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RANDOM REFLECTIONS.



THE character of the people composing it, makes the character of the State. Human weakness ever has refuge in hiding even from itself an unpleasant truth. Human folly, forgetful that wrongdoing incurs its own punishment as effect follows cause, seeks to escape the imputations of its own error in disguising its true character under the friendly shelter of a smooth-sounding name. That human needs can only be supplied through human exertion—that nature yields for man's support only in response to man's toil of body or brain—that the element of most value in human character is usefulness—is the condition of an eternal law the fulfilment of the divine prediction, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread all the days of thy life."

If our conduct, individual or natural, is not founded in righteousness, the sophistry of concealment is powerless to ward off its consequences. We may speak of a thief by a softer name, or resort to the fig-leaf device of hiding the operations of a gambler by calling him a speculator; and the designing and unthinking alike lose sight of the true character of these offences under the cloak we thus give them, but the consequences of the theft or the evils of the gambling remain the same. The essential element that constitutes theft is

that it takes by stealth or cunning that which is the rightful possession of another; and is not that which constitutes gambling the effort to secure accumulation without returning an equivalent? That these things may be accomplished under the forms of law or with the sanction of authority in religion, makes no difference.

The right of the individual to the possession of his own person and powers of body and mind, and as it must follow to the possession and disposal of their full fruits, existed prior to the formation of any state or the enactment of any human law, and are not derived from the state or the law, or dependent for their existence on either. Nor can they rightfully be revoked or denied by religious authority or establishment, however eminent or venerated among men. The things which are taken, or the agencies used for their taking, matters not so long as the transaction contains the essential elements of gambling or theft. It is not necessary that men to gamble should sit down in a low den to a gaming table and shuffle cards, or that to steal they should, in the absence of the man to whom they belong, and without his consent, enter his premises and carry off his goods.

We speak of the man who appropriates to himself directly the tools or the goods which a fellow-workman buys with his wages for his own use as a low thief. Yet we look up to others who do precisely the same thing by other methods and compliment them as successful men. We call the men who possess themselves the labor of a workman without returning him an equivalent in wages as a swindler or a cheat, and yet to many who take from him his earnings after he has got them on the same conditions, because of his accumulations in this way we accord the first place in our society. That such men make liberal gifts for the support of charities or of churches does not give them any better title to wealth unjustly gathered, or undo the evils that come upon those who have been deprived of the just rewards of their toil to build it up.

It will not do to say in defence of such a social arrangement that "the things that be are ordained of God." If they work injustice, it is the clearest

evidence that though He permits them they are not of His institution, and such a defence does not make the deprivation less real or easier to bear for those who suffer it. And our system of taxation, which places a premium upon gambling in land values, brings about just this condition of injustice and inequality. It gives to idleness, to cunning, to deception, the comforts and luxuries of life, the benefits of education and position, the respect of organized society, by enabling it to appropriate to itself the products of industry, which it condemns to toil, to pinching economy, to a lack of educational advantages and social standing.

Two illustrate: Two men, attracted by the advantages which Victoria offers for the building up of a home, arrive here almost on the same day, and with a capital each of about a thousand dollars. No. 1 goes to work at fair wages. No. 2 does something quite different. He buys him an acre of land at a thousand dollars, pays one-third down, balance in six and twelve months at 8 per cent. interest. He divides into six lots, gets himself a licence, an office, and an easy chair, and smilingly awaits customers for his property or other business in the way of administering oaths. No. 1 concludes to make his home here, and for the purpose of buying a lot to put up a house on for his family, drops into the office of No. 2. He buys a lot at \$500, pays one-third down, which you will see is the exact amount paid or promised for it by No. 2, and gives a mortgage for the balance of capital sum, with all expenses added, together with interest at 8 per cent.

No. 2 has held this land less than six months. He has never turned a sod on it, or added in any way to its value; but by this arrangement he gets into a position to appropriate to his own use from the industry of No. 1 an amount twice as great as the original cost of the land to himself. But this is not the end of the injustice. No. 1 spends the rest of his capital and applies his labor to build his house, which increases the value of the remaining five lots still in No. 2's hands usually far out of proportion to the amount for which they are assessed, and at the same time his own liability to taxation to the full amount of his improvement. No. 1, struggling with his mortgage, must practice the