

A TILT WITH THE SOCIALISTS.

(For the Review.)

Some time ago there happened to be a joint meeting of Single Taxers and Socialists. Of course, it can easily be understood how these two classes would agree with one another. Sure enough, the inevitable happened. An acrimonious discussion broke out between two of the most fiery of these cults. Order, however, was restored, a chairman was appointed, and Socialists and Single Taxers called on alternately to state their cases.

One of the Socialists in his address tried to prove, that, because it required the cooperative energies of a multitude of men to make a sewing machine, therefore there was no difference between the value of such a machine and the value of a city lot, the value of which was caused by the crowding of population.

With an appearance of self-satisfaction he took his seat immediately in front of the platform, where he might eye closely the oncoming Single Taxer who would dare to enter the lists in combat.

"My friend tells us," began the champion of land value taxation, "that there is no difference between the value of the land and the value of a sewing machine, because it requires a multitude of people to make the value in either case.

"I can easily imagine with what joy our good friend will some day bring home to the beloved partner of his joys and sorrows a beautiful, spick-span new sewing machine, the pride with which he will address her in the the following language: "My own sweet darling, the brightness of my eyes, the delight of my soul, behold this beauty of a sewing machine; you know the value of this sewing machine is just the same as that of a piece of land. Therefore, when the population doubles, the value of this machine will double, and when the population doubles again then the value of the machine will do likewise. Wont that be delightful? Why some day we will be millionaires like the Fields and the Astors."

"My good brother," continued the speaker, in addressing himself to the Socialist, "is that the way the sewing machines do in your city? Did you ever see a sewing machine like that?

"Go on brother, go on "said the Socialist, "you are doing well."

"Well," replied the Single Taxer, "the good wife uses that machine. She oils it and takes the best of care of it, and yet in spite of all her efforts it will become old and wear out, till at last she is compelled to declare to her beloved lord and master, 'my dear, this machine is beyond repair; it must go to the scrap heap, and we will have to get a new one.' "

"Now, my good brother," said the speaker to the champion of the Socialists, "is that the way the lots in your city go. Do they get worn out and useless? Do you have to scrap them and then get new ones?"

"Go on, brother, go on," repeated the Socialist, "you are doing well."

"Some time ago a number of men went to the woods, they cut down the timber and brought it to the factory. At the same time, another group of men went to the mines. There they dug the ore, roasted it, smelted it, fashioned it, and brought it also to the factory. Here another set of men took the lumber and the metal, and fitted and fashioned them till they turned out a quantity of excellent sewing machines. Now, it cost the effort of a great many men armed with their tools and dinner pails to complete these machines.

Tell me, please, my good brother, did you ever see a gang of laborers start out in the morning with their tools and dinner pails to manufacture a quantity of land value? To make the best situated lots worth twice as much as they were before? Did you ever see or hear of such a sight as that?"

"Go on brother," again chimed in the Socialist, "you are doing well."

"Perhaps you remember the mighty fire that swept away half the city of Chicago about the year 1870, how it destroyed the value, not merely of every sewing machine it could reach, but also of every building and every piece of furniture that its flames could devour.

But there was one thing that set the power of the conflagration utterly at defiance. The fire made sad havoc of all the works that the hands of men had created. But the value of the land it could not touch—not even to a hair of its head. No one ever thinks of insuring land value against fire.

My good brother, did you ever hear the alarm bells calling out the people to extinguish a conflagration of land values? Tell me, please."

"Go on brother, you are doing well," again repeated our good friend the Socialist.

"Did you ever see a man who did not know the difference between multiplication and division? Now, if I should show you one, would you not think he was a Simon pure phenomenon, a very fit subject for a museum?"

Now just let me show you one. When your multitude of men assemble to make some sewing machines, do they try to multiply or to divide? Do they aim to produce abundance or to increase the scarcity?

Now you know this fact just as well as you know your own soul, that the aim of labor, constructive labor, productive labor, all the time and everywhere is to make goods just as abundant as they possibly can, to multiply abundance."

"What about bed bugs" asked the Socialist, with a burst of laughter, in which the crowd joined most heartily.

"Oh! Tut, tut, tut," replied the Single Taxer, "That's too bad to give away your own blood relations in that way"—and the laughter was renewed.

"Now when a man speculates to gain a great deal of land value, does he aim to make land abundant? Does he try to convert the one acre into a hundred acres, as the farmer tries to multiply the bushels of potatoes or the flock of sheep? Does he, my friend?"

You know just as well as Satan knows sin that the speculator hungers and thirsts by day, and lies awake at night, praying that the multitude may come and crowd awfully on that land of his, so that it will be divided and sub-divided till the people are packed by the thousand on that acre. He wants division.

You know, just as sure as the heavens are above and the earth beneath, that industry toils always to multiply and thus increase one kind of value, and that as population becomes more and more congested, this causes an entirely different kind of value—a value of scarcity and dearness.

I would seriously urge you never again to say that the value of multiplication is the same as the value of division—What do you say to that?"

With his good natured smile, the Socialist repeated, "Go on brother, you are doing well."

"And what I have said about multiplication and division, I might also say as to honesty and dishonesty, justice and injustice, right and wrong, enrichment and spoliation—an infinite and eternal difference.

When your multitude went to the mines, the forests, the railroad and innumerable agencies to make those sewing machines, each man was doing his utmost as an active intelligent co-operating agent to accomplish his own individual share to produce a definite result. Then he established an indefeasible right to a part of that result. He had a right to say, 'this part of the value produced is mine, mine exclusively to use according to my best judgment.'

But when the population doubles in this city, what man has a right as an individual to claim the resulting land value as his individual possession? What right has the speculator, who has done nothing towards producing sewing machines to come and claim a share therein, because land has become more scarce and more dear?

Is it not clear as the brightness of noonday that there is one value produced by the industry of individuals, which the producers have an inalienable right to claim as theirs; and the community causes another value to the land, which, therefore, belongs to the community for public purposes.

And is it not, therefore, unquestionable that justice demands that we avoid the assessment of individually produced value, and that we appropriate the community caused values, so that such an injustice as land speculation cannot exist?

Am I not right in proclaiming the doctrine, individually produced values for individual enjoyment, and community caused values for community use?

"You have done well, brother," said the Socialist.

Sometime subsequently that Socialist's name appeared in the public prints as an organizer for the Single Tax.—GUILLIAM ALEXIS.

THE Single Tax philosophy is making remarkable progress in Spain. Over fifty daily papers are publishing Single Tax articles and leaflets.