

BROTHERHOOD OF THE COMMON-WEALTH.

BROOKLYN PROSPECT COUNCIL OF THE BROTHERHOOD GIVES A BALL AND RECEPTION TO CHARLES FREDERICK ADAMS.

The ball-room at Prospect Hall, Brooklyn, N. Y., which is the largest and finest in the city, seldom if ever presented a finer appearance than it did on the evening of Oct. 20th, at the first reception and ball of Prospect Council, Brotherhood of the Common-Wealth, tendered to Charles Frederick Adams, the founder of the order. Friends came from far and near, and among them were many old time Single Taxers to celebrate the enrollment of One thousand persons into the membership of the order. An interesting feature was the entertainment presented between the dances, which included singing by the male chorus of the Brooklyn Quartette Club, Ladies Chorus under the direction of Professor Carl Figue, Soprano Solo, by the talented young singer, Miss Margaret Zeidler, and several selections by Miss Louise Schippers, who met with such a decided success with the Brooklyn Arion on their record trip to Europe. "A Spring Time," by Pinsuti, sung by Miss Heeg, Mr. and Mrs. James and Mr. Thomas Beggs made a decided hit. Master G. Fred. Riemann delighted the audience with his violin Solo.

Mr. Wm. B. Vernam congratulated Mr. Adams on the success thus far attained by the organization, to which Mr. Adams felicitously responded. One of the objects of the order is to provide annuities for old age through an ideal system devised by Mr. Adams. Among its members are the following well known persons who have attested their faith in the feasibility of the plan by becoming members. Supreme Court Justices Luke D. Stapleton and Samuel Seabury, Register Wm. R. Pendergast, Borough President Bird S. Coler, Congressman Calder, Alfred J. Boulton, ex Register, Michael J. Flaherty, ex Sheriff, Isaac M. Kapper, ex Senator, Walter C. Burton, Reverend J. C. Caton, Reverend John D. Long, and many others. The floor was ably managed by Edward Jan-

zer, assisted by George Bowie, Henry J. Schroeder, Wm. F. Yanss, Frederick A. Weber, Christian Herbert and Theodore Gans. The reception committee comprised Geo. F. Riemann, Jr., Gustav Bassler, Alfred J. Bowie, Carl A. Moir, Dr. E. F. Risch, William Young, Gustav Thompson and Joseph McGuiness.

THE BURGESS LETTERS.

THEIR DISCOVERER WRITES ABOUT THESE WONDERFUL EPISTLES OF THE RACINE JOURNEYMAN TAILOR.

The "Letters on Taxation of the Land" were in my hands from about 1899 to January of 1907, and I showed them to a number of Single Taxers without being able to ascertain whether they were authentic or not, for the copy that I had was an old type-written MS. During most of this time I was out of the country, however, or this this valuable work would doubtless have been authenticated and revived. In 1906 I sent out a large number of letters to the people of Racine, including newspaper editors, and also to some Single Taxers in London and elsewhere, giving a copy of the title page of the London edition of the *Letters* (1871); but could get nothing establishing the fact that the MS. was a veritable copy of anything ever printed, until on January 26th, 1907, Mr. Lewis Berens wrote me from London that he had found one of the 1871 editions. None of the Racine newspapers knew anything about any paper in which these letters could have been printed, the 1871 edition merely said that they had been printed in 1859 and 1860, but the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, on Februray 7th, 1907, wrote me saying that the *Letters* had appeared in a weekly newspaper formerly published in Racine, and gave the following details;

"*Racine Advocate*" (weekly)

Taxation Considered—Letter No. 5, June 29th, 1859; No. 6th, July 6th; No. 7th, July 20th; No. 8th, July 27th; No. 9, Aug. 3; (all 1859);—No. 10, Jan. 25th, 1860; Taxation Concluded—Letter No. 11,

March 28th, 1860; On Taxation Considered—Apr. 11th, 1860. Our file of the *Advocate* does not include the number from Dec. 1854 to June, 1859."

On the 15th of March, 1907, the Historical Society amplified their information by saying that "Letters 5-11 are the same as in the *Racine Advocate* except for very slight revision of wording. Letter 10 contains only the last two paragraphs of what was in the paper, about two thirds of a column being omitted. Letter 12 was not printed in the *Advocate*. I am returning to you your MS etc.

The "Letters" begin by asking for direct legislation; they then proceed to inquire, "Why are poverty, misery, disease and crime promoted, instead of prevented, by legislation?" "Why is our labor taxed continually to give premium to indolence, land monopoly and slavery, to raise the price of land and pauperize the laborer by keeping him landless?" "Why is anyone obliged to beg a brother of the earth to give him leave to toil while there is plenty of land on which he might employ and enjoy himself?" These inquiries, formulated in a number of ways, correspond to "The Question Stated" of Henry George, written, however shortly and simply, by a workman and directed to other workers.

"Letter I" is a splendid attack on personal property taxation; it rewards perjury, increases the expense and the corruption of government; prevents production; decreases employment (giving the arguments) makes paupers and criminals; is inquisitorial: raises the price of land and makes it easier for the rich to monopolize it; "so that if all the taxes were on the land, it would sell for the lowest price and would be most difficult to monopolize." "When you want land to be low and wages high, put all the taxes on the land." It is the natural inheritance of all, for all time; and all should be protected in their possession, and those who own all the land should certainly pay all the taxes for keeping them in possession and their neighbors out of it."

"Letter II" continues on the evils of taxation on personalty. It says in effect that it exploits the landless "in proportion to their numbers and necessities;" causes precariousness of living and hereditary in-

sanity; intemperance, suicide and the like; prostitution and disease; it is the main cause of rent; "the landless cannot buy land or build houses or have capital for business, but must pay rent or interest for all;" the ultimate cause of interest is land-monopoly; Burgess agrees with Flurschein and not with George on this point. "Do we desire purity," etc? "Then repeal all taxes on industry, and let the monopolist of land, the source of our living and the rightful inheritance of all, pay taxes in proportion to the value of what they monopolize; then poverty, prostitution and intemperance will soon be among the things that were."

"Letter III" further emphasizes the benefits of transferring taxation. Every sentence is like the blow of a hammer on the conscience and intellect, throughout this work. "Then away with your paltry special privilege legislating, and let us have instead, laws which if universally applied would cause the most permanent prosperity for all. And though we can never do good to the taxpayer by taxing him, let us be sure that we do him the least possible injury; and that, I contend, the "AD VALOREM" LAND TAX will do, and no other force-tax whatever. For it is less costly in valuation and collection, and less corruptive and unequal, and causes less pauperism, misery and crime than any other tax; in fact, it is the only Free Trade Tax, and sets up no board of inquisition on the industry of any man or woman."

In "Letter IV" the author says as to the Wisconsin constitutional rule of uniformity in taxation, that "I would not tax any personal property or product of industry in any form, but the land alone according to its market value regardless of improvements." He is against taxing credits and goes into the benefits of tax exemption, generally, in a convincing manner.

"Letter V" refers to the fact that personalty in New York escapes taxation; gives more arguments for the Single Tax, but not using the term. (To me his term "Ad valorem land tax" is in some respects, better.)

There are many gems of thought and expression scattered through the whole work, which the limits that you would permit me, Mr. Editor, do not allow me to

quote. As an address from one worker to another, in cogent, enthusiastic terms, not antagonizing the "merchants and manufacturers," but including them in the classes to whom he directs his appeals.

This work, either in its entirety, or cut down to the more essential parts, is worthy of being circulated by the American S. T. League, as a workingman's view on Single Tax. Some of the poems are inspiring and high in moral tone, such as "We Thank Thee, God."

In selecting a quotation with which to conclude, I am embarrassed with the richness and variety of material. The tariff, slavery, city congestion, cheap food, etc.—all receive full attention. I will choose the following: "Were all the taxes on the land, and the people's land free, then the hitherto landless could soon build their own homes on their own land and raise all they needed to consume or exchange, and no longer need the land, houses or capital of others; then rent, interest and even usury would cease for want of poverty to sustain it, and the Paradise of the Present or Future be as far above that of the Past as," etc.

Again: "Letter VIII. * * * Farmers, do you ever think that when lots are rising in cities, rents are rising also, which you as consumers must pay when you buy your goods? Merchants, do you reflect that the land rises in the country from 10s to 10 or 100 dollars per acre, you also pay the rent or interest of that land, in proportion to price, on all the product that you consume? Manufacturers, mechanics and laborers do you know that you must pay the high rents of stores as well as dwellings, and the high prices, interest or rents of farm lands also, on all the farm produce and manufactures that you consume? And do we all understand that labor alone inevitably pays the whole? Yes, the mechanical contrivers for productive industry, (not war), the manufacturers, merchants and mechanics, the farmers and laborers, pay the whole expenses of extortionate governments, landlords, doctors, lawyers and legislators, kings, lords, popes, bishops, cardinals, priests and princes, pirates, paupers, prostitutes, gamblers, thieves, loafers and the standing army and navy to boot."

The personality of this remarkable man is little known. It is painful to reflect that he found no following and was looked upon as a crank; when, if the seed had fallen upon fertile ground, the cause of justice might have been well advanced before Mr. George appeared to give it its first great impulse in our times. He succeeded in drawing fire in the shape of objections by a correspondent of the *Advocate* however; from whose worthless criticism we learn that Burgess was a tailor; and his widow had faith in his ideas sufficient to republish them 11 years after they first appeared. From her preface it seems that Burgess suffered from a "long, painful and mortal sickness," and that he wished that his works might be collected and circulated.

I had the interesting experience of calling Mr. George's attention to Dove's "Theory of Human Progression" at a time when he knew nothing of it except its title and that it was reputed to contain the idea of taxation of ground-rents in some form; although he believed that the book that I showed him was a copy of one already in his library. He had received it while on a lecture trip in England or Ireland and had not done more than forward it to this country, without examination. Except for Sullivan's malicious attack on Mr. George in "Ideokleptomania," based on the discovery or rediscovery of the "Human Progression," the subject of the many identities of thought and expression in works treating of the economic rent tax idea, was a pleasurable one to Mr. George. And I have no doubt that he would have been deeply interested in the "Letters" of Burgess. Somewhere George says that one is much surer of the existence of a star when another also discerns it. And this was the thought that he gave me on the last occasion when I saw him, in the Union Square Hotel, in 1897, when, in order to escape the tiresomeness of the constant speechmaking, interviewing and the strain and excitement of the tremendous attempt against the local machine, he made me the willing victim of a half-hour monologue concerning Single Tax and near Single Tax authors.

I believe that George would have republished the Letters with greater pleasure than the "Theory;" for the former have a pop-

ular method of expression that would be valuable for propaganda.

It is needless to add that there is no basis for the comparison with "Progress and Poverty." The letters of Burgess, taken together, form a mere pamphlet; in which however, the main truths of the relation of man to land and the way to improve that relation, are told with great power. There is no profound study, or any study of technical economics; no planned development of the argumentation; or exposures of current fallacies in political economy. Definitions are absent; and the thought is somewhat blurred at times, to an exacting thinker. There is repetition, principally of the way in which the remedy is stated; but the repetition is such as, under the circumstances, would best aid in direct exhortation. And even if there is no attempt to harmonize economic laws, the essence of what ought to be in all political economies is the most conspicuous element in the work, viz: the Single Tax. I believe that Burgess, even if he never had anything but the rudiments of other men's thoughts in economics, (and it may be that he never had as much as the rudiments, as far as the "Letters" show, intrinsically,) could in oral argument before the people, have "polished off" any economist extant in this country in his day; for his original illustrations, drawn from surrounding conditions, and his varied approaches to the central truth, show that he was a man of resources. It would be fair to Burgess to say that his work is to Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* what a good rifle is to a cannon, in the general attack on Privilege.

JOSEPH F. DARLING.

THE Rochester, N. Y. *Union and Advertiser* contained under the heading "A Single Tax Man in Town" an account of Joseph Fink's recent visit to that city. It said:

"You can always strike most any kind of a political or economic argument around a big political convention. Joseph Fink, secretary of the Manhattan Single Tax Club, took on all comers in debate in the lobby of the Whitcomb yesterday afternoon and a large audience enjoyed the cross fire."

ASKS FOR ACTION.

Editor *Single Tax Review*:

The emphasis which in his paper submitted to the recent Free Trade Congress in London, Louis F. Post laid upon the "natural socialism" advanced by Henry George as distinguished from the artificial, arbitrary and chaotic scheme of the socialistic party, catches my imagination and suggests an appeal to democratic democrats (See "Land Values" for Sept.)

After 30 years of agitation the Single Tax has not won a place in politics or even in the minds of party leaders, not excepting Mr. Bryan. Even as a propaganda it seems to have lost its vitality, and to the casual observer it is inert and apparently dead. Of course, I am not blind to the progress which our theory of taxation as a fiscal reform has made in many countries. The people of the United States are lagging far behind that procession and the proposal of Henry George is tardy in assuming a practical shape anywhere in America. Nor do I fail to recognize the value of the example set by Tom L. Johnson and Lawson Purdy. But their efforts are but small oases in the vast desert of economic ignorance and indifference. The Socialists are performing a valuable service in directing attention to bad social conditions and I would not belittle even the half hearted efforts of the Democratic party. But neither party clears the befogged mental atmosphere or guides the bewildered people to think and act on right lines. The only considerable body of men who are suitably equipped to supply the indispensable preliminary education are the Single Taxers.

Disastrous economic conditions and the trend of thought which they suggest ought to render the masses peculiarly receptive of our conceptions of true Democracy. In common, undoubtedly, with many other Single Taxers I must confess that I am restless and impatient because we fail to avail ourselves of this exceptional opportunity. True, the burning enthusiasm of "howling dervish" days has vanished and, superficially, it seems to be extinct, for now it rarely finds expression. And yet, I am sure, it only sleeps, and can be