

# Peace

## By Henry George

A portion of an address delivered at branch meeting of the universal peace union, at wiley's grove, near Poughkeepsie, NY., on Sunday, august 25th, 1889.

Mr. President, Ladies, and Gentlemen,—I am glad to be here this Sabbath afternoon, and to take part in this assemblage of one of the two American branches of the Inter-national Peace Society. This part of the State of New York, this county of Duches, received in the beginning, I believe, a large infusion of the people called “Friends”— those who, in an age when true religion seemed buried beneath formalism, and, in the temples erected to Christ, the truths of Christianity were forgotten, taught that men should look to the inward light, should listen to the inward promptings, and in daily life and conversation should model their conduct upon the principles of “The Prince of Peace.” Their peculiar garb is now seldom seen; their peculiar speech is seldom heard, unless it be in the privacy of their domestic circles; but this gathering here to-day is one of the evidences that their spirit yet lives. And there is need of it to-day— of that bearing of testimony against war and the spirit of war; of that bearing of testimony for peace and the Prince of Peace.

Twenty centuries have almost gone since over the stable in Bethlehem of Judea, the angels sang their song of “Peace on earth, to men good will.” Yet never before has the earth seen such monstrous armies; never before has human ingenuity and human industry been devoted to the preparation of such terrific engines of destruction. A few years ago I came across the Atlantic with an American inventor. We were talking of the possibilities of aerial navigation, of the time when man might at last gratify that desire that has probably been latent in every human breast since the first man witnessed the graceful flight of the bird. He said to me that in his opinion it was merely a question of commercial demand, and added: “Do you know what to-day is the most certain road to profit for the inventor? If, he invents anything that is to augment the comfort of men, there is toil, trouble, worry, and, in nine cases out of ten, failure before him. The thing on which he can certainly succeed, the thing for which he can immediately get money, is to invent something that will destroy life and property a little quicker, and the governments of the world will make haste to pay him any price for it.”

A few weeks ago: I walked one morning down . the Avenue Du Grand Armee in Paris. A French regiment of the line was marching up the avenue, with fife and drum corps at their head. As that regiment moved along I was about the only one who turned my head to look at it. The people of the city seemed to pay no attention whatever to it, so used are they to the sight of soldiers, so used are they to this thing of taking men in the prime of life, from their families, from their occupations, and turning them into mere killing machines.

Against these great armaments, against this idea that war is a necessary thing, this meeting is a protest. And such protest is needed. Even in the churches, men preach peace in words, but glorify war in their hearts! In Windsor Castle is a room prepared at the expense of millions of dollars of our money by the present Queen of England, as one of the numerous testimonials to her love for her deceased husband. In that magnificent room, lined with polished marble, lies an effigy of Prince Albert on a marble couch of state. He is clad from neck to heel in the armour of a warrior, and the couch is supported by carvings of the Passion of Christ—the agony, the bloody sweat, the crucifixion, the descent, and the burial. This is typical of much of our Christianity. The very Prince of Peace—He whose mission it was to preach good will among men, to teach that the sword might be beaten into the ploughshare, and the spear into the pruning-hook—His name and His effigy are used to support the state of kings, to glorify the spirit that sends men by the millions to the grave before their time, that leaves women desolate and widowed at home. It ought to be ours to protest against this spirit. It ought to be ours, not merely as individuals, but as a nation.

### **The Glory Of Our Flag**

What is the glory of this flag? What are the benefits that the Union it symbolizes confers upon us? Is not its chief benefit the peace that exists between so many sovereign States; that from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the Lakes to the Gulf, there is no dividing line guarded by sentinels and dotted with custom houses to interfere with free exchange? Sixty-five millions of people on the temperate zone of a great continent. Sixty-five millions of people with higher intelligence and education than exists among any other people on earth to-day, with no warlike neighbours of superior strength or feeling of enmity, with none of the old world hatreds, with none of the fierce passions which array the nations of Europe against each other. This ought to be the nation of nations to lead the world in peace. Yet look at our paltry attempts to imitate the navies of Europe. Look at us keeping a standing army for which we have no use whatever, in the time of peace. There is no need of a standing army or of a standing navy. Too strong to fear injustice from any nation on earth, we ought to be too great to do it.

The remark of Professor Gardner, who said this morning that the “external is but the outward sign and manifestation of the internal,” that war exists on the earth today, and the energies of nations are spent in devising means of destruction because the inward spirit is warlike, is true. It is true even in this republic. Have we as yet learned the lesson that the interests of mankind are interwoven so that each is dependent on the other? Have we yet learned the great lesson that we can attain our own comfort and our own profit by promoting the comfort and profit of others? Why, look at this American Republic. From one border to the other, Americans can freely trade with Americans; but when you arrive at the national line, there you will find a custom-house officer to prevent Americans from trading with Canadians, or Europeans, or Mexicans. Consider the pettiness of this great nation of sixty-five millions of people, degrading itself with the idea that it needs a “baby act” to prevent American industries from being ruined by the pauper labour of Europe. And we are going from bad to worse. We are beginning to look askance at men who come here wanting to work, when, a few years ago, as you older people

will remember, we welcomed them. But to-day we are beginning to think and act as though there were too many people in this country.

## **The Complement Of Monster Wealth**

I drove yesterday afternoon with a friend of mine along the road between Dobbs Ferry and Tarrytown, and he told me that on this road were the summer houses of sixty millionaires. Their aggregate wealth is estimated at from \$500,000,000 to \$1,000,000,000. What is the complement of such monstrous wealth as that? It is the tramp and the pauper. Wealth is produced by labour; and when a few men can gather to themselves such accumulations of the products of labour, other men by thousands and millions must go without the things that their labour produces. Where there is such monstrous wealth on the one hand there must be deep poverty on the other. Out of such monstrous inequality as we see being developed here, must come war. When Christ was born the civilized world was hushed in the Roman peace. Not a true peace, but a peace maintained by the mailed hands of the legions. But underneath that peace was the spirit of oppression, and oppression always means war.

Great estates were growing then in Italy, as they are growing to-day in the Republic of the West, Slavery existed, and was increasing, and, ground down by taxation, and eaten out by mortgages, the tillers of the soil were passing into tenants and into mere day labourers, and Rome, seemingly secure from outside danger, was rotting at the heart. Then came corruption, violence, civil war, the decline of civilization, till the barbarians, bursting through the circle that seemed once so strong, found but a shell. If within our Republic this aggregation of wealth goes on, this monstrous power on the one hand, this monstrous poverty on the other, the time must come as it came to the civilization of old, when the flames of temple and museum and college will light men to destruction.

He who would insure peace, aye, he who would bring peace in its full, true meaning—must look deeper than to arbitration between nations; he must endeavour to build the very foundations of the State upon the firm rock of justice. War comes from injustice; peace comes for justice; from the securing to each man of his right; from the giving to each of that which is his due. Now, look at the world to-day. Look over even this new Republic of the West. What do we find? Thousands and thousands of men and women labouring hard and long for a mere pittance, for merely enough to live on, the great body of the people finding it a strain and a struggle to merely live. With all our advantages, with all our advances, the growing intensity in the struggle for existence is everywhere showing itself in the increase of suicides, in the increase of lunatic asylums and of their inmates, in the arraying against each other of industrial classes. The industrial wars called strikes and lock-outs are only somewhat less disastrous than the wars of hostile armies, and the growing ill-feeling manifested in our industrial life is passing into legislation and into our party politics.

## **True Peace**

If we would really have peace and the prosperity that is born of true peace, let us study these industrial problems, let us discover the cause of the bitter competition that is everywhere felt. If there are too many people in the country, what is the reason of it? Is it the niggardliness of the Creator? Has he made the mistake of bringing more people into the world than He has made provision for? No one can look around the world to-day and say that this is so. Whoever looks must say, it is not so. There is more than enough for all. If all do not have enough, it is not because enough has not been provided by the Creator, but because so much of what has been provided, is, in our greed and bad management, wasted. Look over the Illinois coalfields to-day. American citizens who would like to be at work are starving. They are only kept alive by the contributions of charity that have been pouring in. These coal miners have had a difficulty with their employers. The employers have shut down their mines and refused to employ them; the consequence is they are starving. There is a wrong somewhere. Where is it? Nothing is more certain than that no man has any right to insist that another shall employ him, unless it be that every man has the right to employ himself. Each man has that right. Here is the wrong. There is a natural right that men do not enjoy to-day, and that is a right to employ those opportunities that the Creator made for their employment. There is no law, and there ought to be no law, that would compel those coal operators to employ men they do not want to employ or to pay them more wages than they choose to pay them. The injustice is not there; the injustice is in the laws which prevent those men from employing their own labour; that compel them to go to their employer and get his wages, and to accept his employment, or else stand idle. In Illinois and Pennsylvania there is no scarcity of coal. Why, the mines that are worked are as nothing to the coal land that remains to work. Go into Pennsylvania, where the coal has been long worked. There you will find around the mines great stretches of land, under which are millions and millions of tons of coal. There it lies; no one is using it. If the coal miners do not want to work for their employers, or the employers do not want to employ the coal miners, all right. But why should the man who wants to employ his own labour in digging out of the earth coal which was placed in the earth before man came upon the earth, why should he be prevented? Why should anyone come in and step between him and the natural opportunity that no one is using, and say, "No, you shall not dig out this coal; this coal is mine!" Here is the wrong; here is the bottom wrong; that is the root and cause of all these industrial troubles: the wrong that all over our civilized world to-day is the cause of the monstrous inequality in the distribution of wealth.

What are we? Science answers that we are land animals, living on land and from land, and only capable of life as we can obtain access to land. Religion answers that we are the equal children of a common Father, who prepared this world through long ages for our temporary sojourn, for a passing phase in our existence. Prepared it, not for any one man, or any generation of men, but for the countless generations that, in His providence, follow each other upon it. Take the answer of science or the answer of religion, and is it not obvious that we are all here with equal rights to the use of the earth? Is it not obvious that we are all here, not with the right to claim equal conditions, not with the right to say to another man, because you have more than I, you must give up a part of it to me; but with the right to the equal use of natural opportunities? The equal right to exert our labour, as nature—or, as I prefer to say, the Creator—has intended we should exert it? With the equal right to enjoy the products of our

labour? And yet to-day, in our civilized countries, in this new country of ours, as well as in older ones, the majority of the people are but tenants at the will of other human creatures.

### **The Cause Of Misery**

If you would know the cause that has produced the gaunt misery of Ireland, the cause that in England has built up one enormously rich class and crowded great masses of the people into the poorhouses, or labourers' cottages; if you would know the reason why, with our growth, the same monstrous inequalities are developing, you have but to look to the fact that while men are land animals, while it is only on the land and from the land that they can live; or produce, yet in these civilized Countries the great mass come into existence without any legal right whatever to as much of the soil of the earth as they can plant the soles of their feet upon.

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Here is the conclusion of the whole matter: That we should do unto others as we would have them do to us—that we should respect the rights of others as scrupulously as we would have our own rights respected, is not a mere counsel of perfection to individuals, but it is the law to which we must conform social institutions and national policy if we would secure the blessings of abundance and peace.—Henry George in ‘Protection or Free Trade.’”