

Day celebration of the Manhattan Single Tax club of New York city:

Berlin, April 1, 1902.

"We are in the thick of the fight here, but the movement goes surely onward."

The new civil code which passed into effect January 1, giving a unity of civil legislation for the entire German empire, brings us a new law which is of great help to us. This is the so-called "Erbbaurecht," a statute which empowers the communities to become land owners and to give their land in leasehold of from 80 to 100 years, or a ground rent. From this new law we hope to see in time something like a genuine "single tax" arise. For if the communities find the experiment advantageous and continue buying more and more land, with a sinking fund for the purpose, we hope that in time the ground rent will prove to be sufficient revenue for the purpose of the government of the communities. The cities of Halle, Leipzig and Frankfort on Main have already made a beginning with the enforcement of this law, and in Frankfort 700 houses are built or are in process of building on land owned in this way by the city.

Another line of work for us is a reform of the land and building tax, so that the land shall be taxed, not on the income it brings, but on its true market value. The late Herr von Miquel, Prussia's most capable Minister of Finance, who at heart was a good single taxer, made it possible for the city governments to adopt this method of taxation if they so desired, and to the energetic work of our party is due the fact that to-day 53 Prussian towns assess their land according to the new valuation. It is true that the tax as now taken is very small. Kiel, for instance, takes only  $4\frac{1}{4}$  marks to the thousand of the market value, but it is a step in the right direction.

Much depends for us on the ultimate success of the single tax experiment now being made in Kiautschou, by the naval office, with the express consent of the emperor. The German colony in China is a true single tax community, which taxes lands six per cent. of the market value, and demands no other taxes whatever. Every three years a new valuation of the land is made, and the tax raised accordingly. In every land transaction  $33\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. of the profit accruing from increased value, the "unearned increment," goes to the government.

Naturally all advocates of legalized monopoly are bitter against this ex-

periment and prophesy fearful things for the young colony. But the reports from Kiautschou state that all classes of the population—traders, merchants, artisans, workers of all descriptions—are exceedingly well satisfied with a condition of things which frees industry and thrift from every possible hampering burden of taxation, and which entirely does away with all possibility of speculation in land.

Our league here grows slowly but surely. Of late we have laid much value on winning organizations of workers as cooperative members, and in this way have won a membership roll of 102,000. The movement gains ground in other countries of Germanic race. In Denmark a "Henry George association" has been started by a young Danish lawyer, who first heard of the new truth through us.

Von Miquel once told us: "Become a power, and the government will put no obstacles in your way." It is a hard and unceasing struggle to become a power against the overweight of capitalistic interests, which control that mighty weapon, the press; but the truth forces its way through, towards the winning of physical and mental well being for our nation, in the only way possible, the gaining of honest reward for honest labor. We look with encouragement on the work of our comrades in faith in America, and every news of success that comes from the home of Henry George fills us with new vigor and enthusiasm.

Mr. Damaschke's letter is commented upon as follows by Henry George, Jr.:

It will be noticed from this letter that progress of land reform in Germany is along two lines. One of these is by the gradual substitution of municipalities for private owners through purchase and leasing on long terms to users. The weakness of this is twofold. First, the payment for land so taken is an injustice to the general community who must pay the purchase price, yet the members of which have equal natural right to such land with the so-called owners. Second, the leasing of land by the municipality is cumbersome and, when long terms are involved, only partly effective.

The better policy for the government to pursue respecting land is that indicated by the other line of movement spoken of by Mr. Damaschke, the taxation of ground values, that is, of land according to its true selling value, and irrespective of improvements. This tax now is very small, but if increased until the selling value of land were absorbed, the full princi-

ple of public ownership of land would be observed in effect, while present private titles would be undisturbed and the government would not be burdened with the trouble of management.

#### LAND REFORM IN NEW ZEALAND.

George Fowlds, a prominent business man of Auckland, N. Z., also president of the National Single Tax league of New Zealand and a member of the New Zealand parliament, contributes the following:

The first New Zealand land value tax was introduced by Sir George Grey in 1879. The act imposed a tax of one half-penny in the pound on the unimproved value, with periodical revaluation. The capitalist class quickly realized that this meant a serious check to the land traffic to which most of them owed their wealth. They at once proposed a property tax of one penny in the pound in place of it, and supported their proposal by plausible appeals to the ignorance and cupidity of the people, on the hardship of taxing the land and exempting the rich man's wealth in houses, goods, money, carriages, wines, pictures, etc., etc. The thoughtless people applauded this argument and Sir George Grey's government was promptly overthrown and the tax repealed. The property tax took its place with the result that a period of depression set in which lasted for ten years. Thousands of our best workers left the colony and financial disaster and distress were universal. Then it was recognized that a great mistake had been made and the capitalist party was driven from power. Hon. John Ballance became premier in January, 1891. The obnoxious property tax was then abolished, and our present land tax of one penny in the pound was firmly established. An addition of an eighth of a penny per pound to the tax is made on every additional £5,000 after the first £5,000, up to £40,000, and increasing up to two pence extra (i. e. three pence in the pound) when the value reaches £210,000 or upwards. An exemption of £500 is allowed to all owners whose total land value does not exceed £1,500. This exempts the bulk of the small landowners, and only about 13,000 out of 90,000 actually pay land tax.

The next great step was made in 1896, when our "rating on unimproved value act" became law. It is an optional measure which can be brought into operation by the vote of a majority of the rate payers of any local rating body. The act provides that on receipt of a demand signed by 15 per cent. of the local rate payers the

municipal authorities must take a poll on the proposal, and in this way up to last July it has been voluntarily adopted by 17 boroughs, nine counties, seven road districts and one town district. In August last the proposal was defeated in Auckland by more than two to one (1697 against 753). This was a great disappointment certainly, but it was mainly due to the fact that our single tax propaganda had so alarmed the privileged classes that they forced the contest solely on the straight single tax issue. The papers all united in denouncing it as "single tax" and simply vied with each other in misrepresentation and abuse. Only three months later it was put to the vote in Wellington, the capital city of the colony, with the exactly opposite result, being carried by more than two to one (1,261 against 591), but in Wellington the newspapers did not indulge in the unreasonable abuse and vituperation which disgraced Auckland papers. A number of other places have adopted the reform since July, and it is being constantly brought forward all over the colony. In the important county of Southland a demand for a poll has been signed by over 800 persons, and the polling is to take place next month. [This letter was written in February and the result of the vote is not yet reported in the United States. Editor Public.] Many of the country papers are now advocating the measure, and if it should be carried in Southland (which seems highly probable) it is expected that the government will bring in a bill to make it universal, instead of only local and optional as at present. The act provides that the rate shall be so adjusted as to produce as much revenue as under the old system, and that it shall be levied on the capital or gross value of the property after deducting the value of all improvements thereon. The term "improvements" "includes houses and buildings, fencing, planting, draining, clearing from timber, scrub or fern, laying down in grass or pasture, and any other improvements whatsoever on land, in so far as the benefit thereof is unexhausted at the time of valuation."

It is evident that taking this as the basis of revenue for any city or borough, means the actual adoption of single tax for all municipal or local taxation, and as it is equally evident that every argument for its adoption for local purposes is also cogent when applied to the question of revenue for national purposes, it is easy to understand the determined opposi-

tion of the financial institutions and the monopolists generally.

We have, therefore, every reason to be satisfied with the steady progress that the reform is making, and to feel confident that ere long this municipal and local form of single tax will be law throughout the colony. We shall then be ready for the next steps towards national single tax in the shape of another penny in the pound and abolition of the £500 exemption—recouping the people by an equivalent reduction of customs duties.

#### THE CAUSE OF LAND VALUES.

Extract from the expert real estate article in the New York Herald of April 6, 1902.

The value of real estate lies in the presence of the multitude, for the fundamental reason that the congregating of men means the effecting of economies. Inasmuch as the use of ground is necessary for establishing the business interests and the means of communication by which these economies are secured, as well as because one can only take advantage of the public demand for goods or for services by the use of ground in some way, the owner of the ground can reap the benefit of these things in rent.

Whatever, therefore, increases the facility of communication in a city increases its advantages to business men and is promptly reflected in the rental value—and, of course, the selling value—of its real estate. It is not difficult to see how the improving of all sorts of transit systems in New York is a favorable factor for the real property of the city as a whole, as well as for the particular localities immediately affected.

#### THE SIN OF DESIRING SPECIAL PRIVILEGES.

If we cannot think of any good thing in the life to come under the monopoly of one man or one group of men, must not the same feeling prevail as to the possession and enjoyment of good things here on earth? I cannot look with unconcern upon the tendency which prevails to-day to place before our young men and women the ambition to rise in the world at the expense of their fellows. I cannot think that it is the best thing we can do for the real life of our sons and daughters to center their whole thought and efforts upon the idea of "getting ahead." I dare to say that it is a crime against the human soul blacker and more terrible than any for which death is made the penalty by common law to create in the minds of human beings on the

very threshold of their years the impression that it is a wise or a good thing to gain and hold opportunities or privileges in this world to which thousands and millions of their fellows can never hope to aspire. To be willing to rise while others are sinking in the mire, to be willing to have an eminence which is attained by standing upon a pyramid of struggling human bodies, to be contented to have and enjoy while others starve, to be satisfied to prosper while any earnest, honest toiler plods on toward the goal of despair and death, betrays a moral sense which the beasts of the field put to shame.—William Thurston Brown.

This little story is declared to be true, and we very much hope it is. It relates to Jacob Grimm and runs:

One of his prettiest tales ends with the words: "Whoever refuses to believe this story owes me a thaler."

One winter morning a little Jewish girl rang the doorbell and asked if Herr Prof. Jacob Grimm was at home. When informed that he was not, she said, politely:

"Will you please hand him this thaler when he returns?"

The servant took the coin, glanced at it curiously, and inquired who sent it, and what it was for.

"I owe him the money myself," said the little girl.

"Why? For what?"

"Because I don't believe the story about the wolf."—The Book Lover.

The Lady—Shame! Shame! Do you know what you are doing when you destroy that poor bird's eggs?

The Boy—Yes, ma'am. I am preventing a lot of innocents from coming into the world to be slaughtered for women's hats.—Chicago Daily News.

During the rush hour yesterday afternoon a dignified man entered a well-filled Market street car and tried to work his way in to secure a strap to hang from, but the conductor, who was collecting fares, blocked his progress.

"Step lively, there!" said the passenger.

"Were you speakin' to me?" asked the conductor, elevating his eyebrows.

"Certainly," replied the passenger. "Step forward, so we can get inside. Plenty of room up front!"

"If you will attend to your business I will attend to mine," snapped the conductor.

"If you can't take your own medicine better than that you had better try