

for the discovery and advocacy of the simple, natural and practicable method whereby in peaceful fashion, without the revolution and bloodshed which Carlyle prophesied, the great and long standing injustice may be rectified.

(To be concluded in next number.)

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

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### AN APPEAL TO THE WHITE SLAVES OF LANDLORDISM.

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

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#### IV.

##### THE REWARD OF DOING NOTHING.

When Peter and Paul divide a cake, the piece the one gets will be smaller as the piece of the other is larger. Three factors divide between them the fruits of human labor. The workers, those who work with brain or muscle, whether as navvies or draftsmen, as agricultural laborers or bank managers, receive wages, capitalists receive interest on the wealth used in promoting production and commerce; and the land-owner receives rent for the use of the land. Other things remaining equal, the greater the reward of the one, the less there remains for the others.

Under present conditions there is always some invisible and to most of us incomprehensible cause at work constantly forcing wages down to the

lowest level at which the majority of the workers will consent to live and work, and concurrently reducing the normal rate of interest on capital. Despite the marvellous increase in the productive power of labor and capital during the past two hundred years, increasing it more than tenfold, the wages of those who perform all the necessary work have increased but little, and the rate of interest has steadily declined. In truth, the purchasing power of labor has scarcely increased at all; and in all countries the industrial masses of the people are practically living from hand to mouth.

Nor is the reason far to seek. The land on which and from which all men must live has been made the private property of the few; and the ever-increasing rent from land, instead of advantaging all, enriches only its few fortunate possessors. In a small village labor is necessarily less productive than in the larger towns and centres of industry. There is less efficiency, less division of labor, less of modern machinery, and more unnecessary, useless waste. Should the village grow into a city, with an enormous trade, and industries worked with the best machinery, with its railway stations kept busy with goods and passenger trains, and with tramways running through all its streets: who will mainly benefit by such a development? Will employment be more constant and certain, and the wages of labor materially higher? No, employment will not be more certain, but rather the reverse; nor will the wages of labor be materially higher—it is more than probable that, owing to increased rents and the increased cost of provisions, the purchasing power of labor will be lower. Will the rate of interest be higher? No, the normal rate of interest will certainly be lower. Who, then, will reap the lion's share of the increased production? Who else but the land-owners? Land now selling by the acre will then be sold by the foot or yard, now let for a few shillings, or sold for a few pounds, will then let for as many pounds, or be saleable for as many thousands of pounds. The value of the land will go up and up. If you have a piece of land in a favorable situation in a rapidly growing city, you need neither to work nor worry; others will work and worry for you. You need do nothing to promote the developement of the town; you may, indeed, hinder its development by allowing your land to lie idle, and yet from the fruits of their labor its inhabitants will reward you more handsomely than they will their most honored and useful official.

Private property in land is as a lottery to which all must subscribe, but from which only a privileged few can draw the prizes, in which the prizes are for those who have, the blanks for those who have not. Everybody needs the use of land, so everybody must, directly or indirectly, contribute toward the tribute exacted by the landowners. Every child born into the world increases the demand for land and for the fruits of the land; so does every increase in trade, every improvement in the industrial arts. There could not be imagined a more perfect scheme for the legalised plunder of the poor by the rich, of the industrious by the idle.

The accusation that the gains of the landowners are unearned, is often met by the contention that the gain of merchants is also unearned. What

is the difference, it is asked, between the gain of the merchant and the gain of the landowner, between the gain of the land-owner and the gain of the factory-owner, between a man who is speculating in commodities of all kinds, wool, cotton, coal and so on, and the man who is speculating in land? This sounds very plausible; but, even if it were true it is no defence at all. Is a burglar less dishonest because there are other people who also rob us of our possessions?

But it is not even true that there is no difference between the gain of the land-owner and the gain of the merchant and the factory-owner, between the gain of the land speculator and the gain of the speculator in wool, cotton, coal and other merchandise. They are, in truth, as different as fire and water.

Let us take a concrete example. Wheat is produced, drawn forth from the land, by the labor of the farmers. Every family requires annually a certain quantity of wheat. If the wheat harvest promises to be poor, speculation at once sets in and increases the price of wheat long before there is an actual shortage, thus not only checking consumption, but also encouraging increased production. If speculation did not thus set in, consumption would continue unchecked, until scarcity resulted in famine prices. On the other hand, if the harvest promises to be unusually good, speculation at once forces the prices down, giving farmers a necessary warning that increased cultivation of wheat is not required, nor likely to be profitable to them. We are quite aware that speculation may be abused, and lends itself readily to many abuses. But that is no reason for forcibly stopping it. The use of razors is abused when men cut their throats with them; but we do not therefore advocate stopping the production of razors. Many people commit suicide on our railways, but no one would suggest that we should, therefore, do without railways.

Speculation in land, on the other hand, yields no such advantages. It may abnormally increase the price of land, but cannot increase the supply by one square foot. For the land is there, whether made the object of ownership or of speculation, or not. Speculation in land cannot, therefore, increase the supply of land in order to meet a growing demand. Nor can it check the production of land in order to save the producers useless and unnecessary labor. Its one purpose and its one effect is to force up the rental and selling price of land, and thus to mulct the land-users to the greatest possible extent. In all other markets there are speculators for a fall as well as for a rise, the latter striving to force prices up, the former striving to force prices down. But in the land market all are striving to force prices up. To all who have to use land, speculation in land is never beneficial, but always injurious, never a blessing, always a curse.

Again, the profit gained by the man who invests his money in some successful industry or business, is a very different thing from the profit gained by the man who invests his money in land. The latter does not promote, in fact may hinder, the growth and development of the trade and industry of the community; the former enables enterprises to be undertaken which without such aid would not have been possible. Furthermore, investments in business and industrial enterprises only yield a return if such business result