

# THE SINGLE TAX REVIEW

A Record of the Progress of Single Tax and Tax Reform  
Throughout the World.

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## A RETROSPECT AND A PROPHECY.

(For the Review.)

By WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON.

In the closing chapter of "Progress and Poverty," Henry George thus indicated in memorable words his consciousness of the stupendous task mapped out for his life's work: "The truth that I have tried to make clear will not find easy acceptance. If that could be, it would have been accepted long ago. If that could be, it would never have been obscured. But it will find friends—those who will toil for it; suffer for it; if need be, die for it. This is the power of Truth." Instead of the illusion of speedy success, here was a sad and sober acknowledgment of the prevailing gloom. Through it, however, his eye of faith clearly discerned the star of hope beyond the murk.

We have but to transfer ourselves in imagination to the year 1879, the date when by the publication of this great work was announced the arrival of a new and powerful force in the arena of political economy and American politics. Lacking the University stamp, this California printer, with only the rough education picked up in that poor man's college—the printing office—suddenly appeared as a challenger of established conditions and authorities. Lowell's lines to the abolition printer who defied American slavery fit also Henry George:

"Whatever can be known of earth we know,"  
Sneered Europe's wise men, in their snail-shells curled;  
"No!" said one man of Genoa, and that No  
Out of the dark created this New World."

The professors regarded the book with contempt; the press, at first cordially appreciative of its wonderful force of exposition, its mastery of English speech, on discovering the dangerous teaching underlying the new doctrine, joined in the general disparagement. Privilege quickly scented the danger, as the South discovered the menace of the "Liberator" before the Bostonians and their mayor suspected the dynamic possibility of "the poor unlearned young man" in the printing office attic, "friendless and unseen." It was the day of small things, the opening of a revolution in economic thought and in the methods of attacking special privilege.

Yet, in the early morn of the movement, the thrilling years that gathered to his aid youth and manhood alike, there came an enthusiasm and exaltation that presaged speedy triumph. The Anti-Poverty Society drew audiences that tested the capacity of metropolitan halls. The fresh convert to the new evangel, thrilled by an evening of eloquence and prophecy, knew "that the Lord was higher." And when Cleveland in his first administration precipitated the tariff issue, the corollary of the Single Tax, with what jubilation the

followers of Henry George rushed to his support, dreaming that free trade was coming fast and, after that, the liberation of the land. At the National Single Tax Conference at Cooper Union in 1890, from many lips came the confident prediction that the close of the century would see the triumph of the cause.

The date for accomplishment is overpast. What cheer for the disciples of Henry George? Is the grasp of protection weakened? Let the extremest and most drastic protective tariff in our history answer. Have the Single Tax societies multiplied and gained in political power? It is necessary to say that both in numbers and enthusiasm they have dwindled. Where are the leaders that will compare with the exceptional men who clustered about Henry George fifteen to twenty years ago? Echo answers, "Where?" Truly a discouraging report.

Is, then, the reform a failure and has time proved its fallacies? To this a ringing negation is possible. Its principles have pervaded the world. There is no need to count numbers of Single Tax organisations, to lament the decease of the "Standard," or to repine because no leaders stand out in the bold relief of Henry George and his brilliant associates.

Behold, the press and parties of two hemispheres are, under various phases, busy in its discussion. Sentiments that only the official organs of the Single Tax movement would print are now repeated through hundreds of newspapers and magazines in various continents. It puzzles one to name an active issue in politics, here or abroad, that does not in some measure compel the repetition of arguments and the vindication of principles which brought to the author of "Progress and Poverty" abuse and vilification. Strange to say, most of the writers and speakers who have adopted the very phraseology of George, are unconscious of the source from which their strength is drawn, and would shrink from any identification with his heresies.

What matters the credit if the creed is preached? Sir Edward Grey, Campbell-Bannerman, Asquith, the "Daily News," and every English Liberal leader or organ, have been ordained to continue the propaganda. They all borrow, uncredited, Henry George's thunder: "It is not necessary to be a full-blooded disciple of Henry George," says the London "Speaker," "to believe in the doctrine that these increments (land values) as they are created by the population, should flow, not into the pockets of the landowners, but into the local exchequer." That statement surely covers the purpose of George, notwithstanding the desire of the editor chiefly to credit the doctrine to Mill, Morley and Chamberlain.

In a lesser way, as regards public franchises, agricultural problems, municipal ownership, and housing questions, the issues of the Single Tax crop out in all discussions. In whatever country or section, the heresies of 1879 are on orthodox lips of 1904. Tolstoy announces to the workingmen of Russia: "Personally, I regard Henry George's scheme as the most just, beneficent and above all, practicable of all the schemes with which I am acquainted." And Sir Edward Grey declares that the party which first masters the question of taxing land values, making it its own and shows capacity for dealing with it, defiant of vested interests, will have a great and solid ground upon which to appeal to the country.

Such evidences of the advance of the truth and public enlightenment, since "Progress and Poverty" appeared, exist in every portion of the English speaking world; and in New Zealand the approximate adoption of the theory in practical working, indicate that its advocates need not shrink from the extremest test.

With this assuring retrospect, and, in spite of the seemingly impregnable position of privilege, we cannot distrust the future. The alarm of the dominant classes, the volcanic revelations which have made the popular magazines in-

struments of social revolution, the ferment of labor, the disappearance of distinct party lines, the growth of arbitrary power, the craze of imperialism,—all foreshadow a new social dispensation and a crucial trial for democracy. Old bottles are bursting under the pressure of the new wine of progress, if the symptoms named imply progression.

To those who are appalled by surface indications, despondency is natural; but to the followers of Henry George who have realized from the beginning that "Progress and Poverty" was a disturbing ploughshare, the signs of stubborn opposition add assurance to their hope. "Say not the struggle naught availeth." Only youthful inexperience could expect enthroned privilege tamely to submit to extinction. It is fighting for life with immeasurable resources. The conflict will wax hotter before the elements are heated sufficiently to melt the brazen evil. Nevertheless, an invincible and intelligent force was unloosed by the San Francisco printer, in 1879, which, yet unrealized, is the largest factor in the present contest for civilization. Of the result, however delayed or distant, the faithful cannot doubt.



## A "PROFOUND" ECONOMIST.

(For the Review.)

By JAMES LOVE.

I conceive therefore, as to the business of being profound, that it is with writers as with wells—a person with good eyes may see to the bottom of the deepest, provided any water be there; and often when there is nothing in the world at the bottom but dryness and dirt, though it be but a yard and a half under ground, it shall pass, however, for wondrous deep, upon no wiser a reason than because it is wondrous dark.

—DEAN SWIFT.

In the October "Century" I find an article by Professor John Bates Clark of Columbia University: "The Real Dangers of the Trusts. With Some Suggestions as to Remedies." In the editorial introduction the remark: That at this time especially "It will be no less interesting than instructive to read the conclusions as to the real dangers of the system by one who has given the subject *profound* and disinterested examination," seems to me to warrant the opinion that the editor had never read a line, or at least had never attempted to comprehend a line of anything written by Clark. But knowing that from time to time he appears in the economic quarterlies; that he has found publishers for two or three college text books; and that he is a professor in one of our greatest schools; the editor of "The Century" has taken his profundity for granted, and has not given to Clark the profound examination that he fancies Clark has given to the trusts. A faith suggestive of the abiding reliance that Copperfield's aunt had in poor, witless, Mr. Dick: "A man," she said. "who evidently had an idea in his head; and if he could only pen it up into a corner, which was his great difficulty, he would distinguish himself in some extraordinary manner."

Professor Clark was called upon to give his opinion, not as a politician nor as a business man of course, but as an *Economist* to point out the natural laws concerned—laws—physical or ethical—from which to deduce a course of legislative action. By assuming, as he does, that such monopolies arise arbitrarily—by using his unfounded beliefs as a standard of truth—I incline to think that his opinion as to such a course is of no greater value than if he were not an economist and had no collegiate authority. For, like most Economists, he