

Rev. NULTY'S "BACK TO THE LAND"

By HENRY GEORGE

Starting ... from the irrefutable proposition that the inhabitants of every country are equally entitled to the use and enjoyment of the land of that country, Dr. Nulty proceeds to inquire how best this common estate may be utilized to the greatest advantage of all. Showing that each individual is entitled to the full enjoyment of the fruits of his own exertions, and that security in possession of land is necessary to the individual use of land, he arrives at the conclusion that the value which the growth of society gives to the original and indestructible qualities of the soil should be taken for the use of the community, leaving to the improver or user that value which is due to his improvement or use. That rent, in the economic sense of the word (that is to say, the value attaching to land by reason of social growth and improvement, as distinguished from the value which may be produced upon it by the exertions of the individual user), is the natural provision for social needs, Dr. Nulty sees with the utmost clearness. And this evidence of creative intent fills him, as it must every man who recognizes it, with a new and deep sense of the beauty of the creative scheme. For it shows that the wrongs and injustice which under present conditions seem due to the very advance of civilization, do not result from any failure or jangle of natural laws, but are due solely to the injustice of human laws, which, denying to the masses of men their most obvious natural rights, make what was intended by God for the use of all the private property of a few, and turn the patrimony of the whole people, the great fund arising from social growth and improvement, into a fund for the encouragement of monopolization and waste and the promotion of monstrous social inequality. Dr. Nulty sees clearly the real reason why the marvelous increase of productive power by modern invention has failed to raise wages, and why the enormous increase in wealth has served but to make want more bitter. He sees that the prime cause of our social difficulties, the real root of the seeming conflict between labor and capital, which is the most menacing danger of our time, arises simply from the monopoli-

zation which has been permitted in that natural element indispensably necessary to production and to life, and he sounds the keynote of the great struggle for the emancipation of labor and the abolition of poverty in the rallying cry with which he concludes, "Back to the land!" — (The Standard, June 18, 1887)

How Best to Use the Common Estate

By Rev. Nulty

The great problem, then, that the nations, or what comes to the same thing, that the governments of nations, have to solve is — what is the most profitable and remunerative investment they can make of this common property (the land) in the interest of and for the benefit of the people to whom it belongs? In other words, how can they bring the largest, and, as far as possible, the most skilled amount of effective labor to bear on the proper cultivation and improvement of the land? — how can they make it yield the largest amount of human food, human comforts and human enjoyments — and how can its aggregate produce be divided so as to give every one the fairest and largest share he is entitled to without passing over or excluding any one?

The practical approval . . . which the world has bestowed on a social institution that has lasted for centuries is no proof that it ought to be allowed to live on longer, if, on close examination, it be found to be intrinsically unjust and cruel, and mischievous and injurious besides to the general good of mankind. No amount of sanction or approval that the world can give to a social institution can alter its intrinsic constitution and nature; and the fact of the world's having thus approved of an institution which was essentially unjust, cruel and degrading to human nature, only proves that the world was wrong, but it furnishes no arguments or justification for allowing it to live on a moment longer.

The two essential characteristics of property are: First, the thing itself must be useful for some purpose; and, secondly, it must be the product or the result of our labor.

Who has a right to demand a rent for the land "which no man made"? God, who made it. If God, then, demanded a rent for the use of these lands, He would undoubtedly be entitled to it. But God does not sell His gifts or charge a rent for the use of anything He has produced. He does not sell; but He gives or bestows. (April 2, 1881)