

SALUTATION TO HALLEY'S COMET.

Editorial in the Chicago Inter Ocean of May 18.

Halley's comet is due to make us a visit—or the nearest approach to a visit that we can hope for—this evening.

Such an event, it is hardly necessary to remark, is exceedingly rare. It is worthy of being marked with a white stone. Or, better still, a poem.

With this idea in mind we take pleasure in presenting the Office Poet's metrical salutation of the approaching visitor. The comet will receive no prettier compliment while it is with us:

Of gases all compounded,
Forever chasing far,
And yet engaged in doing
Naught in particu-lar;
The solar system putting
At sixes and at sevens—
We gladly, proudly greet thee,
Thou Roosevelt of the heavens!

Thou comest, and excitement
Attends thee, and delight;
Thou goest, and excitement
Doth follow thee in flight.
The tribute of their wonder
From millions thou dost get;
Thou makest them to murmur:
"Ain't that the greatest yet!"

Thy shining tail is lighter
Than is thy nucle-us;
It follows thee with rapture
And doesn't give a cuss.
And hast thou, too, O comet,
In these thy wildest flights,
A train of R. La Follettes,
And William Allen Whites?

Thou dost not stay, O Halley's,
When men have got a fill;
A while the world beholds thee,
And then the sky is still.
Thou understandest absence—
Its profit and its grace;
Thou hast thine Afric voyage
In shining realms of space!

Of gases all compounded,
Forever chasing far,
And yet engaged in doing
Naught in particu-lar;
The solar system putting
At sixes and at sevens—
Hail and farewell, O comet,
Thou Roosevelt of the heavens!

It is believed that Mr. Roosevelt will be mag-nanimous enough to overlook the comparison of himself with a heavenly body.

† † †

"There is plenty of room at the top," quoted the Wise Guy.

"Not for all the people who think they ought to be there," added the Simple Mug.—Washington Star.

HENRY GEORGISM IN GERMANY.*

An Explanation Which Under the Above Title the Boston Transcript of April 13, 1910, Makes of Land Value Taxation in the German Empire.

Under the stimulus of mounting expenditures, recurring deficits and growing indebtedness the Imperial Government has arrived at the conclusion that the carrying out of its vast projects of social reform and the maintenance of Germany as a world power worthy of respect involves inevitably the substantial broadening of its basis of fiscal support. This is taken to mean an invasion by the Empire of those domains of taxation which have ordinarily been regarded as closed to it.

Four years ago a beginning was made, when by the law of June 3, 1906, an Imperial tax was laid on collateral inheritances. Last year it was proposed to take another big step in the same direction through the levy of Imperial death duties. The plan miscarried, but the principle of direct Imperial taxation received a decided impetus.

In lieu of certain of the proposed death duties the Conservatives in the Reichstag at that time proposed an Imperial tax on the unearned increment of land. Chancellor von Bülow and Finance Minister Sydow argued forcibly against it, but their successors have chosen an alternative. The probability now is that the measure will be adopted. . . .

What apparently changed the mind of the Imperial authorities was the remarkable strides this tax has made recently and the very favorable consideration which Berlin itself is giving the proposition. It will be noted that the Government does not intend to levy this tax as an Imperial tax, but to levy upon those communities which already have this tax a portion of it for Imperial purposes. Undoubtedly the municipalities will object, but just as surely they will lose.

While this action of the Government does not fix the Henry George idea in the Imperial tax system, it gives it recognition and indorsement. It is a most notable action and, taken in connection with the grafting of a similar scheme into British law as was proposed by the Budget that failed, but will probably pass sooner or later,† will hearten the friends of more equitable taxation throughout the world.

There is no question of the success of this scheme in Germany. The communities which levy the tax are increasing yearly by leaps and bounds. For instance, in the course of the current year no less than six "kreise" (corresponding roughly to American counties), and sixty cities, including such important centers as Erfurt, Cuxhaven, Wil-

*See The Public, vol. xii, pp. 1098, 1190, 1206, 1212.

†Passed at the close of last month. See Public of May 6, pages 410, 417.—Editors of The Public.

helmshaven, Hildesheim, Lübeck and Königsberg, have introduced this form of taxation. No homogeneous method prevails, each community following a different plan for computing land values, fixing the scale of the tax and deciding the measure of its retroactiveness. It is, however, alleged, that in the large towns groups of land speculators are able to influence the municipal councils to levy the tax according to the convenience of the former.

Appended to the Government exposé last fall was a most instructive review of the extent to which the tax has already been introduced in the German Empire, a notable feature of which is the following table giving the average annual return of the tax with the average annual amount falling on the population per head. Here is the table:

Places with 100,000 Inhabitants and Over.

	Population.	Total Average, Marks.	Per Capita, Marks.
In Prussia	2,812,246	1,613,676	0.57
In Kingdom of Saxony	503,672	312,012	0.62
In Hamburg	874,878	1,000,000	1.14
Total.....	4,190,796	2,925,688	0.70

Places of 20,000 to 100,000 Inhabitants.

In Prussia	1,265,824	872,940	0.69
In Saxony Grand Duchy.....	26,360	45,429	1.72
In Oldenburg	22,367	1,940	0.09
Total.....	1,314,551	920,309	0.70

Places of 5,000 to 20,000 Inhabitants.

In Prussia	69,123	352,238	5.10
In Kingdom of Saxony.....	59,525	30,071	0.51
In Oldenburg	21,432	65,204	3.04
Total.....	150,080	447,513	2.98

Places of Less Than 5,000 Inhabitants.

In Prussia	22,127	17,805	0.80
In Kingdom of Saxony.....	77,040	93,132	1.21
In Saxony Grand Duchy.....	2,116	374	0.18
In Oldenburg	4,379		
In Waldeck	3,714	565	0.15
Total.....	109,376	111,876	1.02
Grand total	5,764,803	4,405,386	0.76

A very interesting and sympathetic history of the land reform movement in Germany apropos of this new movement was published in the Berlin correspondence of the New York Evening Post last Nov. 6. This correspondent said, in part: Over twenty years ago men first began to preach Henry George's gospel in Germany and a Land League was formed. In 1895 this was turned into the "Bund der Bodenreformer" with Herr Adolf Damaschke as chairman, whose little work, "Die Bodenreform," is more than anything else responsible for the immense progress the movement has made in modern Germany. To-day with its 640,000 members the Bund can look with righteous pride on what its agitation has accomplished. Up to the end of 1908, 133 cities and communes and five counties in the German Empire had adopted the unearned increment tax, including fifteen cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants, of which may be mentioned Hamburg with over 800,000, Breslau with close on half a million, Leipzig, Col-

ogne and Frankfurt-o-M. The influence of the League has increased in proportion, and the Government has frequently followed its suggestions, notably with regard to its land policy in the German African colonies and mortgage legislation at home.

It was Herr von Miquel, the Prussian finance minister, who paved the way for the introduction of the increased values tax. In 1893 he got the Prussian Diet to pass a bill enabling municipalities and communes to tax land according to its current value instead of, as hitherto, in accordance with the revenue derived from it. The old system put a premium on real estate speculation, and as soon as the German cities began to avail themselves of Von Miquel's law, the introduction of the unearned increment tax only became a matter of time.

Yet it was not in Germany that this tax was applied, but in China, at Kiauchau, which Germany took on a ninety-nine years' lease from China in 1898. The admiral commanding the German squadron which hoisted the German flag at Tsingtau, Von Diedrichs, and Dr. Schrameier, the Chinese commissary, were both members of the German Land League. With remarkable foresight, they recognized how easily the port under German administration might become the prey of the real estate speculator, so a tax of 33 1-3 per cent was placed on all unearned increment on land irrespective of the amount and without conditions. A 6 per cent tax was further imposed on the current value of land. It is in no small measure due to this wise precaution that Kiauchau has in eleven years risen from being the thirty-sixth to be the seventh most important Chinese port.

Still the German cities tarried, and it was not until the spring of 1904 that Frankfort-o-M. followed suit, since when the unearned increment tax has triumphed all along the line, in proof of which it may be remarked that not a single city or commune which has introduced it has ever abandoned it. Besides Prussia, Saxony and the grand duchies of Hesse, Saxony and Oldenburg have passed bills permitting the imposition of the tax, and several years ago the Baden government succeeded in getting a similar bill, in the case of towns of five thousand inhabitants and more, through the lower house, but it was thrown out by the upper chamber of the Grand Duchy.

To give any complete review of the system on which the increased values tax is raised in Germany can only be done with the help of tables, for in every case the method followed is different. The systems vary as to the period elapsing from one transfer of land to another; as to the rate of the tax and as to the amount of increment upon which the tax comes into force. Many towns, in order to hasten building operations, discriminate against unimproved property, and in most places where the tax is in vogue a rebate is made according to

the length of time during which a lot has remained in the same hands. Kiauchau remains unique in that the tax is imposed by the Government and not by the municipality, and is collected every twenty-five years instead of on the transfer of land, as is done elsewhere.

Let us take Frankfort as the first German city to resort to the new means of raising the municipal income. According to the original scheme (modified in 1906), the increase on property up to 30 per cent on the value (15 per cent by the 1906 amended scheme), remained duty free, anything above this paying 5 per cent (2 per cent since 1906), up to 130 per cent, after which 25 per cent was imposed. From this was excepted property which had not changed hands during the last twenty years, for which a special scale of charges came into force, as follows:

(a) Improved Property.

1	per cent in the case of 20-30 years' possession.
1½	per cent in the case of 30-40 years' possession.
2	per cent in the case of 40+ years' possession.

(b) Unimproved Property.

2	per cent in the case of 20-30 years' possession.
3	per cent in the case of 30-40 years' possession.
4	per cent in the case of 40-50 years' possession.
5	per cent in the case of 50-60 years' possession.
6	per cent in the case of 60+ years' possession.

These charges are levied irrespective of the amount of increased value, save in the event of proof being brought that there is no such increase. For all other land the retroactiveness of the tax is restricted to the twenty years before the change of hands.

Generally speaking, however—and in this respect Frankfort is an exception—accretions of land value up to 10 per cent for improved property and 5 per cent for unimproved are duty free. Essen and Gelsenkirchen, in the Westphalian industrial region, extend this to 20 per cent. As to the rate of the tax, it ranges from 3 per cent as a minimum up to 25 per cent as a maximum. The point at which the maximum rate comes into force is generally high, varying from 90 per cent to as much as 500 per cent in small localities. Hamburg claims a percentage on all unearned increment at the rate of 1 per cent up to M. 2000, and 5 per cent on more than M. 40,000 increase of value. If, however, the increment is more than 10 per cent of the purchase value, a supplementary tax of from 10 per cent to 100 per cent is taken. If less than ten years have passed since the last transfer, a supplement at the rate of 25 per cent of the tax is charged. Dortmund and Gelsenkirchen take 3 per cent as the minimum, and then move up the steps of 1 per cent, till a maximum of 15 per cent is reached at Dortmund and 20 per cent at Gelsenkirchen.

When one turns to the computation of original values, the picture is still more kaleidoscopic. Liegnitz, for instance, goes back as far as 1870. Other communes take the current value tax of the year before or after the unearned increment tax

is introduced as basis. This heterogeneity is one of the difficulties in the way of the application of the tax to Imperial purposes, for every commune is influenced by local interests and conditions.

Certain reductions are made in almost every case. In addition to the discrimination against unimproved property already mentioned, deductions are made for taxes paid, for contributions to municipal improvements, and the length of time that property is held also, in some instances, carries with it a rebate. Cologne excepts farm lands within the city limits worth less than a certain figure. At Leipzig from two-thirds to one-sixth of the tax is remitted in the case of improved property held from five to twenty years, and five-sixths to one-half in the case of unimproved property. In all places in Saxony, with population of from five thousand to twenty thousand, improved property is not liable to the unearned increment tax.

The governmental table of the financial results of the tax per head of the population is somewhat misleading, inasmuch as it stands to reason that in smaller places the contribution of the individual must often be much higher than it is in the large cities. Thus, in the rapidly growing outer suburbs of Berlin, for example, Reinickendorf, Weissensee and Pankow, the tax amounts to approximately M. 4.50 per capita as compared with M. 0.50 at Breslau.

Of course speculators—and they are a great force in a rapidly expanding country like modern Germany—are up in arms against the tax. But it has come to stay, for, notwithstanding the fact that its imposition by the communes is optional, its popularity as an equitable and productive fiscal measure is increasing.

BOOKS

SERMONS BY BISHOP WILLIAMS.

A Valid Christianity for Today. By Charles D. Williams, D. D., LL. D., Bishop of Michigan. Published by the Macmillan Company, New York, 1909.

Churchmen find valid Christianity in its sources, the practical minded in its present character; or, as the author crisply puts it, the former know it by its roots, whereas the latter would know it "not by its roots but by its fruits." It is to the practical minded, therefore, that this churchman's present preaching is addressed.

Can the church, he asks, "invigorate our moral and ethical life?" Can it "raise up a new generation of seers and prophets such as the age imperatively demands? Can it meet the need of a universal religion felt by an expanding and unifying world? Can it moralize our industrial, political and commercial life and humanize our social life?"

Those and other penetrating questions are the