

Chapter I.

Of Property.

§ 1. Individual Property and its opponents.

The laws and conditions of the Production of Wealth partake of the character of physical truths. There is nothing optional or arbitrary in them. It is not so with the Distribution of Wealth. That is a matter of human institution solely. The things once there, mankind, individually or collectively, can do with them as they like. They can place them at the disposal of whomsoever they please, and on whatever terms. The Distribution of Wealth depends on the laws and customs of society. The rules by which it is determined are what the opinions and feelings of the ruling portion of the community make them, and are very different in different ages and countries; and might be still more different, if mankind so chose. We have here to consider, not the causes, but the consequences, of the rules according to which wealth may be distributed. Those, at least, are as little arbitrary, and have as much the character of physical laws, as the laws of production.

We proceed, then, to the consideration of the different modes of distributing the produce of land and labor, which have been adopted in practice, or may be conceived in theory. Among these, our attention is first claimed by that primary and fundamental institution, on which, unless in some exceptional and very limited cases, the economical arrangements of society have always rested, though in its secondary features it has varied, and is liable to vary. I mean, of course, the institution of individual property.

Private property, as an institution, did not owe its origin to any of those considerations of utility which plead for the maintenance of it when established. Enough is known of rude ages, both from history and from analogous states of society in our own time, to show that tribunals (which always precede laws) were originally established, not to determine rights, but to repress violence and terminate quarrels. With this object chiefly in view, they naturally enough gave legal effect to first occupancy, by treating as the aggressor the person who first commenced violence, by turning, or attempting to turn, another out of possession.

In considering the institution of property as a question in social philosophy, we must leave out of consideration its actual origin in any of the existing nations of Europe. We may suppose a community unhampered by any previous possession; a body of colonists, occupying for the first time an uninhabited country. (1.) If private property were adopted, we must presume that it would be accompanied by none of the initial inequalities and injustice which obstruct the beneficial operation of the principle in old society. Every full-grown man or woman, we must suppose, would be secured in the unfettered use and disposal of his or her bodily and mental faculties; and the instruments of production, the land and tools, would be divided fairly among them, so that all might start, in respect to outward appliances, on equal terms. It is possible also to conceive that, in this original apportionment, compensation might be made for the injuries of nature, and the balance redressed by assigning to the less robust members of the community advantages in the distribution, sufficient to put them on a par with the rest. But the division, once made, would not again be interfered with; individuals would be left to their own exertions and to the ordinary chances for making an advantageous use of what was assigned to them. (2.) If individual property, on the contrary, were excluded, the plan which must be adopted would be to hold the land and all instruments of production as the joint property of the community, and to carry on the operations of industry on the common account. The direction of the labor of the community would devolve upon a magistrate or magistrates, whom we may suppose elected by the suffrages of the community, and whom we must assume to be voluntarily obeyed by them. The division of the produce would in like manner be a public act. The principle might either be that of complete equality, or of apportionment to the necessities or deserts of individuals, in whatever manner might be conformable to the ideas of justice or policy prevailing in the community.

The assailants of the principle of individual property may be divided into two classes: (1) those whose scheme implies absolute equality in the distribution of the physical means of life and enjoyment, and (2) those who

admit inequality, but grounded on some principle, or supposed principle, of justice or general expediency, and not, like so many of the existing social inequalities, dependent on accident alone. The characteristic name for this [first] economical system is Communism, a word of Continental origin, only of late introduced into this country. The word Socialism, which originated among the English Communists, and was assumed by them as a name to designate their own doctrine, is now, on the Continent, employed in a larger sense; not necessarily implying Communism, or the entire abolition of private property, but applied to any system which requires that the land and the instruments of production should be the property, not of individuals, but of communities, or associations, or of the government.

It should be said, moreover, that Socialism is to-day used in the distinct sense of a system which abolishes private property, and places the control of the capital, labor, and combined industries of the country in the hands of the state. The essence of modern socialism is the appeal to state-help and the weakening of individual self-help. Collectivism is also a term now used by German and French writers to describe an organization of the industries of a country under a collective instead of an individual management. Collectivism is but the French expression for the system of state socialism.

§ 2. The case for Communism against private property presented.

The objection ordinarily made to a system of community of property and equal distribution of the produce, that each person would be incessantly occupied in evading his fair share of the work, points, undoubtedly, to a real difficulty. But those who urge this objection forget to how great an extent the same difficulty exists under the system on which nine tenths of the business of society is now conducted. And though the "master's eye," when the master is vigilant and intelligent, is of proverbial value, it must be remembered that, in a Socialist farm or manufactory, each laborer would be under the eye, not of one master, but of the whole community. If Communistic labor might be less vigorous than that of a peasant proprietor, or a workman laboring on his own account, it would probably be more energetic than that of a laborer for hire, who has no personal interest in the matter at all.

Another of the objections to Communism is that if every member of the community were assured of subsistence for himself and any number of children, on the sole condition of willingness to work, prudential restraint on the multiplication of mankind would be at an end, and population would start forward at a rate which would reduce the community through successive stages of increasing discomfort to actual starvation. But Communism is precisely the state of things in which opinion might be expected to declare itself with greatest intensity against this kind of selfish intemperance. An augmentation of numbers which diminished the comfort or increased the toil of the mass would then cause (which now it does not) immediate and unmistakable inconvenience to every individual in the association; inconvenience which could not then be imputed to the avarice of employers, or the unjust privileges of the rich.

A more real difficulty is that of fairly apportioning the labor of the community among its members. There are many kinds of work, and by what standard are they to be measured one against another? Who is to judge how much cotton-spinning, or distributing goods from the stores, or brick-laying, or chimney-sweeping, is equivalent to so much plowing? Besides, even in the same kind of work, nominal equality of labor would be so great a real inequality that the feeling of justice would revolt against its being enforced. All persons are not equally fit for all labor; and the same quantity of labor is an unequal burden on the weak and the strong, the hardy and the delicate, the quick and the slow, the dull and the intelligent.(146)

If, therefore, the choice were to be made between Communism with all its chances and the present state of society with all its sufferings and injustices, all the difficulties, great or small, of Communism, would be but as dust in the balance. But, to make the comparison applicable, we must compare Communism at its best with the *régime* of individual property, not as it is, but as it might be made. The laws of property have never yet conformed to the principles on which the justification of private property rests. They have made property of things which never ought to be property, and absolute property where only a qualified property ought to exist.

Private property, in every defense made of it, is supposed to mean the guarantee to individuals of the fruits of their own labor and abstinence. The guarantee to them of the fruits of the labor and abstinence of others, transmitted to them without any merit or exertion of their own, is not of the essence of the institution, but a mere incidental consequence, which, when it reaches a certain height, does not promote, but conflicts with the ends which render private property legitimate. To judge of the final destination of the institution of property, we must suppose everything rectified which causes the institution to work in a manner opposed to that equitable principle, of proportion between remuneration and exertion, on which, in every vindication of it that will bear the light, it is assumed to be grounded. We must also suppose two conditions realized, without which neither Communism nor any other laws or institutions could make the condition of the mass of mankind other than degraded and miserable. One of these conditions is, universal education; the other, a due limitation of the numbers of the community. With these, there could be no poverty, even under the present social institutions: and, these being supposed, the question of socialism is not, as generally stated by Socialists, a question of flying to the sole refuge against the evils which now bear down humanity, but a mere question of comparative advantages, which futurity must determine. We are too ignorant either of what individual agency in its best form, or socialism in its best form, can accomplish, to be qualified to decide which of the two will be the ultimate form of human society.

If a conjecture may be hazarded, the decision will probably depend mainly on one consideration, viz., which of the two systems is consistent with the greatest amount of human liberty and spontaneity. It is yet to be ascertained whether the communistic scheme would be consistent with that multiform development of human nature, those manifold unlikenesses, that diversity of tastes and talents, and variety of intellectual points of view, which not only form a great part of the interest of human life, but, by bringing intellects into stimulating collision and by presenting to each innumerable notions that he would not have conceived of himself, are the mainspring of mental and moral progression.

§ 3. The Socialists who appeal to state-help.

For general purposes, a clearer understanding of the various schemes may be gained by observing that (1) one class of socialists intend to include the state itself within their plan, and (2) another class aim to form separate communities inside the state, and under its protection.

Of this first system there are no present examples; but the object of most of the socialistic organizations in the United States and Europe is to strive for the assumption by the state of the production and distribution of wealth.(147) At present the most active Socialists are to be found in Germany. The origin of this influence, however, is to be traced to France.(148) Louis Blanc,(149) in his "Organisation du Travail," considers property the great scourge of society. The Government, he asserts, should regulate production; raise money to be appropriated without interest for creating state workshops, in which the workmen should elect their own overseers, and all receive the same wages; and the sums needed should be raised from the abolition of collateral inheritance. The important practical part of his scheme was that the great state workshops, aided by the Government, would make private competition in those industries impossible, and thus bring about the change from the private to the socialistic system.

The founder of modern German socialism was Karl Marx,(150) and almost the only Socialist who pretended to economic knowledge. He aimed his attack on the present social system against the question of value, by asserting that the amount of labor necessary for the production of an article is the sole measure of its exchange value. It follows from this that the right of property in the article vests wholly in the laborer, while the capitalist, if he claims a share of the product, is nothing less than a robber. No just system, he avers, can properly exist so long as the rate of wages is fixed by free contract between the employer and laborer; therefore the only remedy is the nationalization of all the elements of production, land, tools, materials, and all existing appliances, which involves, of course, the destruction of the institution of private property. An obvious weakness in this scheme is the provision that the Government should determine what goods are to be produced, and that every one is bound to perform that work which is assigned by the state. In this there is no

choice of work, and the tyranny of one master would be supplanted by the tyranny of a greater multiplex master in the officers of Government. Moreover, it can not be admitted that exchange value is determined by the quantity of labor alone. Every one knows that the result of ten days' labor of a skilled watch-maker does not exchange for the result of ten days' labor of an unskilled hodman. Of two men making shoes, one may produce a good the other a poor article, although both may work the same length of time; so that their exchange value ought not to be determined by the mere quantity of labor expended. Above all, Marx would extend the equality of wages for the same time to the manager and superintendent also. In other words, he proposes to take away all the incentives to the acquirement or exercise of superior and signal ability in every work of life, the result of which would inevitably lead to a deadening extension of mediocrity.

This system gained an undue attention because it was made the instrument of a socialist propaganda under the leadership of Ferdinand Lassalle.(151) This active leader, in 1863, founded the German "Workingmen's Union," a year earlier than the "International(152) Association." In 1869 Liebknecht and his friends established the "Social Democratic Workingmen's Party," which after some difficulties absorbed the followers of Lassalle in a congress at Gotha in 1875, and form the present Socialist party in Germany. Their programme,(153) as announced at Gotha, is as follows:

I. Labor is the source of all riches and of all culture. As general profitable labor can only be done by the human society, the whole product of labor belongs to society--i.e., to all its members--who have the same duties and the same right to work, each according to his reasonable wants.

In the present society the means of work are the monopoly of the class of capitalists. The class of workingmen thus become dependent on them, and consequently are given over to all degrees of misery and servitude.

In order to emancipate labor it is requisite that the means of work be transformed into the common property of society, that all production be regulated by associations, and that the entire product of labor be turned over to society and justly distributed for the benefit of all.

None but the working-class itself can emancipate labor, as in relation to it all other classes are only a reactionary mass.

II. Led by these principles, the German Social Workingmen's party, by all legal means, strives for a free state and society, the breaking down of the iron laws of wages by abolishing the system of hired workingmen, by abolishing exploitation in every shape, and doing away with all social and political inequality.

The German Social Workingmen's party, although first working within its national confines, is fully conscious of the international character of the general workingmen's movement, and is resolved to fulfill all duties which it imposes on each workingman in order to realize the fraternity of all men.

The German Social Workingmen's party, for the purpose of preparing the way, and for the solution of the social problem, demands the creation of social productive associations, to be supported by the state government, and under the control of the working-people. The productive associations are to be founded in such numbers that the social organization of the whole production can be effected by them.

The German Social Workingmen's party requires as the basis of state government:

1. Universal, equal, direct, and secret suffrage, which, beginning with the twentieth year, obliges all citizens to vote in all State, county, and town elections. Election-day must be a Sunday or a holiday.
2. Direct legislation by the people; decision as to war and peace by the people.
3. General capability of bearing arms; popular defense in place of standing armies.

4. Abolition of all exceptional laws, especially those relating to the press, public meetings, and associations--in short, of all laws which hinder the free expression of ideas and thought.

5. Gratuitous administration of justice by the people.

6. General and equal, popular and gratuitous education by the Government in all classes and institutes of learning; general duty to attend school; religion to be declared a private affair.

The German Social Workingmen's party insists on realizing in the present state of society:

1. The largest possible extension of political rights and freedom in conformity to the above six demands.
2. A single progressive income-tax for State, counties, and towns, instead of those which are imposed at present, and in place of indirect taxes, which unequally burden the people.
3. Unlimited right of combination.
4. A normal working-day corresponding with the wants of society; prohibition of Sunday labor.
5. Prohibition of children's work and of women's work, so far as it injures their health and morality.
6. Protective laws for the life and health of workingmen; sanitary control of their dwellings; superintendence of mines, factories, industry, and home work by officers chosen by the workingmen; an effectual law guaranteeing the responsibility of employers.
7. Regulation of prison-work.
8. Unrestricted self-government of all banks established for the mutual assistance of workingmen.

The above scheme also represents very well the character of the Socialist agitators in the United States, who are themselves chiefly foreigners, and have foreign conceptions of socialism. On this form of socialism it is interesting to have Mr. Mill's later opinions(154) in his own words.

"Among those who call themselves Socialists, two kinds of persons may be distinguished. There are, in the first place, (1) those whose plans for a new order of society, in which private property and individual competition are to be superseded and other motives to action substituted, are on the scale of a village community or township, and would be applied to an entire country by the multiplication of such self-acting units; of this character are the systems of Owen, of Fourier, and the more thoughtful and philosophic Socialists generally. The other class (2) who are more a product of the Continent than of Great Britain, and may be called the revolutionary Socialists, propose to themselves a much bolder stroke. Their scheme is the management of the whole productive resources of the country by one central authority, the general Government. And with this view some of them avow as their purpose that the working-classes, or somebody in their behalf, should take possession of all the property of the country, and administer it for the general benefit. The aim of that is to substitute the new rule for the old at a single stroke, and to exchange the amount of good realized under the present system, and its large possibilities of improvement, for a plunge without any preparation into the most extreme form of the problem of carrying on the whole round of the operations of social life without the motive power which has always hitherto worked the social machinery. It must be acknowledged that those who would play this game on the strength of their own private opinion, unconfirmed as yet by any experimental verification, must have a serene confidence in their own wisdom on the one hand, and a recklessness of people's sufferings on the other, which Robespierre and St. Just, hitherto the typical instances of those united attributes, scarcely came up to."

§ 4. Of various minor schemes, Communistic and Socialistic.

[Of the schemes to be tried within a state], the two elaborate forms of non-communistic Socialism known as Saint-Simonism and Fourierism are totally free from the objections usually urged against Communism. The Saint-Simonian(155) scheme does not contemplate an equal, but an unequal division of the produce; it does not propose that all should be occupied alike, but differently, according to their vocation or capacity; the function of each being assigned, like grades in a regiment, by the choice of the directing authority, and the remuneration being by salary, proportioned to the importance, in the eyes of that authority, of the function itself, and the merits of the person who fulfills it. But to suppose that one or a few human beings, howsoever selected, could, by whatever machinery of subordinate agency, be qualified to adapt each person's work to his capacity, and proportion each person's remuneration to his merits, is a supposition almost too chimerical to be reasoned against.(156)

The most skillfully combined, and with the greatest foresight of objections, of all the forms of Socialism is that commonly known as Fourierism.(157) This system does not contemplate the abolition of private property, nor even of inheritance: on the contrary, it avowedly takes into consideration, as an element in the distribution of the produce, capital as well as labor. It proposes that the operations of industry should be carried on by associations of about two thousand members, combining their labor on a district of about a square league in extent, under the guidance of chiefs selected by themselves (the "phalanstery"). In the distribution a certain minimum is first assigned for the subsistence of every member of the community, whether capable or not of labor. The remainder of the produce is shared in certain proportions, to be determined beforehand, among the three elements, Labor, Capital, and Talent. The capital of the community may be owned in unequal shares by different members, who would in that case receive, as in any other joint-stock company, proportional dividends. The claim of each person on the share of the produce apportioned to talent is estimated by the grade or rank which the individual occupies in the several groups of laborers to which he or she belongs, these grades being in all cases conferred by the choice of his or her companions. The remuneration, when received, would not of necessity be expended or enjoyed in common; there would be separate *ménages* for all who preferred them, and no other community of living is contemplated than that all the members of the association should reside in the same pile of buildings; for saving of labor and expense, not only in building, but in every branch of domestic economy; and in order that, the whole buying and selling operations of the community being performed by a single agent, the enormous portion of the produce of industry now carried off by the profits of mere distributors might be reduced to the smallest amount possible.

Fourierism was tried in West Virginia by American disciples, and it was advocated by Horace Greeley. A modified form appeared in the famous community at Brook Farm (near Dedham, Massachusetts), which drew there George Ripley, Margaret Fuller, and even George William Curtis and Nathaniel Hawthorne.

There have been many smaller communities established in the United States, but it can not be said that they have been successful from the point of view either of numbers or material prosperity. The followers of Rapp, or the Harmonists, in Pennsylvania and Indiana; the Owenites,(158) in Indiana; the community of Zoar, in Ohio; the Inspirationists, in New York and Iowa; the Perfectionists, at Oneida and Wallingford--are all evidently suffering from the difficulties due to the absence of family life, from the increasing spirit of personal independence which carries away the younger members of the organizations,(159) and the want of that executive ability which distinguishes the successful manager in private enterprises.

 § 5. The Socialist objections to the present order of Society examined.

"The attacks(160) on the present social order are vigorous and earnest, but open to the charge of exaggeration.

"In the first place, it is unhappily true that the wages of ordinary labor, in all the countries of Europe, are wretchedly insufficient to supply the physical and moral necessities of the population in any tolerable measure. But when it is further alleged that even this insufficient remuneration has a tendency to diminish;

that there is, in the words of M. Louis Blanc, *une baisse continue des salaires*; the assertion is in opposition to all accurate information, and to many notorious facts. It has yet to be proved that there is any country in the civilized world where the ordinary wages of labor, estimated either in money or in articles of consumption, are declining; while in many they are, on the whole, on the increase; and an increase which is becoming, not slower, but more rapid. There are, occasionally, branches of industry which are being gradually superseded by something else, and in those, until production accommodates itself to demand, wages are depressed.

"M. Louis Blanc appears to have fallen into the same error which was at first committed by Malthus and his followers, that of supposing because population has a greater power of increase than subsistence, its pressure upon subsistence must be always growing more severe. It is a great point gained for truth when it comes to be seen that the tendency to over-population is a fact which Communism, as well as the existing order of society, would have to deal with. However this may be, experience shows that in the existing state of society the pressure of population on subsistence, which is the principal cause of low wages, though a great, is not an increasing evil; on the contrary, the progress of all that is called civilization has a tendency to diminish it, partly by the more rapid increase of the means of employing and maintaining labor, partly by the increased facilities opened to labor for transporting itself to new countries and unoccupied fields of employment, and partly by a general improvement in the intelligence and prudence of the population. It is, of course, open to discussion what form of society has the greatest power of dealing successfully with the pressure of population on subsistence, and on this question there is much to be said for Socialism; but it has no just claim to be considered as the sole means of preventing the general and growing degradation of the mass of mankind through the peculiar tendency of poverty to produce over-population.

"Next, it must be observed that Socialists generally, and even the most enlightened of them, have a very imperfect and one-sided notion of the operation of competition. They see half its effects, and overlook the other half. They forget that competition is a cause of high prices and values as well as of low; that the buyers of labor and of commodities compete with one another as well as the sellers; and that, if it is competition which keeps the prices of labor and commodities as low as they are, it is competition which keeps them from falling still lower. To meet this consideration, Socialists are reduced to affirm that, when the richest competitor has got rid of all his rivals, he commands the market and can demand any price he pleases. But in the ordinary branches of industry no one rich competitor has it in his power to drive out all the smaller ones. Some businesses show a tendency to pass out of the hands of small producers or dealers into a smaller number of larger ones; but the cases in which this happens are those in which the possession of a larger capital permits the adoption of more powerful machinery, more efficient by more expensive processes, or a better organized and more economical mode of carrying on business, and this enables the large dealer legitimately and permanently to supply the commodity cheaper than can be done on the small scale; to the great advantage of the consumers, and therefore of the laboring-classes, and diminishing, *pro tanto*, that waste of the resources of the community so much complained of by Socialists, the unnecessary multiplication of mere distributors, and of the various other classes whom Fourier calls the parasites of industry.

"Another point on which there is much misapprehension on the part of Socialists, as well as of trades-unionists and other partisans of labor against capital, relates to the proportion in which the produce of the country is really shared and the amount of what is actually diverted from those who produce it, to enrich other persons. When, for instance, a capitalist invests £20,000 in his business, and draws from it an income of (suppose) £2,000 a year, the common impression is as if he were the beneficial owner both of the £20,000 and of the £2,000, while the laborers own nothing but their wages. The truth, however, is that he only obtains the £2,000 on condition of applying no part of the £20,000 to his own use. He has the legal control over it, and might squander it if he chose, but if he did he would not have the £2,000 a year also. For all personal purposes they have the capital and he has but the profits, which it only yields to him on condition that the capital itself is employed in satisfying not his own wants, but those of laborers. Even of his own share a small part only belongs to him as the owner of capital. The portion of the produce which falls to capital merely as capital is measured by the interest of money, since that is all that the owner of capital obtains when he contributes to production nothing except the capital itself.

"The result of our review of the various difficulties of Socialism has led us to the conclusion that the various schemes for managing the productive resources of the country by public instead of private agency have a case for a trial, and some of them may eventually establish their claims to preference over the existing order of things, but that they are at present workable only by the *élite* of mankind, and have yet to prove their power of training mankind at large to the state of improvement which they presuppose."

§ 6. Property in land different from property in Movables.

It is next to be considered what is included in the idea of private property and by what considerations the application of the principle should be bounded.

The institution of property, when limited to its essential elements, consists in the recognition, in each person, of a right to the exclusive disposal of what he or she have produced by their own exertions, or received either by gift or by fair agreement, without force or fraud, from those who produced it. The foundation of the whole is, the right of producers to what they themselves have produced. Nothing is implied in property but the right of each to his (or her) own faculties, to what he can produce by them, and to whatever he can get for them in a fair market: together with his right to give this to any other person if he chooses, and the right of that other to receive and enjoy it.

It follows, therefore, that although the right of bequest, or gift after death, forms part of the idea of private property, the right of inheritance, as distinguished from bequest, does not. That the property of persons who have made no disposition of it during their lifetime should pass first to their children, and, failing them, to the nearest relations, may be a proper arrangement or not, but is no consequence of the principle of private property. I see no reason why collateral inheritance should exist at all. Mr. Bentham long ago proposed, and other high authorities have agreed in the opinion, that, if there are no heirs either in the descending or in the ascending line, the property, in case of intestacy, should escheat to the state. The parent owes to society to endeavor to make the child a good and valuable member of it, and owes to the children to provide, so far as depends on him, such education, and such appliances and means, as will enable them to start with a fair chance of achieving by their own exertions a successful life. To this every child has a claim; and I can not admit that as a child he has a claim to more.

The essential principle of property being to assure to all persons what they have produced by their labor and accumulated by their abstinence, this principle can not apply to what is not the produce of labor, the raw material of the earth. If the land derived its productive power wholly from nature, and not at all from industry, or if there were any means of discriminating what is derived from each source, it not only would not be necessary, but it would be the height of injustice, to let the gift of nature be engrossed by individuals. [But] the use of the land in agriculture must indeed, for the time being, be of necessity exclusive; the same person who has plowed and sown must be permitted to reap.

But though land is not the produce of industry, most of its valuable qualities are so. Labor is not only requisite for using, but almost equally so for fashioning, the instrument. Considerable labor is often required at the commencement, to clear the land for cultivation. In many cases, even when cleared, its productiveness is wholly the effect of labor and art. One of the barrenest soils in the world, composed of the material of the Goodwin Sands, the Pays de Waes in Flanders, has been so fertilized by industry as to have become one of the most productive in Europe. Cultivation also requires buildings and fences, which are wholly the produce of labor. The fruits of this industry can not be reaped in a short period. The labor and outlay are immediate, the benefit is spread over many years, perhaps over all future time. A holder will not incur this labor and outlay when strangers and not himself will be benefited by it. If he undertakes such improvements, he must have a sufficient period before him in which to profit by them; and he is in no way so sure of having always a sufficient period as when his tenure is perpetual.

These are the reasons which form the justification, in an economical point of view, of property in land. It is seen that they are only valid in so far as the proprietor of land is its improver. Whenever, in any country, the proprietor, generally speaking, ceases to be the improver, political economy has nothing to say in defense of landed property, as there established.

When the "sacredness of property" is talked of, it should always be remembered that any such sacredness does not belong in the same degree to landed property. No man made the land. It is the original inheritance of the whole species. Its appropriation is wholly a question of general expediency. When private property in land is not expedient, it is unjust. The reverse is the case with property in movables, and in all things the product of labor: over these, the owner's power both of use and of exclusion should be absolute, except where positive evil to others would result from it; but, in the case of land, no exclusive right should be permitted in any individual which can not be shown to be productive of positive good. To be allowed any exclusive right at all, over a portion of the common inheritance, while there are others who have no portion, is already a privilege. No quantity of movable goods which a person can acquire by his labor prevents others from acquiring the like by the same means; but, from the very nature of the case, whoever owns land keeps others out of the enjoyment of it. When land is not intended to be cultivated, no good reason can in general be given for its being private property at all. Even in the case of cultivated land, a man whom, though only one among millions, the law permits to hold thousands of acres as his single share, is not entitled to think that all this is given to him to use and abuse, and deal with as if it concerned nobody but himself. The rents or profits which he can obtain from it are at his sole disposal; but with regard to the land, in everything which he does with it, and in everything which he abstains from doing, he is morally bound, and should, whenever the case admits, be legally compelled to make his interest and pleasure consistent with the public good.