

Henry George's Birthday.

The Anniversary Observed in Many of the Principal Cities.

There was a very general observance in the single tax ranks of the anniversary of the birth of our leader. On September 7 a dinner was given at Ulmer Park, New York City. About four hundred sat down, though there were many others who, coming in after the feast, listened to the speakers. The dinner was a success, and the speeches were above the average. The shock occasioned by the shooting of the President the day before threw a gloom over the meeting. It was at the suggestion of the toastmaster, Ernest Howard Crosby, that all those present rose and drank to the speedy recovery of the President. Following are the subjects and speakers:

"The Condition of Labor in This Country," Former Governor John P. Altgeld.

"The Single Tax," John S. Crosby, of this city.

"Municipal Campaigns," Lee Meriwether, of St. Louis.

"The Labor Laws of This State," Samuel Seabury, of this city.

"The Religious Side of the Philosophy of Henry George," the Rev. Herbert S. Bigelow, of Cincinnati.

"Municipal Ownership," General Henry E. Tremaine, of this city.

"Imperialism and Labor," C. B. Spahr.

"Labor and Judiciary," John Brooks Leavitt.

SPEECH OF JOHN S. CROSBY.

It would seem something more than mere coincidence and to suggest the possibility of providential purpose that labor's annual holiday should fall at brief and regular intervals on the birthday of the man to whom, more than to any other, labor will be indebted for its ultimate emancipation, and one of the most hopeful signs of a more rational and efficient ordering of the labor movement is the universal respect paid by wage-workers to the memory of Henry George. Respect for the man will lead sooner or later to an understanding of his teachings, without which there can be neither final settlement nor even intelligent discussion of the labor problem.

It would be sweet and commendable in labor to honor the name of Henry George, if only for his life-long sympathy with its sacred cause, but that sympathy, sincere and sweet as it was and is, constitutes but small part of his broad claim to the respect, veneration, and everlasting gratitude, not of wage-workers alone, but of all men everywhere and for all time to come. Other men may have been as sympathetic and as devoted as he, but to him above all others was it given to show once and for all how labor may forever cease to stand in need of sympathy. He not only saw and felt the hard, unnatural

conditions to which labor is subjected, but laboriously, patiently and successfully sought out the cause of those conditions, and, having found the cause, pointed out the only way to its removal, a way so plain, however, that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein.

Henry George neither disparaged the achievements nor magnified the mistakes and failures of organized labor. He knew the value and recognized the necessity of organization, but saw clearly that, although the toilsome marches and countermarches of labor's forces had won and might still win higher vantage grounds, still advance and retreat, success and failure on minor and inconsequential issues would of necessity continue to be the disheartening story of their warfare until united and sustained attack should be made upon the very stronghold in which the enemy is entrenched, and from which it derives its power to oppress.

It is well to strike for higher wages and for a shorter day's labor. Would that success might attend every such effort. But even such success would not end the labor war. It could not, and it should not. While some men are striking for higher wages, others seek work at any wage, but fail to find it. Under existing conditions there is lack of remunerative employment for all that seek it, lack of available opportunity for productive labor. Strikes cannot supply that lack. If all the wage-workers in the world and all that vainly seek for work were to join in one great union and make concerted and successful demand for a higher and what they deemed a fair wage in every department of industry, that would not provide opportunity for all to labor. Nor would a universal shortening of the labor day add to existing opportunity; it would simply divide that opportunity among a greater number of laborers. The true, rational labor movement has two definite objects in view, one to secure to those who toil the full product of their labor, and the other to make secure to all men the natural, God-given opportunity for labor nor can the former be attained until the latter is assured.

We have it on high authority that "a gift than which no other is more valuable is the gift of honest labor—giving a man steady work." We had for a time an institution in this country that did all that for a man, but we abolished it. What we should do next is to abolish that institution which makes it necessary for any man to ask another to give him work. The asking and the giving should be the other way. Whoever asks for work should ask it of the man who has the work to give. Has Mr. Rockefeller any work to give away? When he talks of "giving a man steady work" he means giving the man an opportunity to work, and seems to have an idea, shared by too many well-meaning but thoughtless folk, that God has made him the steward of opportunity. One might think, listening to come people, that, had it not been for a few sagacious purveyors of op-

portunity, the race would long ago have become extinct; and fear has been recently expressed that the action of organized labor, if continued, will drive all the capitalists out of the country, leaving nobody to give a man work. Well, suppose they were to go, taking with them all their moveable wealth, including machinery and money, still so long as they took no ground rent away from the country, their going would only cause a demand for the production of wealth to take the place of that carried away. And yet, if opportunities for producing that wealth should remain in the possession of a few or of any part of the people to the exclusion of the rest, landless men would still have to ask landlords for an opportunity to work, and in due time labor would have to begin its war with a new generation of so-called capitalists. But how would they become the possessors of inordinate capital except through the monopoly of opportunities to produce it?

Labor's arch enemy is privilege, whose stronghold is land monopoly. So long as that is maintained, labor's battles, however valiantly they may be fought, however successfully waged, will continue to be but skirmishes with the outposts of an army whose main position is impregnable. So long as laboring men concede the enemy's right to that position, the claim of private property in land, so long will they continue to be but slaves struggling in servile insurrection, battling only for a less rigorous bondage, for shorter hours and fuller dinner pails, but not for freedom.

Have laboring men no right on earth? Are they mere trespassers here on the land? By what right, then, do they presume to demand this, that, or any wage? Ought they not rather to be thankful that they are permitted to remain here at all? If, however, they have a right to be here, a right to live upon and from the land, why in the name of manhood should they not assert that right? Do they hope to achieve it through strikes and arbitration? They will be told there is nothing to arbitrate, and there is, indeed, little worth arbitrating unless they raise the issue of their right to the land.

That, however, is not an issue for arbitration. It can be settled only by legislation; not by further complication of the already too complex machinery of government, but by simplifying it; not by fixing things up, but by getting them out of the fix they are in. It is law that oppresses labor, and all the legislation needed is the repeal of oppressive, unjust, unnatural laws. There are many such laws, legalized interferences with freedom of industry, and they must all be repealed. And yet, if we were to repeal them all, excepting only one, and should continue sanction of that, the unholy fiction of property in land, all the pecuniary advantages of such repeal would be reaped by the landlord alone. He is, indeed, a robber who takes all that is left. He would continue to be the legal holder and sole beneficiary of land values, the only values increased by progress or reform of any kind. What the holders of patent rights or

of corporate and other legal but unnatural advantages might lose by the repeal of their respective privileges, would go neither to labor nor to productive capital, but to the holders of land.

More than fifty years ago Horace Greeley declared land reform to be "the broad and sure basis whereon all other reforms may be safely erected." Such has been the thought of wise men in every age, but not until Henry George gave to the world his great work, that immortal labor of love, "Progress and Poverty," was the true and only method of land reform made known to mankind. That method has received the name of "the single tax," because it would abolish all taxes save one, a single tax on the values of land. It calls for the gradual but finally total repeal of all taxes except the tax on land values, and for a correspondingly gradual increase of that tax until it ultimately absorbs the whole of ground rent. It would continue the landlord in his present vocation of collecting the public revenue, but impose upon him the duty of paying it over into the public treasury. Then would the people become at once and forever equal sharers in that value which now constitutes so great a part of the fabulous fortunes of the rich.

The laboring or producing classes of this country now pay out of the products of their industry over a billion dollars annually in taxes for the support of the government, and those same toilers also pay every year to landlords, who as landlords neither toil nor spin, another billion and more in rent, for the blessed privilege of paying these taxes and supporting government without which landlords could collect no rent. Under the single tax that rent, so much of it as is normal, would still be paid, but applied to the discharge of public expenses, relieving the people of all burdens, and industry from all hindrances of taxation.

And yet that gain of over a billion dollars annually would be but a paltry part of the vast benefit and universal blessing to accrue from the single tax. Think, for instance, how it would affect the Steel Trust. At a tax or rental of only four per cent. the Connelville tract alone would yield a revenue of more than one hundred and forty million dollars. Let the Trust be called upon every year to pay that and a like tax on its many valuable holdings, and how much of a dividend would it declare on its present capitalization? It would soon go out of the trust business. It could not long afford to hold an acre of land it did not put to productive use. Its extensive holdings would for the most part be sooner or later abandoned to whoever cared to use them.

The same would be true of all the lands of the nation, in country, town and city. Millions of acres now held out of use in vast rural, tracts, town sites and city lots,

"Leagues of unpeopled soil, the common earth,
"Walled round with paper against God and man,"

would like a vast Oklahoma or a new continent welcome the presence and labor of freemen now held in thralldom of the unnatural system rightly named wage-slavery! Only yesterday in his article on labor, published in the *New York Journal*, Mr. Everett P. Wheeler said truly, "Even within a hundred miles of New York are thousands of acres of wild land. Manufacturing and agriculture have naturally seized upon the most attractive spots. But many more remain, and are equally capable of development." But the whole truth is that of these "attractive spots" already "seized upon," the greater part is not developed nor permitted to be used. It is not to wild land alone that labor should look for employment. A vacant lot on Broadway is as undeveloped and as unproductive as are the unploughed, ungrazed prairies of Texas. Under the single tax there would be abundance of land both rural and urban in every state and territory over the possession of which there would be no competition, and which could be occupied without payment of rent or tax. Not wild, but very tame and inviting though now undeveloped land, on which man could make a better living than that made by the now overtaxed farmer. The value of what a man could produce or such "no-rent" land would be labor's lowest wage, for who would be fool enough to sell his labor for less than he could make as his own employer? If there were any then begging for work, it would be to have work done and not for an opportunity to do it.

Wage-workers, wage-slaves, as you sometimes call yourselves, if you must strike and strike you must, let it be for something more than the mere mitigation of a hopeless servitude. Let it be for freedom. Strike for the land. Then will your strike indeed be a sympathetic strike, a strike not for yourselves alone, but for all men everywhere and forever. Would you end this cruel, wasteful warfare of the centuries? Then join in a strenuous, orderly march to the overthrow of land monopoly. Henry George has touched the keynote of the only tune to which that march can ever be made. Fall in. Mark time, forward to the tune of the single tax.

SPEECH OF SAMUEL SEABURY.

The so-called labor laws of this State were enacted as a result of the intelligent and energetic agitation conducted by the trade unions of the State. Their enactment was finally wrung from a reluctant legislature. They provided that the employed of the State, of cities, and of contractors should be paid at the prevailing rate of wages. They also provided that the hours of labor required of such employees and of the employees of street railway corporations should be limited. For a long period of time public officials refused to enforce these laws. When it became no longer possible to ignore them, a policy of misconstruction was adopted. Thus in one case, where the statute provided that certain wages should be paid the employees

of the Street Cleaning Department, and that extra pay for work on Sunday should be made, the clause relating to "extra pay for work on Sunday" was held to be applicable only to the hostlers, who were only one class of employees mentioned in the statute; and the reason for holding that the provision for extra pay for Sunday work was applicable only to the hostlers, and not to all the other classes of laborers required to work on Sunday, was that a comma instead of a semi-colon was used in the statute. The court also held that it was contrary to the policy of the State to encourage "the temptation to do unnecessary work on Sunday"; but as a result of the decision Sunday work was not discouraged; but the policy of paying for the work when done was discouraged. This is but one instance of the policy of misconstruction applied to these laws.

Another example reveals the policy of the different departments of the city government in relation to this law. The statute provided that workmen employed by the city should be paid the prevailing rate of wages. Public officials resorted to the trick of employing expert mechanics and workmen, such as carpenters, stone masons, or painters, as common laborers and then "detailing" them to do the work of an expert mechanic or workman. Thus, for instance, when a carpenter is employed, he is employed as a "laborer," and paid at the rate which laborers receive; but he is detailed to do work for which he should receive a much higher wage. This policy has been approved by the courts, and the construction placed upon the law is to the effect that the statute holds that workmen can only receive the prevailing rate of wages for the work which they were "employed" to do, rather than the work which they actually do.

The law was still further amended by the Legislature, so as to remedy the misconstruction placed upon it by the court.

It then became evident that the policy of ignoring the labor law, and of misconstruing its provisions, was no longer possible, and an open attack was made upon the constitutionality of the law.

In *The People ex rel Rogers against Coler*, a contractor engaged in city work agreed to pay his workmen the prevailing rate of wages. He admitted that he had not paid them the prevailing rate of wages as required by the law and his contract, and that the difference between the wages which he paid the men and which he should have paid them under the contract was \$6,000. This sum the Comptroller refused to pay to the contractor upon the ground that he had violated the terms of his contract. The contractor secured a mandamus compelling the Comptroller to pay him this sum, which, under the law and the contract, should have been paid to the workmen. He secured the mandamus upon the ground that the labor law was unconstitutional. The Court of Appeals, by a divided court, sustained the claim of the con-