

essential. Mr. John Purroy Mitchell, Fusion candidate for Mayor, had stated he would sign such a referendum bill, if submitted to him. Mr. Edward E. McCall, Tammany Hall candidate, had declined to answer any of the several communications addressed to him from these two organizations, asking his position. Mr. Mitchel was endorsed by both organizations.

Relatively few of those endorsing the halving of the tax rate on buildings are Single Taxers, probably not over five per cent. They are, however, keenly alive to the moral iniquity of taxing rents high and homes dear for the benefit of land speculators, as at present. This sentiment and conviction is growing with marvelous rapidity in New York. The gradual untaxing of buildings will begin very shortly, despite the opposition of the land speculators of the city, who have debauched many of our "charities," corrupted our legislature, prostituted our churches, and secured control of many of our pseudo reform, and civic and commercial organizations. Were the proposal submitted to a referendum next year it would doubtless be carried by a large majority. This the land speculators know, hence their unseemly and frantic efforts to prevent the referendum, by every trick and method not legally indictable. The referendum is the death of the privilege of land speculation. It is at hand.

FRENCH CAPITAL AND ITS PROPER FUNCTION.

By ERNEST MANSUY, (Bookkeeper).

"Our fundamental error consists in treating land as private property."—Henry George.

Translated for the SINGLE TAX REVIEW by F. W. Garrison.

(Continued).

We know that in the warlike origin of all nations lies the cause of the absurd social state in which we find ourselves, but this cause is to-day far distant enough for us to ask why its effect perpetuates itself indefinitely, and why the injustice and inequality which form the basis of the system are still supported by a population whose intelligence has developed in every sense for centuries, and who have acquired a feeling for natural law profound enough to make them carefully write the words Liberty and Equality, which sum it up on all the walls belonging to the community. How can this population, whose intelligence is manifested so brilliantly in all the arts and sciences, support the stupid and degrading despotism which hems it in on all sides?

There is here a phenomenon of mental suggestion which is found in many other circumstances. The human mind in developing assimilates not only the true ideas which are accepted in the moral and intellectual circle in which the child finds itself; it absorbs also prejudices incrusting on the public mind,

and current superstitions. These false ideas gain access to his mind before he is strong enough to discuss them, they become fixed there, and later, when the man tries to find the truth, his reasoning constantly slips into the grooves of routine; it is only by a violent and painful effort that he can succeed in freeing his intelligence from the preconceived opinions which obscure it.

I do not mean to say that the evils of social conditions can escape the eyes of even the least far-seeing. Everyone is shocked at social abuses and the stupidity of governments; from time to time these abuses and this stupidity become intolerable and revolutions periodically upset an order of things recognized as bad by everybody. But when it comes to reestablishing order the public mind is impotent; the revolutionists having exactly the same principles and the same method of reasoning as the conservatives, their success ends in simply changing the personnel of the government and the form of the abuse. After, as before, we are confronted by the same moral and economic disorder, the only difference is new men in office and a change in the names or the form of certain social vices.*

The elements of public opinion may be divided into three groups; on the one hand the conservatives are composed chiefly of the governing class and the growing horde of functionaries, naturally partisans of ordered despotism, whose agents they are, and on the other hand the revolutionists who, in the last resort, in spite of differences which distinguish them from one another, profess the identical principle which guides the actual rulers, *The worship of force*. Between these two bitterly hostile armies the great bulk of the people is divided in a confused way and flows continually, sometimes attracted towards the incoherent despotism of *saboteurs*, whose vague theories may deceive so long as no attempt is made to apply them; sometimes returning to the established despotism which presents the appearance of order in disorder and seems to promise greater tranquility in the confusion; and sometimes straying in different directions in the wake of inventors of social panaceas and intriguing saviors of society.

There exists among the people, however, a growing number of sensible persons who have succeeded in freeing their minds from fixed routine and hero-worship. Nor are the masses hostile to truths which appear in a new guise; far from it: but this element is not organized, discussion cannot arise, the ideas which continually unfold there do not spread, they lack the power to make themselves heard. The press, which might report and develop these ideas, reserves its columns for the political inanities which have the approval of the two groups I have described, or for scientific theories which are approved

* These are wise words of the brilliant French essayist. And how appropriate to the minute! Just now we are hearing in this city the cry, "The power of Tammany is broken. But four years hence we may be obliged to confess that the power that was Tammany's was not "broken," but merely transferred to another set of individuals and entrenched under another name. Or, as a result of the same economic disorder, the return—more than once repeated in the city's political history—of a slightly chastened Tammany to power.—EDITOR SINGLE TAX REVIEW.

by established institutions. Among political journals some are conservative and some revolutionary; for some time there have been journals which pretended to be neither the one nor the other but which are in reality both revolutionary and conservative. But all journals, whatever their labels, are before everything else advertising laboratories; political opinions are but the pretext, self-praise is the aim; their editions are consequently composed first of paid articles and next of banal variations on the same political theories, which become fashionable periodically and continually change in form and appearance while remaining in essence the same everlasting twaddle. New truths are systematically left in the dark because they cannot be discussed without offending powerful interests and disturbing the calculations of advertisers and the regular purveyors to public opinion.

In this adulterated intellectual atmosphere little else than silly banalities and ridiculous theories can hope to appear in the light of public discussion, while those which, besides being extravagant, are avowedly criminal, like *sabotage* and propaganda by direct action, are discussed with perfect seriousness and may hope some day to triumph; Opportunism, Anarchy, Progressivism, Nationalism, Internationalism, Anti-Semitism, Syndicalism and many other humbugisms have been successively in fashion. Today society is about to be saved by the absurdity of an income tax and proportional representation, but French journals have not for a moment seemed to suspect that a land question exists, that this question is the mainspring of a powerful movement in the great countries of both the old and the new world, and that it has been partially solved in certain countries to the great advantage of the people.

Nevertheless it seems to be breaking through the thick crust of despotism which in France prevents all liberal ideas from developing in the sunlight of discussion. There is, in the first place, the world-wide movement which I have just mentioned and which the French journals cannot long continue to ignore. Moreover, the invincible power of money which heretofore has scarcely been used except to maintain abuses of all sorts, is now to a certain extent put to the service of truth and liberty. In one notable instance an American citizen, Mr. Joseph Fels, after having amassed a large fortune, such as is rarely found save in the United States of America, awakened to the fact that this fortune was in great part due to organic defects in society, and above all to the individual appropriation of land. An enlightened and convinced philanthropist, he desires to consecrate this fortune to human liberty and the abolition of poverty, and with this end in view, instead of founding charitable institutions which are little else than pauper factories, he has given himself with apostolic faith and a passionate activity to the spread of the philosophic and economic doctrine of Henry George, one of the greatest minds of our epoch and author of the immortal book, "Progress and Poverty." Not content with devoting his time and persuasive eloquence to the success of his ideas, Mr. Fels gives his money also and, thanks to him, they begin to penetrate those countries which seemed until now closed against all liberal propaganda. A French

society has been founded, a special organ is published and the good word begins to be spread among the people.

Many citizens who conceived of progress as subordinate to the political advancement of certain cumbersome personalities and the application of certain mysterious contrivances known only to the initiated, are astonished to learn that there are other political questions than the question of persons, that there is something else to do than to rely on ill-comprehended and contradictory projects of party leaders, and that the solution of social problems does not demand the transcendent genius of statesmen and professional saviors of society, but depends merely upon the initiative of the people, and the employment for this purpose of the simple elementary good sense which is the possession of all.

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I ought to say that the land question, simple as it is, was presented at first in a fallacious way which has always caused false and incomplete solutions to be applied to it, resulting in all countries in disorder and despotism.

This fundamental question has necessarily presented itself at the formation of all political societies and at other successive periods. It has always been sought to solve it by dividing the land; the process has varied in all countries and at all epochs, but always, after having given tolerable satisfaction, these divisions have led to the worst results. Many reasons prove that the earth cannot be satisfactorily divided, the two chief ones are the impossibility of making the allotments equal in value because the earth's surface is different in every part, and the impossibility of determining the number of persons to whom the lots should be distributed, since the population varies in size from day to day.

This error has long since lost its power; no sensible person would demand a division of the earth and it would be useless today to restore the brutal law passed by the Convention in 1793 and punishing with death whoever should demand a division of the territory among all the citizens. Unfortunately, if this solution is no longer valid, it seems to be accepted that the problem cannot be solved, an error much greater than the other. Is it not a fact that many other things exist as impossible as land to divide which, nevertheless, numerous owners dispose of each according to his strictly defined interest? *Capital* is indivisible, but its *products* can be divided in the most exact manner among capitalists however numerous; for instance, a coal mine certainly cannot be divided among the owners, but each of them holds stock in the mine which exactly represents the amount of his share; all commercial, industrial or other companies are in the same case, the capital of each always depends upon its being kept as a unit, none of the owners can take out that part of the capital which belongs to him, but he takes periodically the exact amount of income which it produces.

The question of the common ownership of land would thus have been solved long ago if it had been considered and publicly discussed, but this discussion, so difficult to set going today, was quite impossible during the days of

intolerance and barbarism, and it was not until the 18th century that different sides of the problem were approached by various authors such as the Abbe Saint-Pierre, Vauban and particularly the first economists, the *physiocrats*, led by Quesnay.

As always happens in the search for truth the early efforts only partially disengage it, and leave it veiled by useless complications; the physiocrats gave undue importance to the fecundity of the earth while its essential quality and the reason of its social importance, the fact that it is the indispensable support of man and of his property, only appealed to them confusedly. They made other mistakes which it is not necessary to recall here, but they were enlightened by a moral sense which made it possible for them to determine the two principles which will forever remain the basis of all normal political societies and which may be thus formulated:

1. All social expenses should be met from the revenue derived from land.

2. All legitimate human activities should be absolutely free.

These two principles are inseparable, nor can we find elsewhere than in the rent of land the resources necessary for the State without directly infringing either the personal or property rights of man.

The physiocrats formulated this precept: *Laissez faire, laissez passer*, which condemns all the ridiculous obstacles imagined by the oppressors of the people to vitiate the labor and confuse the fruitful activity of mankind. This golden rule might replace the old word Liberty which no longer seems to be understood and for which it is an exact equivalent.

Adam Smith, although inspired by the physiocrats, criticised their errors wisely, but failed to realize the importance of their fundamental principle, and his celebrated work, "The Wealth of Nations," in spite of its great merit and the abundance of particular truths which it elucidates, represents rather a backward than a forward step in the study of political societies. Since his time economic science, while improved in many particulars, has rather lost ground on the most important question of Sociology.

But the works of Henry George, the first of which appeared in 1871, in San Francisco, restored the question to its true place and presented the whole solution with a wealth of proof which left no room for further doubt.

This powerful thinker reviews the astounding progress realized on all sides, the means of production multiplied, the unlimited power of machinery assisting labor, the means of communication saving time and facilitating exchange, etc., etc., and he asks why poverty seems even to have deepened in certain instances. He then proves that this evil result of immense progress is due to private appropriation of land.

In fact, if a nation spends great sums in improving roads and canals and bettering the public services, these heavy expenditures increase the value of the nation's land, and this increase is taken by the landlords. If artisans, tradesmen, producers of all kinds concentrate in a locality, the money they spend on building, on the costs of living, their activity and even their presence

is sure to increase the well-being of the inhabitants of this locality, a result translated into an increase of land values which the landowners pocket. If a manufacturer builds a factory in an uninhabited spot and constructs dwellings for his workmen it may result in ruin for him if he has not carefully calculated his chances, but in the meantime he will have increased the value of the surrounding land and enriched the landlords.

And so all activity displayed by the administration of a country, or by groups of citizens, or by individuals, from the father of a family who has to struggle to bring up his numerous children to the poor wretches who sell newspapers in the streets, from the workman who labors from morning to night to the man of property who is content merely to spend his income, all this activity, I say, will crystallize in an increase of land values, whether as a whole or in certain parts, an increment which will be entirely absorbed by the so-called landowners.

Analyzing all these economic phenomena with extraordinary insight Henry George proves that not only do the landowners benefit by all the public disbursements, by all the efforts of the community in every sphere of human activity, and by all the progress achieved in the sciences, arts and civilization, but further, that the iniquity which he denounces gives to the parasites a formidable and most baleful power by placing the whole activity of the country indirectly under their domination. "Whoever owns the land owns those who live upon it." If this iniquitous power has not yet produced worse effects it is because there is not an understanding among those who wield it, and because they exercise it partially and without method, but it contains the germ of all miseries and all iniquities. And in this connection, Henry George proves that the economic struggle, the effects of which we all feel more or less directly, are not, as the Socialists contend, between *capital* and *labor*, for at bottom these two elements are identical, capital being past labor which combines with present labor. The unequal struggle is between the so-called landowners on the one side and capital and labor on the other.

While the workman collects with great difficulty an uncertain and insufficient wage for his personal labors and devotion, the landowner profits by everybody's work though he remains idle and takes no risk. He has in addition an evil influence on public well-being because, possessing the substance upon which all human activity must be exerted, it is often to his interest to withhold this indispensable element from use and deny it to the workman who would like to use it and thus find means of subsistence.

(To be continued.)

THE land is a solemn gift, which nature has made to man; to be born, then, is for each of us a title of possession. The child has no better birth-right to the breast of its mother.—MARMONTEL (1757.)