

THE COMING CONTEST. 11134

Henry George's Lecture on the
Next Great Struggle.

Abolish Private Ownership in Land,
Abolish Taxation on Everything but
the Bare Value of Land.

Henry George lectured last night in the Metropolitan Temple on "The Next Great Struggle," dealing with some of the ideas advanced in the book which has made him famous, especially his theory of the abolition of private ownership of land. The auditorium was crowded with an enthusiastic audience, and the applause throughout was hearty and spontaneous, often interrupting the speaker in the middle of a sentence. Mr. George spoke for an hour and a half without notes or manuscript. In substance he said: "We are to-day on the verge of a great movement. An unrest and disquiet pervades the whole world. In France the Commune has wrested victory from defeat. In Germany, under the heel of the man of blood and iron, the social propaganda goes on, and in Russia that enormous military machine is changing into a mighty force for the people. Even now there is a bill in the House of Lords of Great Britain that a few short years ago would have been considered revolutionary. From Scandinavia to Italy all is unrest, commotion, yearning and the prelude of coming change. What is it? It is a quickening of the seeds cast here, a renewal of the fight focused here and of the spirit proclaimed in that immortal Declaration of Independence that all men are created equal. It is but an extension of the revolution in this country of one hundred years ago, and where it has not yet won a final victory it is moving on its way to do so. But Europe is striving not alone for what we have attained. It is seeking for social and not merely political reform. It is this which gives it greater importance and causes greater resistance. The same feeling of unrest exists in this country. All was not accomplished when our forefathers instituted the Republic and the ballot. There is other tyranny than that of kings and rulers. Giant forces are arising, corporations are dwarfing the State and compelling the American citizens to crouch and cringe themselves to gain a bare living. It is a great mistake to suppose that we have arrived at the ultimate. We must go on.

THE AMERICAN BOAST.

There was a time when it was the hopeful, defiant boast of Americans that our forefathers accomplished all that was necessary for any people to accomplish, and we looked with pity on Europe with all her troubles in store. That feeling does not prevail to-day. We look with charity, nay, complacency on monarchies and strong rulers. Let us look this thing in the face. What matters it to me whether a President or Czar rules, whether the laws are made

by or for me, as compared with my chances of getting a living. In the freest country in the world we would be slaves if we had to cringe for a living. If I can make my living without fear or favor I am a free man, and I would rather live under a despotic government if that was guaranteed me than a republic. There is no despotism like the despotism of poverty, no tyranny like the tyranny of want, and the highest allegiance a man can owe is to the woman who shares his lot. Liberty does not exist without social conditions that give liberty. The American Republic was established only because our forefathers were nearly all farmers, existing under social conditions which rendered it possible to establish it. Where there are great extremes of the very rich and the very poor no free government can be established. History on every page shows freemen passing into serfs because the social conditions have changed. We are threatened with this in America. Everywhere government is passing into the hands of rings, corporations and banded rings in politics. At every election money becomes a more and more important factor. In the great factories of the East the owners dictate how their laborers shall vote. The papers talk about good citizens not taking politics in hand, and controlling them. Let them try it, and see how quick they retire with their hands embraced. There are many approximate causes for this, but the primary and greatest cause is the

GROWING INEQUALITY OF WEALTH.

In a community no class should be raised so high as not to be affected by what affects the masses, nor none so low as not to take an interest in public affairs. Let the contrary be the rule, and power will concentrate in the hands of a few, and jobbers will sell it, plunderers use it, and the people will be enslaved and robbed. This is the teaching of history, and this is what is going on in this country to-day. There is an increasing perception of equal rights, a universal tendency toward a diffusion of knowledge, and it is manifested in art, science, literature, manners and customs, yet this tendency, swelling as the sap is swelled by the Springtime's sun, is met by a direct counter force. This is the age of machinery, and the tendency of machinery is for the employment of larger amounts of capital and more subdivisions of labor. All modern inventions only make possible extensions of vast businesses. The independent mechanic is turned into the factory-hand; and whereas before he could wander about obtaining work anywhere, in order now to find employment he must find an employer. Whether machinery is tending to improve the masses is a question not now to be discussed, but there is no mistaking the fact, it is decreasing the independence of laborers. In our large shops it is now impossible to teach a boy a trade. One man attends this wheel, another that one, and one could not do the work of the other, and few ever understand all of it. It is no better in agriculture. The tendency of the large farmer is to absorb the small farmer, because he can obtain his machinery and supplies cheaper, has better facilities for marketing, and above all can make the easiest terms with the railroads. Thus men go on creating wealth until it is now counted in hundreds of millions and soon will be in thousands of millions. On the other hand, there is being created a class of utter pariahs—tramps—

who are to be found everywhere. Even with the good times they are having now in the East, you often read stories of the direct want and suffering—stories of plucking poverty, not the result of idleness, but coming on those who have stumbled, or are unfortunate, or have lost their natural protectors.

POLITICS ARE NO BETTER.

Neither great party has a principle to fight for. Both are dead, except as machines for corruption, and all are split because there is nothing to arouse party fealty. All over the East public attention is drifting to social ideas. They are honeycombing society everywhere, and you can see by the establishment of anti-monopoly movements how rapidly the storm is rising. The lecturer gave the details of a private meeting of business men in New York city to protest against railroad expropriation, and he said that the business men of San Francisco would not dare to hold such a meeting for fear of the anger of the railroad magnates of this coast. He told them that it was like trying to blind Samson with withes, and that there was no possible solution of the question save that of State ownership of railroads, because the railroads are bigger than the States. He was astonished, he said, to hear every speaker not only fully agree with him, but many express more radical ideas. On these social questions the political parties of the future must base their lines. But, however it comes up, or in what shape, the struggle must lead to the final question, for there is a question greater than all these,

THE LAND QUESTION.

The land is the element, the raw material, from which we draw all our wealth. Everything is the product of the land. This flesh and blood of ours is but it grew from the soil, and we are as much the children of the soil as the lilies of the field. Strip man of all that pertains to land, and what is left but the disembodied spirit? The whole structure of society rests upon it. He who is master of the land is master of the men who must live upon it. When it belongs to a class, power and wealth pass into the hands of that class. The value of land increases with the growth of society. As a town improves, real estate values improve. What does that mean? It means that the owners are capable of taking more and more from the earnings of the soil. Let Flood pay all the costs of city government, Peter Donahue furnish gas for nothing, Spring Valley water, and Stanford buy up all the street railroads he does not already own and agree to transport passengers free across the continent, the result would be a grand boom in real estate. And what then? You would simply have to pay more for the privilege of living, and these benefactions would not do one iota of good for the working classes. That result will not be reached so long as the fundamental cause is left untouched. You might get the most perfect governmental machine and do nothing to elevate the condition of the working classes until you touch this treasure of land question. That you must at length come to the miserable condition of the working classes is not the effect of machinery, because the natural result would be the reverse. Look at what the Irish land agitation has done and is yet doing. In its nature and effects it is a universal question, and men all the world over are beginning to see that land, by common right, is

THE COMMON PROPERTY OF ALL.

The lecturer quoted from the famous address of

Bishop Nulty, to the effect that the land was bestowed upon the people by the Creator, and any settlement which excludes the poorest from his share is not only an injustice to man, but impious resistance to the benevolent intentions of the Creator. In the English periodicals we find nothing but discussion on the land question. They are numerous, but still discussions enough to set me thinking. Private property in land is doomed, because the privilege of owning land is already on the defensive. The idea is so absurd that it must be put down. A celebrated historian said that when the right of a ruler to rule is questioned he does not rule long. The same will be the result in this struggle. To prove that the doctrine was not strange, the lecturer quoted Thomas Jefferson to the effect that land belongs in usufruct to the living, and the dead have no right over it. When an owner of land dies it should revert to the State. He held that there was nothing dangerous in the doctrine that the State may abolish private ownership in lands as it first granted it. The denial of private property in land is not a denial of the rights of private property. All thoughtful men recognize that private property is what prevents society from being a horde of barbarians. But that right is only the right of man to control his own muscles and the expenditure of his own labor. That which one makes or obtains from the one who made it is private property. When a right ceases to be useful, when it becomes injurious the same power which made it can unmake it.

AN INCONSISTENT THEORY.

The theory is inconsistent. If a man must give his labor to the man who does not labor he is robbed. Value for value is exchange, but value for nothing is robbery. If a number of men own a ship it is not necessary to saw it into pieces. Thousands of men own the same railroad, but all have their shares without each man taking a car. In London and New York co-operators own lands and lease them and the profit goes into the common treasury. We do the same here. The land adjoining is owned by the city and leased, and the profits go into the School Fund. Here is the true and easy solution: We cannot divide up the lands, because in a short while somebody would soon get possession of more than his share. But we can let those who wish to use them pay their value into the public fund. This can be easily reached. Abolish the tax on other forms of property, and let it slip down on the bare value of land and you have it. It is not necessary to stop there. If we go that far the whole produce can be taken for the use of the community. This is not all; but the first thing to do to strike at the unjust distribution of wealth, we must come to this.

PRIVATE PROPERTY IN LAND

Even now blocks the way of civilization, and it must be destroyed, or civilization itself will be overthrown. As mankind advances he is thrown into closer relations, and he must have a social condition adapted for these things. All over the world the struggle is beginning. Upon us devolves as great a duty as devolved upon our forefathers one hundred years ago. The true republic is not yet established, and every true patriot will devote his best efforts to the performance of this duty. Whether the struggle comes with the carol of the lark or the beat of war drums, it is coming. Let what may oppose it, let what may stand before it, giant forces are arising which must make their way.