

MOSES

An Address
By Henry George

ONE PENNY

THE UNITED COMMITTEE FOR TAXATION
OF LAND VALUES

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“M O S E



AN audience that filled the St. Andrew's Hall, Glasgow, to overflowing, assembled at 7 o'clock on Sunday evening, 28th December, 1884, to hear Mr. George deliver his lecture on "Moses," the great Law-giver of the Hebrews.



THE LECTURE.

There is in modern thought a tendency to look upon the prominent characters of history as resultants rather than as initiatory forces. As in an earlier stage the irresistible disposition is to personification, so now it is to reverse this process, and to resolve into myths mighty figures long enshrined by tradition.

Yet, if we try to trace to their sources movements whose perpetuated impulses eddy and play in the currents of our times, we at last reach the individual. It is true that "institutions make men," but it is also true that "in the beginnings men make institutions."

In a well-known passage Macaulay has described the impression made upon the imagination by the antiquity of that church, which, surviving dynasties and empires, carries the mind back to a time when the smoke of sacrifice rose from the Pantheon and camelopard and tiger bounded in the Flavian amphitheatre. But there still exist among us observances—transmitted in unbroken succession from father to son—that go back to a yet more remote past. Each recurring year brings a day on which, in every land, there are men who, gathering about them their families, and attired as if for a journey, eat with solemnity a hurried meal. Before the walls of Rome were traced, before Homer sung, this feast was kept, and the event to which it points was even then centuries old.

That event signals the entrance upon the historic stage of a people on many accounts remarkable—a people who, though they never founded a great empire nor built a great metropolis, have exercised upon a large portion of mankind an influence, widespread, potent, and continuous; a people who have for nearly two thousand years been without country or organised nationality, yet have preserved their identity and faith through all vicissitudes of time and fortune—who have been overthrown, crushed, scattered; who have been ground, as it were, to very dust, and flung to the four winds of heaven; yet who, though thrones have fallen, and empires have perished, and creeds have changed, and living tongues have become dead, still exist with a vitality seemingly unimpaired—a people who unite the strangest contradictions; whose annals now blaze with glory, now sound the depths of shame and woe.

The advent of such a people marks an epoch in the history of the world. But it is not of that advent so much as of the central and colossal figure around which its traditions cluster that I propose to speak.

Three great religions place the leader of the Exodus upon the highest plane they allot to man. To Christendom and to Islam, as well as to Judaism, Moses is the mouthpiece and law-giver of the Most High; the medium, clothed with supernatural powers, through which the Divine Will has spoken. Yet this very exaltation, by raising him above comparison, may prevent the real grandeur of the man from being seen. It is amid his brethren that Saul stands taller and fairer.

On the other hand, the latest school of Biblical criticism asserts that the books and legislation attributed to Moses are really the product of an age subsequent to that of the prophets. Yet to this Moses, looming vague and dim, of whom they can tell us almost nothing, they, too, attribute the beginning of that growth which flowered after centuries in the humanities of Jewish law, and in the sublime conception of one God, universal and eternal, the Almighty Father; and again, higher still and fairer rose that guiding star of spiritual light which rested over the stable of Bethlehem in Judea.

But whether wont to look on Moses in this way or in that, it may be sometimes worth our while to take the point of view in which all shades of belief or disbelief may find common ground, and accepting the main features of Hebrew record and tradition, consider them in the light of history as we know it, and of human nature as it shows itself to-day. Here is a case in which sacred

history may be treated as we would treat profane history without any shock to religious feeling. Nor can the keenest criticism resolve Moses into a myth. The fact of the Exodus presupposes such a leader.

To lead into freedom a people long crushed by tyranny; to discipline and order such a mighty host; to harden them into fighting men, before whom warlike tribes quailed and walled cities went down; to repress discontent and jealousy and mutiny; to combat reactions and reversions; to turn the quick, fierce flame of enthusiasm to the service of a steady purpose, require some towering character—a character blending in highest expression the qualities of politician, patriot, philosopher, and statesman.

Such a character in rough but strong outline the tradition shows us—the union of the wisdom of the Egyptians with the unselfish devotion of the meekest of men. From first to last, in every glimpse we get, this character is consistent with itself, and with the mighty work which is its monument. It is the character of a great mind, hemmed in by conditions and limitations, and working with such forces and materials as were at hand—accomplishing, yet failing. Behind grand deed, a grander thought. Behind high performance the still nobler ideal.

Egypt was the mould of the Hebrew nation—the matrix, so to speak, in which a single family, or, at most, a small tribe grew to a people as numerous as the American people at the time of the Declaration of Independence. For four centuries, according to the Hebrew tradition—that is to say, for a period longer than America has been known to Europe—this growing people, coming a patriarchal family from a roving, pastoral life, had been placed under the dominance of a highly developed and ancient civilisation—a civilisation whose fixity is symbolised by monuments that rival in endurance the everlasting hills—a civilisation so ancient that the Pyramids, as we now know, were hoary with centuries ere Abraham looked upon them.

No matter how clearly the descendants of the kinsmen who came into Egypt at the invitation of the boy-slave become prime minister, maintained the distinction of race, and the traditions of a freer life, they must have been powerfully affected by such a civilisation; and just as the Hebrews of to-day are Polish in Poland, German in Germany, and American in the United States, so, but far more clearly and strongly, the Hebrews of the Exodus must have been essentially Egyptians.

It is not remarkable, therefore, that the ancient Hebrew institutions show in so many points the influence of Egyptian ideas and customs. What *is* remarkable is the dissimilarity. To the

unreflecting nothing may seem more natural than that a people, in turning their backs upon a land where they had been long oppressed, should discard its ideas and institutions. But the student of history, the observer of politics, knows that nothing is more unnatural. Habits of thought are even more tyrannous than habits of the body. They make for the masses of men a mental atmosphere out of which they can no more rise than out of the physical atmosphere. A people long used to despotism may rebel against a tyrant; they may break his statutes and repeal his laws, cover with odium that which he loved, and honour that which he hated; but they will hasten to set up another tyrant in his place. A people used to superstition may embrace a purer faith, but it will be only to degrade it to their old ideas. A people used to persecution may flee from it, but only to persecute in their turn when they get power.

For "institutions make men." And when amid a people used to institutions of one kind, we see suddenly arise institutions of an opposite kind, we know that behind them must be that active, that initiative force—the men who in the beginnings make institutions.

This is what occurs in the Exodus. The striking differences between Egyptian and Hebrew polity are not of form but of essence. The tendency of the one is to subordination and oppression; of the other, to individual freedom. Strangest of recorded births! from out the strongest and most splendid despotism of antiquity comes the freest republic. From between the paws of the rock-hewn Sphinx rises the genius of human liberty, and the trumpets of the Exodus throb with the defiant proclamation of the rights of man.

Consider what Egypt was. The very grandeur of her monuments, that after the lapse, not of centuries but of millenniums, seem to say to us, as the Egyptian priests said to the boastful Greeks, "Ye are children!" testify to the enslavement of the people—are the enduring witnesses of a social organisation that rested on the masses an immovable weight. That narrow Nile valley, the cradle of the arts and sciences, the scene, perhaps, of the greatest triumphs of the human mind, is also the scene of its most abject enslavement. In the long centuries of its splendour, its lord, secure in the possession of irresistible temporal power, and securer still in the awful sanctions of a mystical religion, was as a god on earth, to cover whose poor carcass with a tomb befitting his state hundreds of thousands toiled away their lives. For the classes who came next to him were all the sensuous delights of a most luxurious civilisation, and high intellectual pleasures

which the mysteries of the temple hid from vulgar profanation. But for the millions who constituted the base of the social pyramid there was but the lash to stimulate their toil, and the worship of beasts to satisfy the yearnings of the soul. From time immemorial to the present day the lot of the Egyptian peasant has been to work and to starve that those above him might live daintily. He has never rebelled. The spirit for that was long ago crushed out of him by institutions which make him what he is. He knows but to suffer and to die.

Imagine what opportune circumstances we may, yet to organise and carry on a movement resulting in the release of a great people from such a soul-subduing tyranny, backed by an army of half a million highly trained soldiers, requires a leadership of most commanding and consummate genius. But this task, surpassingly great though it is, is not the measure of the greatness of the leader of the Exodus. It is not in the deliverance from Egypt, it is in the constructive statemanship that laid the foundations of the Hebrew commonwealth that the superlative grandeur of that leadership looms up. As we cannot imagine the Exodus without the great leader, neither can we account for the Hebrew polity without the great statesman. Not merely intellectually great, but morally great—a statesman aglow with the unselfish patriotism that refuses to grasp a sceptre or found a dynasty.

The lessons of modern history, the manifestations of human nature that we behold around us, would teach us to see in the essential divergence of the Hebrew polity from that of Egypt the impress of a master mind, even if Hebrew tradition had not testified both to the influence of such a mind, and to the constant disposition of accustomed ideas to reassert themselves in the minds of the people. Over and over again the murmurings break out; no sooner is the back of Moses turned than the cry, "These be thy gods, O Israel!" announces the setting up of the Egyptian calf; while the strength of the monarchical principle shows itself in the inauguration of a king as quickly as the far-reaching influence of the great leader is somewhat spent.

It matters not when or by whom were compiled the books popularly attributed to Moses; it matters not how much of the code there given may be the survivals of more ancient usage or the amplifications of a later age; its great features bear the stamp of a mind far in advance of people and time, of a mind that beneath effects sought for causes, of a mind that drifted not with the tide of events but aimed at a definite purpose.

The outlines that the record gives us of the character of Moses—the brief relations that wherever the Hebrew scriptures

are read have hung the chambers of the imagination with vivid pictures—are in every way consistent with this idea. What we know of the life illustrates what we know of the work. What we know of the work illumines the life.

It was not an empire such as had reached full development in Egypt, or existed in rudimentary patriarchal form in the tribes around, that Moses aimed to found. Nor was it a republic where the freedom of the citizen rested on the servitude of the helot, and the individual was sacrificed to the state. It was a commonwealth based upon the individual—a commonwealth whose ideal it was that every man should sit under his own vine and fig tree, with none to vex him or make him afraid; a commonwealth in which none should be condemned to ceaseless toil; in which, for even the bond slave, there should be hope; in which, for even the beast of burden, there should be rest. A commonwealth in which, in the absence of deep poverty, the manly virtues that spring from personal independence should harden into a national character—a commonwealth in which the family affections might knit their tendrils around each member, binding with links stronger than steel the various parts into the living whole.

It is not the protection of property, but the protection of humanity, that is the aim of the Mosaic code. Its sanctions are not directed to securing the strong in heaping up wealth so much as to preventing the weak from being crowded to the wall. At every point it interposes its barriers to the selfish greed that, if left unchecked, will surely differentiate men into landlord and serf, capitalist and workman, millionaire and tramp, ruler and ruled. Its Sabbath day and Sabbath year secure, even to the lowliest, rest and leisure. With the blast of the jubilee trumpets the slave goes free, the debt that cannot be paid is cancelled, and a re-division of the land secures again to the poorest his fair share in the bounty of the common Creator. The reaper must leave something for the gleaner; even the ox cannot be muzzled as he treadeth out the corn. Everywhere, in everything, the dominant idea is that of our homely phrase—"Live and let live!"

And the religion with which this civil policy is so closely intertwined exhibits kindred features—from the idea of the brotherhood of man springs the idea of the fatherhood of God. Though the forms may resemble those of Egypt, the spirit is that which Egypt had lost. Though a hereditary priesthood is retained, the law in its fullness is announced to all the people. Though the Egyptian rite of circumcision is preserved, and Egyptian symbols reappear in all the externals of worship, the tendency to take the type for the reality is sternly repressed. It is only when we think of the

bulls and the hawks, of the deified cats and sacred ichneumons of Egypt, that we realise the full meaning of the command—"Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image!"

And if we seek beneath form and symbol and command, the thought of which they are but the expression, we find that the great distinctive feature of the Hebrew religion, that which separates it by such a wide gulf from the religions amid which it grew up, is its utilitarianism, its recognition of divine law in human life. It asserts, not a God whose domain is confined to the far off beginning or the vague future, who is over and above and beyond men, but a God who in his inexorable laws is here and now; a God of the living as well as of the dead; a God of the market place as well as of the temple; a God whose judgments wait not another world for execution, but whose immutable decrees will, in this life, give happiness to the people that heed them and bring misery upon the people that forget them. Amid the forms of splendid degradation in which a once noble religion had in Egypt sunk to petrification, amid a social order in which the divine justice seemed to sleep, I AM was the truth that dawned upon Moses. And in his desert contemplation of nature's flux and reflux, the death that bounds her life, the life she brings from death, always consuming yet never consumed—I AM was the message that fell upon his inner ear.

The absence in the Mosaic books of any reference to a future life is only intelligible by the prominence into which this truth is brought. Nothing could have been more familiar to the Hebrews of the Exodus than the doctrine of immortality. The continued existence of the soul, the judgment after death, the rewards and punishments of the future state, were the constant subjects of Egyptian thought and art. But a truth may be hidden or thrown into the background by the intensity with which another truth is grasped. And the doctrine of immortality, springing as it does from the very depths of human nature, ministering to aspirations which become stronger and stronger as intellectual life rises to higher planes and the life of the affections becomes more intense, may yet become so incrustated with degrading superstitions, may be turned by craft and selfishness into such a potent instrument for enslavement, and so used to justify crimes at which every natural instinct revolts, that to the earnest spirit of the social reformer it may seem like an agency of oppression to enchain the intellect and prevent true progress; a lying device with which the cunning fetter the credulous.

The belief in the immortality of the soul must have existed in strong forms among the masses of the Hebrew people. But the

truth that Moses brought so prominently forward, the truth his gaze was concentrated upon, is a truth that has often been thrust aside by the doctrine of immortality, and that may perhaps, at times, react on it in the same way. This is the truth that the actions of men bear fruit in this world, that though on the petty scale of individual life wickedness may seem to go unpunished and wrong to be rewarded, there is yet a Nemesis that with tireless feet and pitiless arm follows every national crime, and smites the children for the father's transgression; the truth that each individual must act upon and be acted upon by the society of which he is a part, that all must in some degree suffer for the sin of each, and the life of each be dominated by the conditions imposed by all.

It is the intense appreciation of this truth that gives the Mosaic institutions so practical and utilitarian a character. Their genius, if I may so speak, leaves the abstract speculations where thought so easily loses and wastes itself, or finds expression only in symbols that become finally but the basis of superstition, in order that it may concentrate attention upon the laws which determine the happiness or misery of men upon this earth. Its lessons have never tended to the essential selfishness of asceticism, which is so prominent a feature in Brahminism and Buddhism, and from which Christianity and Islamism have not been exempt. Its injunction has never been, "Leave the world to itself that you may save your own soul," but rather, "Do your duty in the world that you may be happier and the world be better." It has disdained no sanitary regulation that might secure the health of the body. Its promise has been of peace and plenty and length of days, of stalwart sons and comely daughters.

It may be that the feeling of Moses in regard to a future life was that expressed in the language of the Stoic, "It is the business of Jupiter, not mine;" or it may be that it partook of the same revulsion that shows itself in modern times, when a spirit essentially religious has been turned against the forms and expressions of religion, because these forms and expressions have been made the props and bulwarks of tyranny, and even the name and teachings of the Carpenter's Son perverted into supports of social injustice—used to guard the pomp of Cæsar and justify the greed of Dives.

Yet, however, such feelings influenced Moses. I cannot think that such a soul as his, living such a life as his—feeling the exaltation of great thoughts, feeling the burden of great cares, feeling the bitterness of great disappointments—did not stretch forward to the hope beyond; did not rest and strengthen and ground itself in the confident belief that the death of the body is but the

emancipation of the mind ; did not feel the assurance that there is a power in the universe upon which it might confidently rely, through wreck of matter and crash of worlds. Yet the great concern of Moses was with the duty that lay plainly before him ; the effort to lay the foundations of a social state in which deep poverty and degrading want should be unknown—where men released from the meaner struggles that waste human energy should have opportunity for intellectual and moral development.

Here stands out the greatness of the man. What was the wisdom and stretch of the forethought that in the desert sought to guard in advance against the dangers of a settled state, let the present speak.

In the full blaze of the nineteenth century, when every child in our schools may know as common truths things of which the Egyptian sages never dreamed ; when the earth has been mapped and the stars have been weighed ; when steam and electricity have been pressed into our service, and science is wresting from nature secret after secret—it is but natural to look back upon the wisdom of three thousand years ago as the man looks back upon the learning of the child.

And yet, for all this wonderful increase of knowledge, for all this enormous gain of productive power, where is the country in the civilised world in which to-day there is not want and suffering—where the masses are not condemned to toil that gives no leisure, and all classes are not pursued by a greed of gain that makes life an ignoble struggle to get and to keep ? Three thousand years of advance, and still the moan goes up, "They have made our lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service !" Three thousand years of advance ! and the piteous voices of little children are in the moan.

We progress and we progress ; we girdle continents with iron roads and knit cities together with the mesh of telegraph wires ; each day brings some new invention ; each year marks a fresh advance—the power of production increased, and the avenues of exchange cleared and broadened. Yet the complaint of "hard times" is louder and louder ; everywhere are men harassed by care, and haunted by the fear of want. With swift, steady strides and prodigious leaps, the power of human hands to satisfy human wants advances and advances, is multiplied and multiplied. Yet the struggle for mere existence is more and more intense, and human labour is becoming the cheapest of commodities. Besides glutted warehouses human beings grow faint with hunger and shiver with cold ; under the shadow of churches festers the vice that is born of want.

Trace to their root the causes that are thus producing want in the midst of plenty, ignorance in the midst of intelligence, aristocracy in democracy, weakness in strength—that are giving to our civilisation a one-sided and unstable development, and you will find it something which this Hebrew statesman three thousand years ago perceived and guarded against. Moses saw that the real cause of the enslavement of the masses of Egypt was, what has everywhere produced enslavement, the possession by a class of the land upon which and from which the whole people must live. He saw that to permit in land the same unqualified private ownership that by natural right attaches to the things produced by labour, would be inevitably to separate the people into the very rich and the very poor, inevitably to enslave labour—to make the few the masters of the many, no matter what the political forms, to bring vice and degradation no matter what the religion.

And with the foresight of the philosophic statesman who legislates not for the need of a day, but for all the future, he sought, in ways suited to his times and conditions, to guard against this error. Everywhere in the Mosaic institutions is the land treated as the gift of the Creator to His common creatures, which no one has the right to monopolise. Everywhere it is, not your estate, or your property, not the land which you bought, or the land which you conquered, but “the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee”—“the land which the Lord lendeth thee.” And by practical legislation, by regulations to which he gave the highest sanctions, he tried to guard against the wrong that converted ancient civilisations into despotisms—the wrong that in after centuries ate out the heart of Rome, that produced the imbruting serfdom of Poland and the gaunt misery of Ireland, the wrong that is to-day crowding families into single rooms in this very city and filling our new States on the other side of the Atlantic with tramps. He not only provided for the fair division of the land among the people, and for making it fallow and common every seventh year, but by the institution of the jubilee he provided for a redistribution of the land every fifty years, and made monopoly impossible.

I do not say that these institutions were, for their ultimate purpose, the very best that might even then have been devised, for Moses had to work, as all great constructive statesmen have to work, with the tools that came to his hand, and upon materials as he found them. Still less do I mean to say that forms suitable for that time and people are suitable for every time and people. I ask, not veneration of the form, but recognition of the spirit.

Yet how common it is to venerate the form and to deny the spirit. There are many who believe that the Mosaic institutions

were literally dictated by the Almighty, yet who would denounce as irreligious and "communistic" any application of their spirit to the present day. And yet to-day how much we owe to these institutions! This very day the only thing that stands between our working classes and ceaseless toil is one of these Mosaic institutions. Nothing in political economy is better settled than that under conditions which now prevail the working classes would get no more for seven days' labour than they now get for six, and would find it as difficult to reduce their working hours as now.

Let the mistakes of those who think that man was made for the Sabbath, rather than the Sabbath for man, be what they may; that there is one day in the week that the working man may call his own, one day in the week on which hammer is silent and loom stands idle, is due, through Christianity, to Judaism—to the code promulgated in the Sinaitic wilderness. And who that considers the waste of productive forces can doubt that modern society would be not merely happier but richer, had we received as well as the Sabbath day the grand idea of the Sabbath year, or adapting its spirit to our changed conditions, secured in another way an equivalent reduction of working hours.

It is in these characteristics of the Mosaic institutions that, as in the fragments of a Colossus, we may read the greatness of the mind whose impress they bear—of a mind in advance of its surroundings, in advance of its age; of one of those star souls that dwindle not with distance, but, glowing with the radiance of essential truth; hold their light while institutions and languages and creeds change and pass.

That the thought was greater than the permanent expression it found, who can doubt? Yet from that day to this that expression has been in the world a living power.

From the free spirit of the Mosaic law sprang that intensity of family life that amid all dispersions and persecutions has preserved the individuality of the Hebrew race; that love of independence that under the most adverse circumstances has characterised the Jew; that burning patriotism that flamed up in the Maccabees and bared the breasts of Jewish peasants to the serried steel of Grecian phalanx and the resistless onset of Roman legion; that stubborn courage that in exile and in torture held the Jew to his faith. It kindled that fire that has made the strains of Hebrew seers and poets phrase for us the highest exaltations of thought; that intellectual vigour that has over and over again made the dry staff bud and blossom. And passing outward from one narrow race it has exerted its power wherever the influence of the Hebrew scriptures has been felt. It has toppled thrones and cast down hierarchies.

It strengthened the Scottish covenanter in the hour of trial, and the Puritan amid the snows of a strange land. It charged with the Ironsides at Naseby; it stood behind the low redoubt on Bunker Hill.

But it is in example as in deed that such lives are helpful. It is thus that they dignify human nature and glorify human effort, and bring to those who struggle hope and trust. The life of Moses, like the institutions of Moses, is a protest against that blasphemous doctrine, current now as it was three thousand years ago; that blasphemous doctrine preached oft times even from Christian pulpits; that the want and suffering of the masses of mankind flow from a mysterious dispensation of providence, which we may lament, but can neither quarrel with nor alter. Let him who hugs that doctrine to himself, him to whom it seems that the squalor and brutishness with which the very centres of our civilisation abound are not his affair, turn to the example of that life. For to him who will look, yet burns the bush; and to him who will hear, again comes the voice, The people suffer: who will lead them forth?

Adopted into the immediate family of the supreme monarch and earthly god; standing almost at the apex of the social pyramid which had for its base those toiling millions; priest and prince in a land where prince and priest might revel in all delights—everything that life could offer to gratify the senses or engage the intellect was open to him.

What to him the wail of them who beneath the fierce sun toiled under the whips of relentless masters? Heard from granite colonnade or beneath cool linen awning, it was mellowed by distance to monotonous music. Why should he question the Sphinx of Fate, or quarrel with destinies the high gods had decreed? So had it always been, for ages and ages; so must it ever be. The beetle rends the insect, and the hawk preys on the beetle; order on order, life rises from death and carnage, and higher pleasures from lower agonies. Shall the man be better than nature? Soothing and restful flows the Nile, though underneath its placid surface finny tribes wage cruel war, and the stronger eat the weaker. Shall the gazer who would read the secrets of the stars turn because under his feet a worm may writhe?

Theirs to make bricks without straw; his a high place in the glorious procession that with gorgeous banners and glittering emblems, with clash of music and solemn chant, winds its shining way to dedicate the immortal edifice their toil has reared. Theirs the leek and the garlic; his to sit at the sumptuous feast. Why

should he dwell on the irksomeness of bondage, he for whom the chariots waited, who might at will bestride the swift coursers of the Delta, or be borne on the bosom of the river with oars that beat time to songs? Did he long for the excitement of action?—there was the desert hunt, with steeds fleetier than the antelope and lions trained like dogs. Did he crave rest and ease?—there was for him the soft swell of languorous music and the wreathed movements of dancing girls. Did he feel the stir of intellectual life?—in the arcana of the temples he was free to the lore of ages; an initiate in the select society where were discussed the most engrossing problems; a sharer in that intellectual pride that centuries after compared Greek philosophy to the babblings of children.

It was no sudden ebullition of passion that caused Moses to turn his back on all this, and to bring the strength and knowledge acquired in a dominant caste to the life-long service of the oppressed. The forgetfulness of self manifested in the smiting of the Egyptian shines through the whole life. In institutions that moulded the character of a people, in institutions that to this day make easier the lot of toiling millions, we may read the stately purpose.

Through all that tradition has given us of that life runs the same grand passion—the unselfish desire to make humanity better, happier, nobler. And the death is worthy of the life. Subordinating to the good of his people the natural disposition to found a dynasty, which in his case would have been so easy, he discards the claims of blood and calls to his place of leader the fittest man. Coming from a land where the rites of sepulture were regarded as all-important, and the preservation of the body after death was the passion of life; among a people who were even then carrying the remains of their great ancestor, Joseph, to rest with his fathers, he yet conquered the last natural yearning and withdrew from the sight and sympathy of men to die alone and unattended, lest the idolatrous feeling, always ready to break forth, should in death accord him the superstitious reverence he had refused in life.

“No man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.” But while the despoiled tombs of the Pharaohs mock the vanity that reared them, the name of the Hebrew who, revolting from their tyranny, strove for the elevation of his fellow-men, is yet a beacon light to the world.

Leader and servant of men! Law-giver and benefactor! Toiler toward the promised land seen only by the eye of faith! Type of the high souls who in every age have given to earth its heroes and its martyrs, whose deeds are the precious possession

of the race, whose memories are its sacred heritage! With whom among the founders of empire shall we compare him?

To dispute about the inspiration of such a man were to dispute about words. From the depths of the unseen such characters must draw their strength; from fountains that flow only from the pure in heart must come their wisdom. Of something more real than matter; of something higher than the stars; of a light that will endure when suns are dead and dark; of a purpose of which the physical universe is but a passing phase, such lives tell.



FROM PROGRESS AND POVERTY.

By HENRY GEORGE.

CONCLUDING CHAPTER.

THE PROBLEM OF INDIVIDUAL LIFE.

My task is done.

Yet the thought still mounts. The problems we have been considering lead into a problem higher and deeper still. Behind the problems of social life lies the problem of individual life. I have found it impossible to think of the one without thinking of the other, and so, I imagine, will it be with those who, reading this book, go with me in thought. For, as says Guizot, "when the history of civilisation is completed, when there is nothing more to say as to our present existence, man inevitably asks himself whether all is exhausted, whether he has reached the end of all things?"

This problem I cannot now discuss. I speak of it only because the thought which, while writing this book, has come with inexpressible cheer to me, may also be of cheer to some who read it; for, whatever be its fate, it will be read by some who in their heart of hearts have taken the cross of a new crusade. This thought will come to them without my suggestion; but we are surer that we see a star when we know that others also see it.

The truth that I have tried to make clear will not find easy acceptance. If that could be, it would have been accepted long ago. If that could be, it would never have been obscured. But it will find friends—those who will toil for it; suffer for it; if need be, die for it. This is the power of Truth.

Will it at length prevail? Ultimately, yes. But in our own times, or in times of which any memory of us remains, who shall say?

For the man who, seeing the want and misery, the ignorance and brutishness caused by unjust social institutions, sets himself, in so far as he has strength, to right them, there is disappointment and bitterness. So it has been of old time. So it is even now. But the bitterest thought—and it sometimes comes to the best and bravest—is that of the hopelessness of the effort, the futility of the sacrifice. To how few of those who sow the seed is it given to see it grow, or even with certainty to know that it will grow.

Let us not disguise it. Over and over again has the standard of Truth and Justice been raised in this world. Over and over again has it been trampled down—oftentimes in blood. If they are weak forces that are opposed to Truth, how should Error so long prevail? If Justice has but to raise her head to have Injustice flee before her, how should the wail of the oppressed so long go up?

But for those who see Truth and would follow her; for those who recognise Justice and would stand for her, success is not the only thing. Success! Why, Falsehood has often that to give; and Injustice has often that to give. Must not Truth and Justice have something to give that is their own by proper right—their in essence and not by accident?

That they have, and that here and now, every one who has felt their exaltation knows. But sometimes the clouds sweep down. It is sad, sad reading, the lives of the men who would have done something for their fellows. To Socrates they give the hemlock; Gracchus they killed with sticks and stones; and One, greatest and purest of all, they crucified. These seem but types. To-day Russian prisons are full, and in long processions, men and women, who, but for high minded patriotism, might have lived in ease and luxury, move in chains toward the death-in-life of Siberia. And in penury and want, in neglect and contempt, destitute even of the sympathy that would have been so sweet, how many in every country have closed their eyes? This we see.

But do we see it all?

In writing I have picked up a newspaper. In it is a short account, evidently translated from a semi-official report, of the execution of three Nihilists at Kieff—the Prussian subject Brandtner, the unknown man calling himself Antonoff, and the nobleman Ossinsky. At the foot of the gallows they were permitted to kiss one another. "Then the hangman cut the rope, the surgeons pronounced the victims dead, the bodies were buried at the foot of the scaffold, and the Nihilists were given up to eternal oblivion." Thus says the account. I do not believe it. No; not to oblivion!

I have in this inquiry followed the course of my own thought. When, in mind, I set out on it, I had no theory to support, no conclusions to prove. Only when I first realised the squalid misery of a great city, it appalled and tormented me, and would not let me rest, for thinking of what caused it and how it could be cured.

But out of this inquiry has come to me something I did not think to find, and a faith that was dead revives.

The yearning for a further life is natural and deep. It grows with intellectual growth, and perhaps none really feel it more than those who have begun to see how great is the universe and how infinite are the vistas which every advance in knowledge opens before us—vistas which would require nothing short of eternity to explore. But in the mental atmosphere of our times, to the great majority of men on whom mere creeds have lost their hold, it seems impossible to look on this yearning save as a vain and childish hope, arising from man's egotism, and for which there is not the slightest ground or warrant, but which, on the contrary, seems inconsistent with positive knowledge.

Now, when we come to analyse and trace up the ideas that thus destroy the hope of a future life, we shall find them, I think, to have their source, not in any revelations of physical science, but in certain teachings of political and social science which have deeply permeated thought in all directions. They have their root in the doctrines, that there is a tendency to the production of more human beings than can be provided for; that vice and misery are the result of natural laws, and the means by which advance goes on; and that human progress is by a slow race development. These doctrines, which have been generally accepted as approved truth, do what, except as scientific interpretations have been coloured by them, the extensions of physical science do not do—they reduce the individual to insignificance; they destroy the idea that there can be in the ordering of the universe any regard for his existence, or any recognition of what we call moral qualities.

It is difficult to reconcile the idea of human immortality with the idea that nature wastes men by constantly bringing them into being where there is no room for them. It is impossible to reconcile the idea of an intelligent and beneficent Creator with the belief that the wretchedness and degradation which are the lot of such a large proportion of human kind result from his enactments; while the idea that man mentally and physically is the result of slow modifications perpetuated by heredity, irresistibly suggests the idea that it is the race life, not the individual life, which is the object of human existence. Thus has vanished with many of us, and is still vanishing with more of us, that belief which in the battles and ills of life affords the strongest support and deepest consolation.

Now, in the inquiry through which we have passed, we have met these doctrines and seen their fallacy. We have seen that population does not tend to outrun subsistence; we have seen that the waste of human powers and the prodigality of human suffering do not spring from natural laws, but from the ignorance and selfishness of men in refusing to conform to natural laws. We have seen that human progress is not by altering the nature of men; but that, on the contrary, the nature of men seems, generally speaking, always the same.

Thus the nightmare which is banishing from the modern world the belief in a future life is destroyed. Not that all difficulties are removed—for turn which way we may, we come to what we cannot comprehend; but that difficulties are removed which seem conclusive and insuperable. And, thus, hope springs up.

But this is not all.

Political Economy has been called the dismal science, and as currently taught, *is* hopeless and despairing. But this, as we have seen, is solely because she has been degraded and shackled; her truths dislocated; her harmonies ignored; the word she would utter gagged in her mouth, and her protest against wrong turned into an indorsement of injustice. Freed, as I have tried to free her—in her own proper symmetry, Political Economy is radiant with hope.

For properly understood, the laws which govern the production and distribution of wealth show that the want and injustice of the present social state are not necessary; but that, on the contrary, a social state is possible in which poverty would be unknown, and all the better qualities and higher powers of human nature would have opportunity for full development.

And, further than this, when we see that social development is governed neither by a Special Providence nor by a merciless fate, but by law, at once unchangeable and beneficent; when we see that human will is the great factor, and that taking men in the aggregate, their condition is as they make it; when we see that economic law and moral law are essentially one, and that the truth which the intellect grasps after toilsome effort is but that which the moral sense reaches by a quick intuition, a flood of light breaks in upon the problem of individual life. These countless millions like ourselves, who on this earth of ours have passed and still are passing, with their joys and sorrows, their toil and their striving, their aspirations and their fears, their strong perceptions

of things deeper than sense, their common feelings which form the basis even of the most divergent creeds—their little lives do not seem so much like meaningless waste.

The great fact which Science in all her branches shows is the universality of law. Wherever he can trace it, whether in the fall of an apple or in the revolution of binary suns, the astronomer sees the working of the same law, which operates in the minutest divisions in which we may distinguish space, as it does in the immeasurable distances with which his science deals. Out of that which lies beyond his telescope comes a moving body and again it disappears. So far as he can trace its course the law is ignored. Does he say that this is an exception? On the contrary, he says that this is merely a part of its orbit that he has seen; that beyond the reach of his telescope the law holds good. He makes his calculations, and after centuries they are proved.

Now, if we trace out the laws which govern human life in society, we find that in the largest as in the smallest community, they are the same. We find that what seem at first sight like divergencies and exceptions are but manifestations of the same principles. And we find that everywhere we can trace it, the social law runs into and conforms with the moral law; that in the life of a community, justice infallibly brings its reward and injustice its punishment. But this we cannot see in individual life. If we look merely at individual life we cannot see that the laws of the universe have the slightest relation to good or bad, to right or wrong, to just or unjust.* Shall we then say that the law which is manifest in social life is not true of individual life? It is not scientific to say so. We would not say so in reference to anything else. Shall we not rather say this simply proves that we do not see the whole of individual life?

The laws which Political Economy discovers, like the facts and relations of physical nature, harmonize with what seems to be the law of mental development—not a necessary and involuntary

* Let us not delude our children. If for no other reason than for that which Plato gives, that when they come to discard that which we told them as pious fable they will also discard that which we told them as truth. The virtues which relate to self do generally bring their reward. Either a merchant or a thief will be more successful if he be sober, prudent, and faithful to his promises; but as to the virtues which do not relate to self—

“ It seems a story from the world of spirits,
When any one obtains that which he merits,
Or any merits that which he obtains.”

progress, but a progress in which the human will is an initiatory force. But in life, as we are cognizant of it, mental development can go but a little way. The mind hardly begins to awake ere the bodily powers decline—it but becomes dimly conscious of the vast fields before it, but begins to learn and use its strength, to recognise relations and extend its sympathies, when, with the death of the body, it passes away. Unless there is something more, there seems here a break, a failure. Whether it be a Humboldt or a Herschel, a Moses who looks from Pisgah, a Joshua who leads the host, or one of those sweet and patient souls who in narrow circles live radiant lives, there seems, if mind and character here developed can go no further, a purposelessness inconsistent with what we can see of the linked sequence of the universe.

By a fundamental law of our minds—the law, in fact, upon which Political Economy relies in all her deductions—we cannot conceive of a means without an end; a contrivance without an object. Now, to all nature, so far as we come in contact with it in this world, the support and employment of the intelligence that is in man furnishes such an end and object. But unless man himself may rise to or bring forth something higher, his existence is unintelligible. So strong is this metaphysical necessity that those who deny to the individual anything more than this life are compelled to transfer the idea of perfectibility to the race. But as we have seen, and the argument could have been made much more complete, there is nothing whatever to show any essential race improvement. Human progress is not the improvement of human nature. The advances in which civilisation consists are not secured in the constitution of man, but in the constitution of society. They are thus not fixed and permanent, but may at any time be lost—nay, are constantly tending to be lost. And further than this, if human life does not continue beyond what we see of it here, then we are confronted, with regard to the race, with the same difficulty as with the individual! For it is as certain that the race must die as it is that the individual must die. We know that there have been geologic conditions under which human life was impossible on this earth. We know that they must return again. Even now, as the earth circles on her appointed orbit, the northern ice cap slowly thickens, and the time gradually approaches, when its glaciers will flow again, and austral seas, sweeping northward, bury the seats of present civilisation under ocean wastes, as it may be they now bury what was once as high a civilisation as our own. And beyond these periods, science discerns a dead earth, an exhausted sun—a time when, clashing together, the

ear system shall resolve itself into a gaseous form, again to begin immeasurable mutations.

What then is the meaning of life—of life absolutely and inevitably bounded by death? To me it seems intelligible only as the avenue and vestibule to another life. And its facts seem explainable only upon a theory which cannot be expressed but in myth and symbol, and which, everywhere and at all times, the myths and symbols in which men have tried to portray their deepest perceptions do in some form express.

The scriptures of the men who have been and gone—the Bibles, the Zend Avestas, the Vedas, the Dhammapadas, and the Korans; the esoteric doctrines of old philosophies, the inner meaning of grotesque religions, the dogmatic constitutions of Ecumenical Councils, the preachings of Foxes, and Wesleys, and Savonarolas, the traditions of red Indians, and beliefs of black savages, have a heart and core in which they agree—a something which seems like the variously distorted apprehensions of a primary truth. And out of the chain of thought we have been following there seems vaguely to rise a glimpse of what they vaguely saw—a shadowy gleam of ultimate relations, the endeavour to express which inevitably falls into type and allegory. A garden in which are set the trees of good and evil. A vineyard in which there is the Master's work to do. A passage—from life behind to life beyond. A trial and a struggle, of which we cannot see the end.

Look around to day.

Lo! here, now, in our civilised society, the old allegories yet have a meaning, the old myths are still true. Into the Valley of the Shadow of Death yet often leads the path of duty, through the streets of Vanity Fair walk Christian and Faithful, and on Greatheart's armour ring the clanging blows. Ormuzd still fights with Ahriman—the Prince of Light with the Powers of Darkness. He who will hear, to him the clarions of the battle call.

How they call, and call, and call, till the heart swells that hears them! Strong soul and high endeavour, the world needs them now. Beauty still lies imprisoned, and iron wheels go over the good and true and beautiful that might spring from human lives.

And they who fight with Ormuzd, though they may know not each other—somewhere, sometime, will the muster roll be called.

Though Truth and Right seem often overborne, we may not see it all. How can we see it all? All that is passing, even here,

we cannot tell. The vibrations of matter which give the sensations of light and colour become to us indistinguishable when they pass a certain point. It is only within a like range that we have cognisance of sounds. Even animals have senses which we have not. And, here? Compared with the solar system our earth is but an indistinguishable speck; and the solar system itself shrivels into nothingness when gauged with the star depths. Shall we say that what passes from *our* sight passes into oblivion? No, not into oblivion. Far, far beyond our ken the eternal laws must hold their sway.

The hope that rises is the heart of all religions! The poets have sung it, the seers have told it, and in its deepest pulses the heart of man throbs responsive to its truth. This, that Plutarch said, is what in all times and in all tongues has been said by the pure hearted and strong sighted, who, standing as it were, on the mountain tops of thought and looking over the shadowy ocean, have beheld the loom of land:

"Men's souls, encompassed here with bodies and passions, have no communication with God, except what they can reach to in conception only, by means of philosophy, as by a kind of an obscure dream. But when they are loosed from the body, and removed into the unseen, invisible, impassable, and pure region. this God is then their leader and king; they there, as it were, hanging on Him wholly, and beholding without weariness and passionately affecting that beauty which cannot be expressed or uttered by men."



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