

indeed, directly or indirectly, a necessary of life for each of them. When, all, therefore, relatively to this gift, are perfectly equal, and nobody has any real claim to it; when all equally need the liberality and generosity, of God in it, and no one can afford, or is willing, to part with his share in it—to alienate it from any or all of them would be to do them a wanton injustice and grievous wrong, and would be a direct disappointment to the intentions of the donor besides.

#### **The Whole People the True Owners of the Land.**

When, therefore, a privileged class arrogantly claim a right of private property in the land of a country, that claim is simply unintelligible, except on the broad principle that the land of the country is not a free gift at all, but solely a family inheritance; that it is not a free gift which God has bestowed on His creatures; but an inheritance which He has left to His children; that they, therefore, being God's eldest sons, inherit this property by right of succession; that the rest of the world have no share or claim to it, on the ground that their origin is tainted with the stain of illegitimacy. The world, however, will hardly submit to this shameful imputation of its own degradation, especially when it is not sustained by even a shadow of reason.

I infer, therefore, that no individual or class of individuals can hold a right of private property in the land of a country; that the people of that country, in their public corporate capacity, are, and always must be, the real owners of the land of their country—holding an indisputable title to it, in the fact that they received it as a free gift from its creator, and as a necessary means of preserving and enjoying the life He has bestowed upon them.

#### **Distinction Between the Right of the Individual and the Right of the Community.**

Usufruct, therefore, is the highest form of property that individuals can hold in land. On the other hand, I have shown that the cultivator's right of property in the produce of the land, in the improvements he has made in the productiveness of the land, and in its undisturbed occupation, as long as he continues to improve it—that these various rights are all founded on the strictest principles of justice, and that their recognition and protection by the state will secure for the land the highest culture and improvement it is capable of receiving, and will draw from it, without fail, the largest returns of human food it is capable of yielding. On these immutable principles of justice and right, the order, progress and welfare of society depend. They allow free scope and hold out the highest encouragement to the fullest development of the energy and activity of human industry and enterprise, by securing to everyone the full fruits of his

labor, and recognizing in him a right of property to all that his hands produce. They guarantee to him immunity and protection from disturbance as long as he devotes himself with earnestness and zeal to his industrial pursuits. On the other hand, if a man, through indolence or incompetence, allows his land to run wild, to return to its primitive sterility and barrenness, so as to produce nothing at all, or, at all events, much less than it is capable of yielding, it is no hardship to that man if these principles call on him to surrender a trust which he held from society, and which, to the great detriment of society he has so grievously abused. Finally, it is no injustice to refuse the remuneration of labor to those who have not labored at all. This usufruct, therefore, is a right of property in land which is held mainly for the benefit of the public and for the advancement of the general interests of the community.

And yet the general interests of the community are hardly distinguishable from the private interests of the usufructuary. The larger the amount of permanent improvements made in the soil and the richer and the more abundant returns it will yield, the better will it be for both interests. An usufructuary or farmer who labors might and main for his own self-interests, labors with the same amount of earnestness and zeal for the interests of the public as well. But it is the consideration of the public interests that will determine the continuity of his occupancy. The continuity of his occupancy entirely depends on the continuity of its real, practical effectiveness for the advancement of the interests of the public. The moment it ceases to be useful and beneficial to the public welfare, that moment it ceases to have a right to exist any longer. If individuals could have a right of private property in land, that right would not be fettered by these responsibilities; in fact it would not be liable to any responsibility at all.

The distinction, therefore, between the two rights of property in land is essential and fundamental, and it is absolutely necessary to apprehend it clearly and to bear it distinctly in mind. Now, there is nothing novel or startling in the common and inalienable right of property which I have shown every people possesses in the land of its country. I know of no writer on political economy who disputes it, although I am familiar with the works of many of the most eminent of them.

#### **That the Rent of Land Should go to the Community a Design of the Divine Providence.**

Bastiat, the great defender of the property classes in France, certainly does not dispute it; on the contrary, he assumes it as a settled principle of justice throughout his entire treatise.

The late Mr. Cairnes, though by far the ablest and most eloquent of all the modern