice.

In Rome, from which the idea of private property in land has come to us, land was originally common property and severe laws hindered the accumulation of landed property in the hands of the few. Private property in land originated in the lawless appropriation of land Estates, which according to law were the property of the State, *i. e.* of the Roman people. The tribunes of the people who opposed the insolent usurpations of the rich and the powerful were silenced either by bribery or assassination. More than once the blood of the best citizens of Rome was shed in order to protect "the vested rights" of the private land-owners from "unwarranted attacks". The defenders of private property in land were responsible for the assassination of the high minded brothers Tiberius and Caius Gracchus; were responsible for a whole series of the most disgraceful crimes that dishonored the name of Rome. Unrestricted private property in land was created in Rome at a time when the continuous plundering of other nations had poisoned the spirit of the Roman people, had stifled their natural feelings of justice, had indoctrinated the majority of them with the dishonoring passion of the idle, pleasure-loving mob. It was created by people whose insatiable avarice laid waste the thriving world of ancient culture, made heaps of ruins of prosperous towns, and changed the most industrious and enterprising nations into bands of starving dependent proletariats.

Under the dominion of common property in land, temperate well-being had been the lot of all, luxury and indulgence things unknown and unheard of; under the dominion of private property in land the number of the indigent increased from day to day, as did also the luxury, the extravagance, the greed, and the voluptuousness of the rich and powerful. "Men of Rome", said Tiberius Gracchus to his fellow citizens, "you are called the master of the world, yet have no right to a square foot of its soil. The wild beasts have their dens, but the warriors of Italy have only water and air."

So spake to the Roman people not an ordinary demagogue, but a man of the highest nobility of Rome, a patrician, the son of the queenly Cornelia, the nephew of the heroic Scipio, who had overthrown the most dangerous enemy of Rome, and had saved the Roman people from the greatest danger that had ever threatened them. But it was too late for peaceful reform. The Roman people had grown too accustomed to their own oppression and slavery, too corrupted by the habit of enslaving and plundering other people. Tiberius and Caius Gracchus paid with their blood the penalty of their brave enterprise to restore to honor the laws of their fathers. Their downfall sealed the fate of the Roman people. In vain were all the palliatives, all the reforms, with which later it was attempted to stay the decay of the Roman people and the decline of the Roman Empire. At the decisive moment the people of Rome had been tried and found wanting, and from that moment their decline was continuous.

The blind egoism of the possessing classes led to the downfall of the once all-powerful Roman Empire. To them could never come the thought that the one thing necessary to change things for the better was that they should renounce their usurped privileges. Every privilege was made into a right, every wrong serviceable to them, was made into a law. To those who had much more was given, so that they should have a superabundance; from those who had little was taken what they had; this was the spirit of the Roman Empire. The consequent plundering of the weak by the strong, of the many by the few, is the aim of the Laws of Rome, which blinded imitators have described as "written reason." To escape the blessings of Roman law and Roman administration, Roman subjects escaped in hordes from the civilized Roman States to the countries still ruled by those scornfully termed barbarians. The classical Roman Law of today was established at the time when the Roman people were already completely exhausted, when the last trace of healthy inspiration had been killed by century-long robbery and oppression, when, through their own laws, the proudest and most powerful nation of antiquity had been degraded into a handful of cowardly and degenerate men.

The civilization of the Middle Ages would not have been possible had Roman Law been immediately introduced into Germany, more especially if property in land had been treated in accordance therewith. The Roman Law recognised no difference between land and the products of labor. According to German law land was not treated as absolute property, but was held in fee by the peasants and citizens, from the head of the State, the Lord of the Land. This formed the foundation of the Feudal system, the duty of the dependents being to live on the land and to pay a quit rent, either in kind, service or money for the privilege, for which the Lord, on his side, owed them protection against outside enemies. The conditions under which the land was held in fee varied according to time and place, but nowhere were the dependents regarded as serfs without rights. The dependents had their own Courts, and even against the Lord of the Land had such far-reaching rights that without their consent he could not even cut wood in the common forests. The rent which accrued to him could not be increased. If the Lord entered the house of one of his dependents, he had to take off his sword and spurs, in order not to frighten the house-wife. If a hail storm or an army of the enemy ruined the harvest, the peasant had to pay no rent for that year. By all sorts of rules and regulations it was enjoined on the Lord to be mild and forbearing when collecting his rent. When the deputy of the Lord came to collect the indebtedness of the peasant, the chickens in the roost were not to be scared, nor the child in the cradle awakened. The land itself could not be laden with debt or mortgaged. Only the movable possessions of the peasants could be seized for debt. No usurious plundering, no accidental misfortune, could drive the peasant from his fatherly inheritance.

The citizens of the towns were also originally independent. The land of their towns was held by them as inherited property at a yearly rent from the Emperor, the Bishop, or one of the noble Lords of the Land. But this rent

was very low, and could not be increased. Everything the citizen earned by his work remained his property. According to German law the improvements made by a tenant remained his property, and did not accrue to the land lord. On taking back a holding, the land lord had to compensate the tenant for any increased value his labor had given to the land; and the house the tenant had built the Lord had to buy. In this right to improvements, as the Jurists called it, is embodied the recognition of the saying: "What I produce by my work is mine". It was this right to improvements that soon made the citizens of the German towns free and independent. Their work made them prosperous, and their wealth soon gave them the superiority over the unproductive land owners. Without the recognition of labor as the spring and source of property rights, the prosperity of the German towns during the Middle Ages could not have been so equally diffused through all classes of society, and Germany would never have developed a civilization the relics of which, noble and inspiring buildings and imperishable treasures of art and poetry, we today admire and imitate, but can not hope to equal or surpass.

During the dark Middle Ages the condition of the man who had to live by the work of his hands was better than ever before or has been since. The wages of labor were higher than today after so many centuries of technical progress, and, as shown in the accounts of payments made to artisans of the times, eight hours was regarded as a full day's work. At a time when the yield of agriculture was very much lower, the wages of the agricultural workers were three or four times higher. During the fifteenth century a free worker could earn in one day a bushel of barley or six to nine pounds of the best meat, in three or four days a sheep ready for killing, in twenty-two days a fat cow. Such a wage was no exception. In 1482 one of the Saxon Dukes issued a decree fixing the weekly wage of the agricultural day laborer at sixteen groschens, for which at the current price four sheep could be bought. In Augsburg, during low priced years the day laborer could provide himself out of his daily wage with a pound of meat or seven eggs, a quarter of peas, a measure of wine, and the necessary bread, and still have half of his wage left to pay for his dwelling, clothes and other necessaries. The same facts are reported for the countries outside Germany, from Austria, Holland and England.

Romantic historians attribute the happy condition of the workers during the Middle Ages to the influence of the Church, but those who have any real insight into the economic forces of national life will easily recognise a very different cause. It is to be found in the fact that free land was still available, that the greater part of the land was still common property, which, together with the more equitable German law, forced the wages of labor to a higher level—just as the free land of America kept wages there at a higher level than in Europe. During the Middle Ages the English Parliament issued law after law to hinder the increase in wages, a proof that the workers were not being paid their high wages out of pure Christian love of one's neighbor. But all laws to reduce wages were in vain so long as free land was available. In spite of such laws, wages increased beyond the fixed maximum. But when the

English aristocracy had possessed themselves of the land, when hundreds of thousands of their fellow countrymen had been driven from their homes to make room for the flocks of sheep of the large landed proprietors, then wages fell so low that poor relief had to be given to adult workers to prevent them from starving.

With the introduction of the Roman Law into Europe things changed to the detriment of the poor, but to the advantage of the powerful. Roman law recognises no limitation of property rights; its accepted principle is that the owner had a right to use or to misuse his property. If applied only to moveable possessions, to things which have been produced, and if necessary can be produced by labor, this principle may be harmless, but it becomes dangerous and ruinous when extended to property in land. Property in land is misused when the land remains unused, and this misuse injures not only the owner, but the whole community, more especially the industrial classes, who are thus deprived of opportunities to work and earn their living. In many districts in Europe it was an unwritten law that any piece of land left by its owner unused could be put to use by another, and that, if he manured and cultivated it, he could reap from it two harvests without the owner being able to hinder him. But the Roman Law soon cleared away all such customs and laws that served as a protection to labor. Roman Law set no limits and made no distinctions in property rights; above everything else it knew nothing of the beneficial and equitable principles that improvements by right belong to those who make them. According to Roman Law all improvements made by a tenant become the property of the land owner. According to the Roman Law the landless man is not a person with living rights, but a mere complement of a landed estate, a subordinate instrument in the hand of the fortunate possessor, possessing only such rights as the land owner has specifically granted him. The usurious, humiliating conditions of tenancy which the tenant, more especially perhaps the *own* tenant, has today so often to accept, are the fruits of the Roman Law.

(To be Continued.)

POLITICAL economy is only the economy of human aggregates, and its laws are laws which we may individually recognize. What is required for their elucidation is not long arrays of statistics nor the collocation of laboriously ascertained facts, but that sort of clear thinking which, keeping in mind the distinction between the part and the whole, seeks the relation of familiar things, and which is as possible for the unlearned as for the learned.—HENRY GEORGE, *Protection or Free Trade*.

LOOK out for the Edmonton and Grain Growers' Number of this magazine. This, with the Vancouver Number lately published, is the biggest thing in the way of Single Tax propaganda ever attempted.