

PERHAPS A QUESTION OF AMENITIES

We have done an apparent injustice to Mr. James R. Brown in attributing to his excellent "Plain Talk on Taxation" the statement that "the present system of taxation is advocated by knaves and believed in by fools." It occurs in Mr. Brown's pamphlet on the Farmer and not in the work to which it is erroneously ascribed.

It is said that the remark was made by Henry George himself, and that our criticism is therefore a criticism of the prophet. If so, it is a liberty which the prophet always allowed his disciples, and if Mr. George really said it, it was nevertheless in questionable taste.

A correspondent sees an inconsistency in our condemnation of such a statement when placed over against what he terms our harsh criticism of the political economists. The cases are hardly analogous. To stigmatize ninety per cent of our fellow citizens as fools or knaves is one thing; to pillory a small class of the "intellectuals" whose teachings are in many cases deliberately designed to conceal truth in the interests of a privileged class, is quite another.

So much for this correspondent. Another, in a milder tone of disapproval asks that we do justice to those political economists (indeed to nearly all political economists in a measure) who have taught the doctrines of free trade in opposition often to the pecuniary interests of universities endowed by protected and protectionist magnates. We gladly concede this measure of credit to the professorial class. But the teaching of free trade is a tradition inherited from Adam Smith who wrote more than a hundred years ago; it is the orthodoxy of the schools; it is an old, not a new truth. At that it is only a partial challenge to privilege, and it has nearly as many friends in the House of Have as Protection has. And after all it is only commercial free trade that is taught: no political economist occupying a seat in a

university is a free trader of the kind that Bastiat was, or David A. Wells, not to mention Henry George. Ninety per cent of these free trade teachers in the universities are merely revenue tariff men. If they have ever boldly advocated the destruction of custom houses we confess not to have heard of it.

Nevertheless, such credit as is due them we concede, and we thank our correspondent for the opportunity of making this acknowledgment with such grace as circumstances permit, and such qualification as must perforce accompany it.

CAN MARX AND GEORGE BE HARMONIZED?

Many letters have been received congratulating the REVIEW on the publication of Mr. W. H. Kaufman's series of articles showing, or endeavoring to show, a practical agreement between the economics of Karl Marx and those of Henry George.

The experience of some readers however, may or may not be described by Mrs. Julia Goldzier, who writes as follows:

"I read the article 'Karl Marx and Henry George' by W. H. Kaufman in the May-June issue of the SINGLE TAX REVIEW, with great pleasure.

In its proper proportion it is as fearfully and wonderfully made as is the Milky Way. It is as formless, nebulous, fluid and rarely viscous. Not vacuous; "viscous." There certainly is something there, but it wafts away when you try to grasp it. You can feel it if you thrust your hand into a pailful and paddle around. Or if the pailful is thrown over you, you know you were hit by something, for you are all wet; but the tangible particles have flowed away and you can't gather them together again.

If "Das Kapital" means "private monopoly" what is the name for that which means capital? For surely—no matter what a "consistent Single Taxer" might do—a believer in the Henry George philosophy would never be guilty of making such a statement as: The three factors in the production of *Wealth* are *Land*, *Labor*

and "*Private Monopoly*." When Karl Marx or any other "consistent Single Taxer" wants to mention the third factor in production what word does he use? I have not been able to discover it, and I am inclined to conclude that, to be a consistent Single Taxer you must be eloquently nebulous, indefinite and viscous in your statements; and the more nebulous, the more indefinite and viscous your statements, the more consistent a Single Taxer you are."

This is extremely clever, but not very convincing. For it is quite possible to show that Marx erred in minor details and in definitions without disproving Mr. Kaufman's contention that he really saw the land question, not merely as a phase, but as the actual basis of the system of private monopoly by means of which in a thousand ways labor is exploited. That hundreds of extracts from *Das Kapital* reinforce this conclusion Mr. Kaufman has, it seems to us, abundantly proved. That Marx was a "more consistent" Single Taxer than Henry George may be allowed to pass as a harmless exaggeration. The fact that he was not clear in his exposition is proved by the fact that it was reserved for Mr. Kaufman to demonstrate years after the publication of the book itself that the elaborate structure of State Socialism reared in the name of Marxism fails to find its justification in anything that Marx taught. Evidently much of this has been tacked on to Marxism and its contention as taught in *Das Kapital* that before labor can be exploited it must first be expropriated from the land.

The surprise of a few Single Taxers at Mr. Kaufman's series of papers, and their disposition to reject without examination and with a little impatience much of the truth which Mr. Kaufman has made clear with respect to the teachings of Marx, is due to the fact that their knowledge of Socialism is drawn entirely from the later interpreters of Marxism, and their inclination as Single Taxers to that philosophy of individualism which is the antithesis of Socialism as taught by some of its later disciples. Representing this thought, Mr.

Chas. LeBaron Goeller, of Union, N. Y. editor of the *Single Tax News*, is "amazed that Mr. Miller should allow such weak articles to be leaders in a Single Tax paper." We are not amazed at Mr. Goeller's amazement. But if he can disprove Mr. Kaufman's interpretation of Marx he will do what we confess we are unable to do. And perhaps his failure to accomplish this task may somewhat qualify his amazement.

THE COMING NATIONAL CONFERENCE

The Annual Fels Fund and Single Tax Conference will be held at Niagara Falls, American side, on August 19, 20 and 21st. On the same date the Canadian Single Taxers will also hold a conference, and it is hoped that large numbers of American Single Taxers may be able to meet with our Canadian comrades.

Those who can attend this Conference should neglect no opportunity to do so. The Conference will meet in a sad time for this civilization of ours, with a whole world at war. It must be that most of us are depressed with the events that are transpiring. But though Single Taxers have never been the prophets of evil it is they who, almost alone have declared that a civilization based on injustice could not long endure. All the industrial fabric so laboriously builded was seen to be of the most unsubstantial stuff, and so far as Europe is concerned, is now tottering to its fall. We cling to a stupid folly indeed if we imagine our own system, in these United States in most ways similar, is any more enduring.

How civilization may be saved, how what is worth while in it may be preserved, is a Titanic task indeed, even with the answer written in the heavens as we read it. Others will not see it, and the nation may march to its destruction if the true lesson is not read. Our work is to cry the warning so loudly that men will listen, will awake from their sleep, and from the fool's sense of security.

These words of Cardinal Manning should