

The British Budget is a very interesting case in point. The great victory of 1846, in the repeal of the corn laws, was a victory in the direction of the Single Tax. It went no further, however. The English land tax is ridiculously small, and labor and thrift are taxed in many ways, direct and indirect. Now, however, the increasing war-burdens make additional taxation necessary. Immediately we get the conflict: Mr. Asquith's government would increase the tax on privilege, that is, on land; the reactionary opposition desire to leave the land-lords untaxed and put the burden in the shape of increased tariff taxation, upon the workingman and the consumer.

"Ca ira, ca ira,  
La Liberté's etablira,  
Malgre les tyrans, tout reusira!"

Or as Isaiah said:

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is arisen upon thee."

## FRANKLIN AND FREEDOM.

[Address by Joseph Fels to the "Poor Richard" Club of Philadelphia,  
January 6th, 1910.]

The opinions of Franklin as an uncompromising free trader will be interesting at the present time. His enthusiastic approval of the *impot unique*, forerunner of the Single Tax principle, will surprise the general public.

The City of Philadelphia is indebted to an honored merchant, Justus C. Strawbridge, for a beautiful statue of her first citizen and adopted son, Benjamin Franklin. The statue is in the highest degree pleasing, and itself appears well to match the encomium by Washington which, with dignified simplicity, graces the pedestal:

"Venerated for benevolence,  
Admired for talents,  
Esteemed for patriotism,  
Beloved for philanthropy."

He who knows Benjamin Franklin only from his extraordinary, varied and persistent services to his country, state and city; his observations and pioneer work in gathering secrets from Dame Nature; and the homely and quaint maxims of "Poor Richard," has not sounded the depths of his feelings; has not yet learned the whole worth of the man.

### A FREE TRADER.

Franklin was opposed to the theory and practice euphemistically, but improperly I think, known as "protection," but sometimes defined as "public tax-

ation for private purposes." He was not of that timid class known to-day as tariff reformers. He did not even believe in tariff for revenue. He believed that any governmental interference between buyer and seller was wrong, and productive of evil. He was uncompromisingly a free trader. The importance of the subject will justify quotations as length:

(From *The Internal State of America*.)

"And when the government had been solicited to support such schemes by encouragement in money or by imposing duties on importation of such goods, it has been generally refused, on this principle, that if the country is ripe for the manufacture, it may be carried on by private persons to advantage; if not, it is folly to think of forcing nature. . . . The governments in America do nothing to encourage such projects. The people by these means are not imposed on either by the merchant or mechanic."

I make no comment further than this; we have progressed since then, yet complaints of imposition to-day are widespread.

In 1775, when the colonies were restive under the restrictions imposed by England, Franklin suggested the following proposal:

"Whenever she (England) shall think fit to abolish her monopoly . . . and allow us a free commerce with all the rest of the world, we shall well nigh agree to give and pay into the sinking fund 100,000 pounds sterling per annum for the term of one hundred years."

To counteract the proposed restraining acts of Parliament, Franklin moved in Congress, July 21st, 1775, as follows:

"That all custom houses in the colony shall be shut up and all officers of the same discharged from the execution of their several functions, and all the ports of the said colonies are hereby declared to be henceforth open to the ships of every state in Europe that will admit our commerce and protect it . . . ."

Franklin's biographer, the lamented Albert H. Smyth, of our Central High School, said: "Franklin's freedom of trade was based on a natural right." Personally I am a free trader. I respect every man's right to buy or sell to the best advantage, believing that "mind your own business" is the best part of the Golden Rule. May I respectfully suggest to my fellow citizens that, if Franklin's theory be unsound, their settled judgment of Franklin's wisdom must be revised? The revision must include also in its disapproval the opinions of Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Patrick Henry and all the signers of the Declaration of Independence; for therein is an indictment of George III "for cutting off our trade with all parts of the world." It must also question the wisdom of that provision of Magna Charta which declares:

"All merchants may safely and without molestation depart from England and come to England as well by land as by water, to buy and to sell, free from all evil duties."

In a letter to Peter Collinson, he wrote:

"In time, perhaps mankind may be wise enough to let trade take its own course, find its own channels, and regulate its own proportions, etc."

In 1784, in a letter to Vaughan, he wrote:

"I am sorry for the overturn you mention of those beneficial systems of commerce that would have been exemplary to mankind. The making England entirely a free port would have been the wisest step ever taken for its advantage."

There are hosts of sincere protectionists who fear the ruin of their country if traders be allowed to fetch and carry without let or hindrance. To them I respectfully commend Franklin's words written in 1774:

"It were therefore to be wished that commerce were as free between all the nations of the world as it is between the several counties of England; so would all by mutual communication obtain more enjoyment. These counties do not ruin one another by trade; neither would the nations."

Cobden, whose mind, Smyth says, was fertilized by Franklin, held that the moral progress and elevation of a people depend, first of all, upon a removal of carking care, and upon the ability to secure with reasonable labor, the loaf, the coat and the roof. It was clear to Franklin, as to Cobden, that free trade best provided for the certainty of these conditions for his countrymen, but his interest was broader than the colonies; it embraced the world. In a letter to the Englishman Hume, he writes:

"I have lately read with great pleasure the excellent essay on the jealousy of commerce. I think it cannot but have a good effect in promoting a certain interest too little thought of by selfish man, and scarcely ever mentioned, so that we hardly have a name for it; I mean the interest of humanity, or common good of mankind. But I hope, particularly from that essay, an abatement of the jealousy . . . of the commerce of the colonies."

This "interest of humanity or common good of mankind" for which Franklin sought a name, shall we call it cosmopolitanism—a citizenship of the world? It is that for which saints have prayed, and philosophers have taught, and poets have sung. Yet with clear vision Franklin saw in the trader, however humble, however selfish or prosaic, yet unconsciously its missionary, a courier for civilization, a promoter of peace on earth and good will among nations. Instead of "setting the dogs upon him," he advised that the trader should be welcomed with open arms. "Many," said the prophet, "shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." It is the demand of the trader which removes barriers separating mankind; witness the Atlantic cables, the Suez Canal, the Simplon Tunnel, and the brave attempt at Panama, appalling in difficulty. Success to them all, workers together for good!

#### THE LAND QUESTION.

What were Franklin's thoughts upon the land question? That question which, slowly here, but swiftly in England, is engaging political thought, and promising dramatic developments. The question was not in his day pressing, as the question of trade had been. The settlements on the seaboard were trifling; behind them lay a continent untouched. Franklin has, however, recorded interesting observations. I quote from his *Internal State of America*:

"We are sons of the earth and sea, and like Antæus in the fable, in wrestling with a Hercules, we now and then receive a fall; the touch of our parents communicates to us fresh strength and vigor to renew contests . . . The truth is that though there are in America few people so miserable as the poor of Europe, there are also very few that in Europe would be called rich. It is rather a general happy mediocrity that prevails. There are few great proprietors of the soil, and few tenants; . . . very few rich enough to live idly on their incomes."

We pride ourselves upon having progressed since that day. We have millionaires and multi-millionaires, also we have tramps and paupers. The strain of business life is increasing. Women and children are pressed into the ranks of labor; the fireside and the playground are drafted for the machines. And on our streets at night I see sadder sights than these. We have progressed.

Let us quote from Franklin's "Observations on the Increase of Mankind:"

"Land being thus plenty in America, and so cheap that a laboring man that understands husbandry can in a short time save money enough to purchase a piece of new land sufficient for a plantation whereon he may subsist a family, such are not afraid to marry, for if they even look far enough forward to consider how their children when grown up, are to be provided for, they see that more land is to be had at rates equally easy, etc., . . . but, notwithstanding this increase, so vast is the territory of North America, that it will require many ages to settle it fully, and till it is fully settled, labor will never be cheap here, where no man continues long a laborer but gets a plantation of his own."

These hopeful words were written in 1751 by a man thoughtful, careful and restrained in the use of language. Franklin did not foresee. The lapse of time is far from having been "many ages," yet to-day Labor is cheap—dirt cheap. That being whom the Psalmist declared to be a little lower than the angels, whose possibilities are boundless; that being whom Shakespeare apostrophized so gloriously as "in apprehension so like a God"—is a drug upon the market. When you built your new opera house, such beings fought for a chance to dig its cellars. To meet the needs of the poor, so vast is the problem that charity finds it necessary to be "organized" and statistical; and the quality of mercy has become strained. We read, and forget, that the bread line at the Bowery Mission has increased from 1500 to 2000 men—not vagabonds, says the Mission Superintendent, but men out of work. And newspaper accounts of suicides because of despondency are common. The vast territory which was to be a safeguard against poverty for "many ages" is but sparsely settled. Yet stories of distress are commonplace, perennial and alas! "tiresome." We dismiss them with a shrug.

Last January, Secretary Garfield, submitted information of 32,000 cases of alleged land frauds, mainly in States west of the Mississippi. The fact is ominous. Lowell saw that destruction lies that way, as destruction had waited for Rome.

"Where Idleness enforced saw idle lands,  
Leagues of unpeopled soil, the common earth,  
Walled round with paper against God and Man."

A philosopher has told us that in Nature there are no punishments; there are only consequences. In Nature, as in mathematics, two and two make four, yesterday, to-day and forever. But, when we consider the remedies which we apply to the consequences, the words of John Stuart Mill cannot be too often repeated: "When the object is to raise the general condition of a people, small means do not merely produce small effects; they produce no effects at all." The good intentions of our Good Government Clubs and our Municipal Leagues are acknowledged, but—"hell is paved with good intentions."

We complain that the men in the bread line sell their votes; what else have they to sell? Neglecting equity, we defraud and disemploy them; we do not attend to the public business; the public business is neglected, and the consequences annoy us. "Drive thy business," says Poor Richard, or "it will drive thee."

Had similar conditions existed in Franklin's time, I think he would have studied them; he would have been put upon inquiry; his benevolence was of a kind that walks with open eyes, that traces effect to cause, that seeks remedy, and is not satisfied with palliatives. But at that time the question was not urgent, and the public demands on Franklin's time were constant. Otherwise, I think he could not have failed to concur in the opinion expressed by Thomas Jefferson. Being in France thirty-four years afterward, and observant of the causes which soon after brought to pass the French Revolution, Jefferson wrote:

"Whenever there are in any country uncultivated lands and unemployed poor, it is clear that the laws of property have been so far extended as to violate natural right. The earth is given as a common stock for man to labor and live on."

#### THE SINGLE TAX.

The last letter which I shall quote is most pleasing and most important; a fitting finale. It was written in 1768 from London to Du Pont de Nemours in France; that Du Pont whose sons founded the powder works near Wilmington, Delaware:

"I received your obliging letter of the 10th of May, with the most acceptable present of your "Physiocratie" . . . There is such a freedom from local and national prejudices and partialities, so much benevolence to mankind in general, so much goodness mixt with the wisdom in the principles of your new philosophy, that I am perfectly charmed with them, and wish I could have stayed in France for some time to have studied at your school, that I might by conversing with its founders have made myself quite a master of that philosophy . . . I had, before I went into your country, seen some letters of yours to Dr. Templeman, that gave me a high opinion of the doctrines you are engaged in cultivating, and of your personal worth and abilities which made me greatly desirous of seeing you . . . .



"I am sorry to find that that wisdom which sees in the welfare of the parts the prosperity of the whole seems yet not to be known in this country. It is from your philosophy only that the maxims of a contrary and more happy conduct are to be drawn, which I therefore sincerely wish may grow and increase till it becomes the governing philosophy of the human species, as it must certainly be that of superior beings in better worlds."

Like most strong men, Benjamin Franklin was careful and moderate in his language, as we have seen. It is, therefore, worth while to examine doctrines of which such a man says, "I am perfectly charmed with them," and for which he hopes such growth and increase that they may become the governing philosophy of the human species.

The physiocrats were philosophers and political economists who lived in France in the reign of Louis XVI. The most prominent members of the school were Turgot, the King's Minister of Finance, and Quesnay, his favorite physician. Their doctrine was, in a word, the narrow one that government should do no more than to protect and preserve the rights of life and property, and to administer justice. Governmental interference with production and exchange was not allowable. Trade was to be free, and the entire revenue, the "impot unique," was to be taxed from the rent of land. This proposal of Quesnay to substitute one single tax upon rent (for all others) was praised by the elder Mirabeau "as a discovery equal in utility to the invention of writing, or the substitution of the use of money for barter."

Do these words appear to be extravagant? That I regret, for extravagance is weakness. Let me ask you to forget them, and to recall, instead, those of one who is notably calm, philosophical and moderate. It was of this philosophy that Franklin wrote, "I am perfectly charmed with it:" it was of this philosophy that he expressed the hope that it might finally govern the whole race; it was this philosophy that he thought worthy of superior beings in better worlds.

The philosophy which so charmed Franklin, and from which he hoped so much, was unhappily placed. It was making progress, undoubted progress, when the storm of the French Revolution broke; it was overwhelmed, and became naught but a memory to the students of history. It is a curious fact that this doctrine should have been independently thought out and revived in after years by a young man who knew nothing of the great Frenchmen who preceded him; a young man, moreover, who was born in Franklin's loved city of Philadelphia, a reader of Franklin's works, and an eager attendant upon lectures at the Franklin Institute. Like Franklin, too, a printer, a philosopher and a free trader. He wrote what John Russell Young characterized as "a solemn message to mankind." The message was "Progress and Proverty," couched in masterly English worthy of the subject. But as of old, so to-day, a prophet is not without honor but in his own country and among his own kin. Lightly regarded in his native city and land, his revived doctrine of the "impot unique," the doctrine which had so charmed Franklin, here known as the "SINGLE TAX," is, in the Antipodes, in Germany and in England, marching apace. I think the

time will come when Henry George's birthplace on Tenth Street will rival in attractive power our Independence Hall.

Benjamin Franklin once wrote of his gratification in the thought that his works were respectfully quoted by others. Allow me here on my part to acknowledge a keen pleasure in thus spreading further the pure and peaceful counsels of this printer, philosopher and statesman.

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## GREAT BRITAIN'S TRIBUTE TO HENRY GEORGE.

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Part of Speech Delivered by Wells Drury at the Henry George Memorial Meeting in San Francisco.

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The most magnificent tribute offered to the memory of Henry George on the seventieth anniversary of his birth, is that bestowed by the people of Great Britain. The plain truth, known to all who are acquainted with contemporary history, is that the genius of Henry George actually rules the realm over which King Edward nominally holds sway. The controlling power in Great Britain is the ministry when backed by the majority in the House of Commons. Against these forces, when combined, there is no possible resistance. The throne is helpless and the House of Lords can go no farther than a vote of negation, that may only temporarily stem the tide of the people's will. Sooner or later the majority must rule. This is the inevitable outcome of every struggle between the people and all who oppose them, proved time and again in the history of Great Britain. Read the speech made by David Lloyd George, chancellor of the exchequer, reported in the London *Times* of July 31, 1909, and you will there find sound Single Tax doctrine clearly expounded. The truth could not be more plainly set forth if Henry George himself came back to uphold the cause of right and justice. The late premier of Great Britain was firmly established in the philosophy of the Prophet of San Francisco, namely, that those who create values shall possess them and enjoy the benefits arising therefrom. His successor follows in his footsteps, as is shown by the budget which the entire ministry so valiantly fought to put through. It is a Henry George budget, and is denounced by the House of Lords as such. Not Lloyd George, but Henry George, is the author, they bitterly declare. It will surely be enforced by the British government, and when that is done it will be a great victory for the people and against the privileged classes who have enjoyed all the profit without doing any of the work. It will be a new Declaration of Independence, according to the philosophy of Henry George, the Prophet of San Francisco.

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*The American Ideal*, of Cincinnati, and *The Only Way*, of Philadelphia, are bright little Single Tax journals in which one always finds something bright and interesting.