

## THE LIBERATION OF THE LAND AN ESSENTIAL STEP TOWARDS FREEDOM.

Address of Wm. Lloyd Garrison at the Single Tax  
Dinner in Boston, May 15, 1907.

It is the custom of the world to discredit reformers by the epithet of "visionary," a term freely applied to Henry George. That these disturbers of the established order are men of vision is undoubted; else posterity would not populate the pedestals of Christendom with their statues. But that they were possessed with a baseless hallucination is untrue. Because of their practical forecast their historic preservation has been secured.

Henry George was a seer, not an idle dreamer. When the doubters and opponents of his theories assumed that he believed the single tax to be the complete solvent for poverty, and that its adoption would mark the arrival of the millenium, they failed to understand the thinker and the facts. In recently arranging my accumulated letters, I came upon the first one written to me by the author of "Progress and Poverty." In writing to him of my new born interest in the land question and "The Standard," I was led to use the common qualification that I failed to see how the single tax was a panacea for poverty.

I have often quoted from memory his noble reply, and am sure that his exact words will be of interest now to all who cherish his memory and faith:—

New York, Jan. 14, 1888.

Wm. Lloyd Garrison.

My Dear Sir,—I am glad to get your words of sympathy and cheer. If I can have your permission I would like to publish them in "The Standard." If not, can you send me a few lines for publication? With our people, yours is a name to conjure by, and it would please them even to know that William Lloyd Garrison was a reader of "The Standard."

I fully agree with what you say of my proper place. I went into politics reluctantly, and only because circumstances seemed to point to that as the best way, for the moment, that attention could be drawn to principle. It seems to me now that circumstances have changed.

You say that you do not see in the single tax a panacea for poverty. Nor yet do I. The panacea for poverty is freedom. What I see in the single tax is the means of securing that industrial freedom which will make possible other triumphs of freedom.

It is the old, old battle we are fighting—the same battle, of which your father in his day led the van. It is this that makes the sympathy

of his son so cheering. And let him be brave as he may, one cannot but feel faint sometimes with the burden and heat of the day, and, hardest of all, the opposition of those who ought to aid. It is then that words like yours are so deeply grateful.

With much respect and with best wishes, I am,

Yours sincerely,

Henry George.

It is plain that, instead of a finality, Henry George viewed the liberation of the land but as a great and essential step toward freedom, which is, indeed, as he declares, the true panacea for poverty. And I recall his reflective comment in a conversation regarding the possibility of communication with the spirit world. I had quoted the remark of Wendell Phillips (addressed to one inclined to ridicule the idea): "It may be the refraction of some great truth yet below the horizon." "That is fine," said Mr. George; "I wonder, when the single tax movement triumphs, what next great struggle for humanity will follow."

Certainly this expressed no conceit that his realised ideas would make needless other efforts for human progress. He expressed his grateful appreciation of the anti-slavery struggle, and added that without the abolition of slavery the single tax movement in this country would have been impossible. I was impressed at the time with the candour and modest simplicity of the man and his impersonal consideration of the subject.

What a difference the lapse of a few years makes in the current thought! When Henry George declared the same conviction which is expressed in a recent number of the "London Nation"—a conviction held by the Liberal party of Great Britain to-day—it was derided by the wise men of that period. Now it passes as a truism, and creates no adverse comment. This is the expression:—

The land question has become the centre not only of the social controversies, but of the political issues of the time. It is here that the will of the nation and the love of power of a class meet in direct conflict. It is here, too, that the wants and necessities of every class of social reformer find common ground.

If not an indication of immediate triumph, it is an evidence that once excluded ideas have possessed thoughtful minds and reached the stage of practical application. How cheered and strengthened would the great-hearted leader be were he alive, to see the imperial progress of his conquering cause!