

YOURS AND MINE.

Yours and Mine. Very simple words. A child apprehends their significance. Yet they are the two great kingdoms of human thought. All that we know or prize is bounded by them. In them is hid the secret of civilization. United, they constitute the dynamo by the interaction of whose parts is generated the mystic force which we call progress.

They are two wondrous realms which include all the kingdoms of the earth and are the bases of a social superstructure. Political economy, law, and in a great measure, religion are engaged in adjusting their relations. Yours,--Miné! All that concerns me as a man--all that concerns you individually, are in these little words. They are an epitome of human existence. Their signification marks the distinction between barbarism and enlightenment. Separately considered they are easy enough to define. So too, they are easily separa-

rable by exclusion. All is mine which is not yours and all is yours which is not mine. So we divide the world between us, you taking what you will and leaving me what I can get.

It is an easy matter to define a boundary and say all inside of a certain limit shall be yours: all outside of it mine. It is when we come to apply this definition--to mark out the line and say what lies within and what without the prescribed circle that trouble arises. This trouble is chiefly on account of the fact that each one of us has a double, from which he can never escape--that every one is in fact, a Simese twins--ever trying to pull himself apart yet forever inseparable. These are the individual self and the collective self--two opposing forces, tugging always in opposite directions.

Individually, I am the center of the Universe. The horizon closes down in every direction from the place where I stand. The sky bends over me with a ~~xyouaxhx~~ symmetric arch and all the worlds in

the dim ether circle about me as a common pivot. The universe adjusts itself instantly and constantly to my changes of position and even a less prejudicial observer might easily presume that I am the most important fact in existence.

Unfortunately, you are individually quite unable to see things from exactly the same point of view. You think my calculations are a trifle at fault--that the axis of the universe is just an arm's length to the right or left as the case may be, and that the glorious arch above is the star-spangled accompaniment of another individuality.

I am not only the center of the universe but the special and particular luminary about which satellites and attendants revolve, each with more or less ~~importance~~ steadfastness and more or less of orbital eccentricity. Wife, children, kindred, dependents, constitute the system of which I am the controlling center. Of course, some of these may have irregular orbits and others may abandon their

courses or disappear. Death or divorce may rob me of my special satellite and good or evil fortune, money or matrimony may draw away my following from me. There are few lives, however, from which at least one other life does not derive its light. Even then, it does not cease to be a sun. Shorn of satellites and tributaries, it steals alone through the realm of human life flashing or fading--a comet or an atom of star-dust, as the case may be.

In this cosmogony, you individually are of more or less importance according to nearness of approach to the central luminary. Venus is larger to the sun than Neptune and Mars struts through the firmament equal in size and brilliancy to Jupiter. My best friend may not be much of a man, but he is more to me than any hundred others who help make up the mighty multitude of You. Nay, those outside of my particular system, who are otherwise only insignificant atoms to me, enlightened with the glory of his regard shine out as bright particular stars in the Milky Way of humanity.

Aside from these,--a few great Suns of thought or action in the present and the past make up the sum total of my knowledge of mankind. Perhaps out of all who have lived and died, the sum total of that humanity which constitutes the mighty multitude of you, I may have known familiarly a thousand by sight, perhaps five thousand and by name or fame, it may possibly be ten thousand. Say in all twenty thousand out of the billion who are now alive and the billions who have lived and died. And the others--all save this insignificant fraction whose existence has touched my consciousness--what are they to me? Dust--nothing but dust! I am vaguely conscious that they do and have existed. I may exalt in their prowess, pity their weakness, glory in their purity, blush for their shame--yet individually they are to me only as the sands of the desert, the drops of the ocean or the sparkling dust of the Milky Way.

Yet they are You and they constitute the power which fixes the line between "Yours and Mine." Though to myself the center of the

Universe, to you I am only an atom on its extremest edge. What a fly on the axis of Neptune would be to observer in the sun, that and even less is an ordinary man to humanity. We speak of immortal names and world-wide fame! Yet how small the segment of humanity which has heard of even the most famous that ever lived. Not half the world's life has ever heard the name of Christ. And Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon, Homer, Shakespeare--how ridiculously narrow the boundaries of their fame compared with the boundlessness of humanity. Ah, "You" are an infinite multitude! I am its *nearest* constituent atom. "Yours" is the earth and its fulness. "Mine?" Ah, what is mine? Have I anything?

We hear a great deal in these days about the "natural rights of property," "the natural laws of trade", the "natural distribution of wealth," the "natural laws of supply and demand," and a thousand other things which we are told are natural and immutable. We are told that a man has a "natural right" to the products of his own la-

bor, to the profits on his own shrewdness, to the free enjoyment of certain products of nature, such as sunshine, air, water. Others say mines, minerals, the products of the soil ~~of the soil~~ or at least a chance for cultivating it. There are strange theories afloat as to yours and mine, your rights and my rights, your realm and my domain. None of them are demonstrable--~~none~~ of them have any right to claim God, Nature as their sources, origin or authority. Nature has nothing to do with property or trade or wealth. God has never defined ~~pr-~~ possessory rights. What you possess and what I own are simply the result of eternal--ever varying adjustment. The line between yours and mine runs here today and tomorrow there. There is but one stable and correct definition. That is yours which you desire to take and hold for your own interest and advantage: that is mine only which you are willing to permit me to control. What is mine today is your tomorrow. You run the line where you will between my possessions and yours but whether I have much or little depends solely on your

favor--the keenness or bluntness of your conscience, or the breadth or narrowness of your view of your own needs and interests.

This may seem to be a strange doctrine but a moment's consideration will show it to be true.

Of course, the first and most evident subject of possession is one's own person. Whatever else you may have a right to control one would say that a man's body is his own--its thews and sinews--its strength and skill--whatever of power it possesses belongs to the being which inhabits it. Yet it is only twenty-five years--nay it is not quite that many--since American Christian civilization asserted not only a collective right but an individual right to control not only the body, but the brain, the intelligence, the soul of another. Forty years ago the power of the whole government of the United States was pledged under the most solemn sanctions to assert preserve and maintain this doctrine. Then "You" would not permit some millions of the people of this land to have any "Mine" at all.

Neither lands nor goods, nor clothes, nor labor nor body nor soul, nor wife nor child could be held or claimed against your express denial. To the slave all things were yours; nothing that could be seen, touched, felt or imagined came within the realm of "Mine" to him. Why? Simply because "You", Society desired and provided that it should be so and my possessions depend on your will.

But Slavery was wrong you say. "Society was in error:--The system was barbarous, unjust, cruel!"

No doubt,--but Society is the sole author and regulator of my possessions. I can only hold what it allows me to have.

It restricts even my possession and control of my own body--of my personal powers and inclination at its own will, and pays no heed to my assertion of ownership if it desires part or all of what I ~~may~~ may have. It taxes all I have and if I refuse to pay, divests at once my ownership and gives it to another. "The power to tax," as the courts have logically declared, "implies the power to divest."

10

Society taxes my coat and leaves me to go bare-back--through life. It taxes very often my life, my liberty, the mere privilege of having a soul and in some States of this union even yet indicts me if I fail to pay and perhaps sells me to the highest bidder until it is paid. In other cases it conditions the high privilege of self-government upon my giving to it a part of my earnings. It puts a guard across my pathway to the ballot-box and says,--"one, two, three dollars toll, if you wish to pass this way." "But I haven't got it," I reply. "No matter: you must pay your money or you cannot vote." But I am poor, sick, oppressed." "No matter: liberty is for those who can pay--redress for grievances for those who offer gifts upon her altar." Is it any wonder that in every State men are found who sell their votes? The State itself is the greatest corrupter of the ballot and when it sets a price upon the voter's privilege shall it blame others for engaging in the same traffic?

But let us go a little farther in our inquiry as to ownership.

Certain men who are accustomed to parade the high-sounding, self-assumed, undefinable title of political economists, are accustomed to tell us just how ownership,--the idea and law of property arose. This is determined with a solemnity which would be laughable if it were not sad, by evolving from their inner consciousness, the conditions and environment of primeval man,--a condition of which they know just as much as you and I, and you and I know nearly as much as a pig does of pyrotechnics. From these purely imaginary results, the political economist--the extremely positive professor of a mis-called science, declares with unhesitating confidence what he terms natural laws concerning property and proceeds to define in accordance therewith the boundary betwixt "Yours and Mine."

The very first step it behooves the student to take who would successfully study and judge social and economic conditions, is to fix in his mind the simple truth that there is no such science as political economy. It is simply a fetich which it has become a hab-

it for those to worship who seek for some rule of thumb by which human destiny and collective conditions may be determined without the trouble of studying men and women and their environment. Not only is there no such science as political economy, but there never will be--there never can be. One might as well talk about a science of business--the rules of trade--a scientific method of achieving business success. It all depends upon the man and his environment. One achieves business success by long and laborious exertion; another by practicing unique and unremitting economies, and still another by daring and adventurous hazard. To one it would seem suicidal to borrow money at six percent; ~~another~~ another finds a thousand percent profitable. One succeeds by avoiding indebtedness, another by incurring it. One sails a freight lugger and another a piratical felucea; but both succeed. Put the lugger-man on the felucea he would fail; give the pirate the lugger and he would probably starve. What is good policy for a business man depends on his environment

On Metayer 13

and his personal qualities. What is good policy for a nation depends on its condition at any particular juncture and the character of its people. What is good policy for one people is folly for another. What is the acme of wisdom at one time is the climax of absurdity at another. The "Wealth of Nations," was published in March 1776: the Declaration of Independence on the Fourth of July succeeding. Adam Smith's science has done more to neutralize Thomas Jefferson's wisdom than any other one element of the world's thought since that time.

The Astor fortune was made by buying furs at a low price and selling them at a high one and investing the proceeds in New York realty. The Vanderbilt wealth is chiefly the result of stealing a railroad, watering the stock and holding on to it until even the water congealed into gold. Jay Gould has achieved his unrivalled success in a lifetime by *smashing railroads* and selling the fragments. *Unhorsed from the Erie he stole the Louisa & used machinery on its ruins* Who would *control now every atom that is in the Pacific* think of deducing from these three brilliant examples a rule for

individual success. So too, with nations: the economics which fail with one will succeed with another. It is not methods which are most important, it is Men.

I do not mean to say that much may not be learned from the past though it is folly to look to the past for all wisdom. The general will never succeed who is always facing to the rear or ^{forever} studying yesterday's achievements. The past will yield its best lessons when political economy has become a thing to be laughed at and we study political history instead. Then the very first step in trying to ~~wrest~~ wrest a valuable lesson out of the history of an epoch will be the inquiry: "What were these people like?"--the next: "What were their conditions and environment?"--and before we think of applying the same method to the cure of social or economic evils elsewhere we will ask the farther question, "Are the characteristics of these people similar to that one and are their political and economic environment similar?" If not, the wise man will hesitate long before ~~advocating~~ ^{advocating}

ing the adoption of a similar policy. The chief benefit derived from *Political* Economy, is the demonstration of the fact that there is no scientific method of social or political evolution--no golden rule of national prosperity.

Aggregates & Leverages

Abandoning then the speculative theory of the origin and natural or philosophic theory of possession, let us see what we really know about "Yours and Mine"--what I really possess and what you really control.

I call myself, perhaps, the owner of a piece of land. How did it become mine? Why, I bought it from Mr A. And Mr A.? He bought it from B, and B, from C, and so on to X. And X? Why X bought it from the United States. And the United States? Why this government obtained it by treaty or conquest or purchase from some other government--England or France or Spain or Mexico. And that other government? Ah, God knows whence their right or title came. We call it sometimes ~~at~~

discovery; sometimes conquest; sometimes settlement. In plain English it is robbery. Stated in full term the principle on which it is based is that a white Christian people have a divine right because they are Christian and white to take the land held and occupied by any people having a colored skin, or so much of it as they see fit either by force or fraud and parcel it out among themselves as a reward for whiteness and civilization and if the former possessors object or resist to kill them. In this way you will soon acquire title to that well-watered and especially valuable portion of the Sioux Reservation which lies about Pine Ridge Agency, and which is made all the more valuable by a little blood sprinkled on the most barren spots. It seems a rather curious doctrine but what right can a worshipper of a dusky Messiah have which interferes with the interest or pleasure of one who worships a Christ whose very name means whiteness?

At any rate it is evident that devisor obtained title from

you. You gave him what right you had to that piece of soil,--to all that lies under it and all that shines over it to have and to hold as long as grass grows and water runs, as the old indentures have it, subject nevertheless to such conditions as you may see fit to impose. And that is the only title I have to my farm. I took with an incumbrance. My title is a right to control, modified by an indeterminate contingent.

As we have seen, you diminish my right first by taking from it by taxation just as much as you desire. You say you have the right to do this because government secures me in my right and it is fair that I should help pay the expenses of Government. But you--that is Society, imposes other duties on me. You say you shall support your wife, your children, yourself." But I reply, "If I do this I have not enough to satisfy your demand--to pay the tax you lay upon me." "No matter," you rejoin, "If you have anything you must pay your share and your wife and children must yield of their need the trib-

ute we demand."

This is your will and whatever I claim to possess, I hold subject to it. It is a theory--a notion--a hypothesis, that I or some one for me has assented to this. What is the sense of imagining an absurdity to account for a self-evident fact. It is so because you will it to be so and that is enough. I may persuade you to modify it ~~HEHEHE~~ but that will be because you wish to do so--not because there is any power to compel you to do so.

It may be questioned indeed, whether I ever had any right of possession at all, except through your will and wish. It is conceivable of course, that there may have been a time when there was but one man in all the world and he may be said to have owned the earth. But what we have come to mean by ownership--the right of property is something more than mere possession, enjoyment. We all of us enjoy the sunshine but none of us own it--yet. Some of us would enjoy it a great deal more if we could control it and prevent others from

enjoying it except by our permission. That is what we mean by ownership--exclusive possession and control--the right to dispossess and exclude others.

And this right, like personal liberty, is the product of civilization, progress, development--not a result of barbarism. The primeval man was the victim of despotism. The ~~father~~ father controlled the son as long as he lived. The patriarchal days are no doubt very sweet and poetic to those who never felt their restrictions. Out of it grew clanship. The right to possess was all the time restricted to the will of the chief, the patriarch, the head of the clan. Strange as it may seem, it is civilized and complex society which has developed individualism both in person and property. It is a neglect of this fact which has made so much of the speculation upon this subject delusive and visionary. After all, the result is not so surprising as might at first sight appear. Right is always the result of law. The power to take from another whatever the individual desired

was the sole measure of possession. Where the power to dispossess ended, the right of property began. Civilization has extended the limit by restricting the exercise of the individual power to dispossess.

My right as against another individual is infinitely broader stronger and more secure than it ever was before. Armed with the terrors of the law my single hand has the strength of all your arms to beat down the individual aggressor. For that purpose you have lent me your power. I draw a chalk-mark at the entrance of my home and the law authorizes me to remove the intruder in its name and if he resists the woe be on his head. Nay, the representative of the law itself stops, helpless and abashed on my door-sill if I do but forbid him to enter. This is not the result of any natural inherent primeval right, but a consequence of your exaltation of my individuality.

But when it comes to contrasting my right as an individual

with your right as a multitude, we find at once that the power to create implies always the power to destroy. You create the right of exclusive, oppugnant possession in me subject to this modification that you will enlarge, restrict or destroy it whenever your interests demand--and to whatever extent they shall require.

Government is always administered for the advantage and benefit of the governing power. Sometimes we hear a great deal about "government for the sake of the governed." It is a delusion. It is only when the governed become part and parcel of the governing power or so closely touch it as to make their evils a potent factor in disturbing the safety or comfort of the governing class or power that their rights, interests or advantage are at all considered. In human affairs justice as a rule is but another name for sagacious self-interest. Liberty--the rights of the individual--the privilege of the atom--are chiefly the result of counter-balancing oppression. The strife of tyrants has forever been the opportunity of freemen.

Sometimes a monarch has yielded something to popular demand for aid against a rival. More frequently the despot has been forced to arm the populace in order to neutralize the power of an aristocracy, or two contending privileged classes have competed for advantage by offering new privileges to the people. While the monarch is the governing power, the nation is administered in the interests of dynastic power. Whatever concessions are made to the individual interests of the masses, is for the sake of perpetuating power. Dynastic perpetuity is the controlling motive, and individual advantage is considered and regarded only as an incident thereto. When an aristocracy whether of birth or wealth bear sway the same principle still applies. The interests of that class, either present or prospective, dominate and control its action. It is only when the whole body of a people become the controlling force in government that the interest of the governed becomes the controlling motive in legislation, in jurisprudence, in administration.

As soon as the people become actually and consciously the controlling power, the real conflict between Yours and Mine begins. Individually, your environment is the same as mine. Your yesterday has been substantially the same. By inheritance and environment we are alike. I may be poor, you may be rich; I may be black, you may be white; I may be bad, you of course without flaw. Yet what I am today become individually it is possible you may ^{become} tomorrow. In defining the boundary betwixt Yours and Mine for me, you are therefore marking out the limits of your own privilege or possession tomorrow. My safety lies in your love of your self. I am safe because you dare not choke your children. This is the way and the only way that Nature defines right. God's earthly justice to man works ^{only} through man's fear of his fellows.

What was it welded the sentiment of this nation together and destroyed Slavery? The conflict ^{had} been hot and fierce for a generation. Yet all that time the slaves' fetters had been more tightly

riveted. Christian slavery in the United States was a thousand fold more horrible in its character in 1860 than in 1820. Yet the conscience--the impulse of justice slumbered. What aroused it?

One man standing in the capitol of Illinois touched the master key of enlightened selfishness and made you the foes of Slavery--not for the slave's sake but for your children's sake. "This nation cannot exist half-free and half-slave! were the words with which Abraham Lincoln stirred the nation to decree ultimately its extinction. Their truth flashed instantly upon every hearer's mind and from simple fear that it might become more than half slave, "You made it wholly free.

It is often said that a many-headed tyrant is worse than a single handed one. Men have asserted that oppression is more to be feared from a populace than a king. The hypercritical thought of the United States is to-day swollen with the rank poison of conceit inclines very strongly to the hypothesis that the danger of the fu-

ture lies on the side of popular control. A thousand devices to limit and restrict it by some sort of indirection are put forth as specifics for present ills. It is absurd. Not only reason but experience teaches that oppression and injustice come always from the few, never from the many. The world has come to admit the truth of an adage which has become axiomatic since our government was founded that no single man is as wise as all men--nobody can ever be as wise as everybody. Nobody knows the needs of a people as well as the people themselves. The man who wears the shoe knows best where it pinches.

But not only is a whole people wiser as concerns its own needs than any one individual member of the community, but it is also true that no man is as just and true to the interests of a people as the people themselves, if they are only conscious of their power and awake to the necessity of its exercise. The evils of self government arise mainly from the failure of the citizen to realize his power

or from neglect of his political duty.

The changes made in the position of the line which separates "Yours from Mine," indicates most clearly the fact that self-government is the only guarantee that the interests of the governed will ever constitute the real motive of government.

One hundred and six years ago the people of Connecticut in the exercise of their newly-established self-governing power, first of all peoples in the world, decreed that they would maintain out of the revenues of the State a system of schools open to all the children of the State. This innovation aroused a great excitement. Those who feared the popular rule declared that the bulwarks of society were being undermined by this revolutionary proposal. It was destroying, people said, the fundamental rights of property on the sacred observance of which the prosperity of government and the perpetuity of society depended.

So far as their statement of facts were concerned, the position

of the opponents of the new idea was quite correct. It was a material change in the relation of Yours and Mine. Up to that time, it had been an accepted theory of government that my right of property could only be diminished by taxation for the sake of maintaining the government. Of course this theory was liberally construed and the support of the government meant the support directly or indirectly of the governing classes. So too, taxation for the support of the poor, so far as ~~the~~ to prevent starvation at least, was ~~admitted~~ admitted to be within the purview of government; but the idea of taking money out of one man's pocket to educate another man's child was a proposition absolutely paralyzing to the well-informed conservative student of political affairs. One of the signers of the Declaration of Independence declared that if such an outrage should finally be consummated, it would have been better for the people of the Colonies to have remained under the rule of Great Britain. It was taking from one ^{for} the benefit of another, from the

rich to give to the poor; from the thrifty to benefit the spendthrift from the industrious to give to the lazy, from the good to give to the bad. This was all true too; but the people said we cannot have the poor and the lazy and the thriftless growing up in ignorance lest they should corrupt, misuse the power of the citizen, corrupt society and endanger the liberties of our children. So they said to every one who had any earthly possessions, "We will take as much as we need of what you possess to educate the children of the less fortunate, the less industrious, perhaps even the less worthy;--simply because our need of it is greater than yours."

One by one other States followed the same lead. Three years later it became a central idea of the Act by which the Northwest Territory was made the nidus in which was hatched that galaxy of States which have since become the Gibraltar of our liberties. By the year 1838, every State of the North had adopted this benign principle and the little schoolroom under the hill had become the uni-

versity in which freemen were educated for many a conflict of liberty yet unfought.

But the public school could never find foothold in the domain of Slavery. Not until equality of political right had been asserted was it deemed necessary or advisable to educate even the poor white man. And so far as the colored man--the laws of fifteen Christian States of the American Union made it a felony to teach a colored man to read or write. It was not until 1868, that the freed slave and the carpet-bagger fixed in the Constitutions of those States that system of public education to which the North owes its liberty and the absence of which the South owes the woes of rebellion and the lurid wave of barbarous injustice which has followed in the wake of that great sin and slaughter.

Other nations caught the idea. In 1794 it was adopted by Prussia as a policy on which dynastic power might most securely be established and the success of Germany in the Franco-Prussian war is

a testimony of the wisdom of the people of Connecticut in shifting the boundary between "Yours and Mine," a little farther over toward me; just as the condition of Ireland and the blackness which overwhelms the "submerged Tenth of Darkest England", is a continuing testimony that the few are not wiser than the many. It was not until 1868 that the controlling oligarchy in England would consent to move the line betwixt mine and thine so as to secure education by public taxation.

It was only a few years afterwards when France under the impulse of popular control led the way in taking from the pockets of the rich and the strong the funds with which to secure the public care and treatment of the insane.

The education of the blind and the training of the deaf-mute at the public expense followed soon after. All these things have now become part and parcel of enlightened government and in all civilized nations the education of the entire people and the care and

training of the infirm and defective constitute the first mortgage upon every man's possessions.

Even in war this principle prevails.

Sherman's men at Raleigh.

We say that "You", that is Society or government can take ~~nothing~~ nothing from me--nothing that is mine without rendering me an equivalent. Yet twenty-three years ago you took from certain people who were citizens of the United States two billions of dollars worth of property which they held under explicit sanction of the law and gave not one penny in return. And this you did, not because of any crime they had committed, for the law imposed no such penalty, not because the property was needed for the public use, but just because you thought it wrong and dangerous to your liberty that men should be held in bondage and sold ^{bought}, manipulated and controlled by other men. You took this vast sum out of the realm of "Mine", without re-

gard to the will or wish of the owner, his actual or fancied need, simply because you chose to re-define the realm of private possession.

It is hardly fifty years ago since the State of Indiana led the way in abolishing imprisonment for debt and the exemption of certain property of the debtor from execution for his creditor's behoof.

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY W. H. T. O. R. N. C. L. E. Y. 2018

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