

FREETRADE AND THE SINGLE TAX.

To the Editor of the Daily Telegraph.

Sir, — Notwithstanding that land nationalization has been proved to be inconsistent with protection, we find a number of protectionists still professing to be also land nationalists, and this in spite of the acknowledgment of one of their foremost men that free trade is the natural corollary of land nationalization.

The very essence of Henry George's scheme is the abolition of all indirect taxation in favor of a "single tax" upon land values alone. What such a proposal has in common with protection (which proposes a multiplicity of taxes — the more the better) it is difficult for the ordinary mind to conceive, and must be left for elucidation to the unfathomable depths of protectionist wisdom.

But as showing the relations of the "single tax" to "free trade," I append the following report of a speech made by Thomas G. Shearman at a dinner given in honor of Henry George on his return to New York from England. It is clipped from the "Standard" of January 5, 1889, and the excellence of the speech must be my excuse for requesting the favor of its reproduction in your widely-read columns: —

"To respond to the toast of 'Free Trade,' the chairman called on Thomas G. Shearman, who, with some remarks as to the relations between free trade and the single tax, said:— If I could not respond to the noble toast of free trade when awakened from a sound sleep in the middle of the night, when drunk or sober, in America or Kamschatka, I think my nature must be entirely changed. (Applause and laughter.) Some of you became free traders because you were single tax men. I became a single tax man because I was a free trader. (Applause.) It did not take me long to see that theoretical logic and practical logic made it impossible for the advocate of real free trade to stop anywhere short of the single tax. (Applause.) It is a very curious fact that there are so many single tax men who have not had logic enough to see that free trade is implied in single tax. They will be educated; they are being educated. (Applause.) Free trade means death to those hateful sentiments which divide nation from nation and set man against man. (Applause.) It means the consummation of the aim which the famous International society set before itself — to be accomplished, however, not by setting class against class and exciting the hatred of the working men against what they call the *bourgeoisie*, or propertied class; but the union of all classes in all parts of the world in one common interest, seeking every man to do good to every other human being. Is there any higher aim than that? (Applause.) When I find my sympathies going out to every man on the face of the globe, rich and poor, high and low; when I feel the certain conviction that the cause of free trade represents the cause of the manufacturers — even the pig-iron manufacturers — of the working men, of the sewing women, and even of the child in the cradle, I feel the same enthusiasm for free trade as the unlimited men feel on behalf of their cause. Look for a moment what might be accomplished by even American free trade. How common it is for protectionists to say if we had the millenium then it would be a good time for free trade. Why don't they start to bring about the millenium? (Applause.) How can you have the millenium unless you take a step toward it? Free trade is the first great step toward the

millenium, in which the lion shall lie down with the lamb, and the lamb not be inside. (Laughter.) They say if all nations should adopt free trade no doubt it would be a good thing for us. Gentlemen, have you ever considered what tremendous influence America has had upon every question upon which she has taken a stand? When she had only 3,000,000 of people her example precipitated the efforts in Europe for freedom, and secured it in greater or less degree in every country except Russia. Our example in the destruction of slavery between 1861-64 destroyed slavery in Brazil and in Cuba and in nearly every quarter of the civilized globe. I appeal to Mr. George if our example has not made Great Britain a more real republic, with more freedom on the whole for the people, with a better representation of the popular will than we can boast of in the United States? Yet that is due to our imperfect example. Look again: Simultaneously in 1845 Sir Robert Peel in England became convinced that the policy of free trade must be established there, and Robert J. Walker here made up his mind that a policy of something approximating to it should be established here. The two men had no acquaintance or correspondence, and yet almost on the same day, without any cable or ocean steamships — except at irregular intervals — to communicate their views, those men concentrated the public feeling of both countries in favor of free trade. What followed? Was Cobden disappointed in his prediction? No. The combined example of the United States and England did have its force, and Europe did gradually fall into line. What happened then? Unfortunately one of the necessities of our war was that the finances of this country should be committed to well meaning men who had no financial experience and whose idea was, wherever there was a taxable head, to hit it. (Laughter.) And so a few men, like our axe-handle friend here, gained the advantage. Europe followed our example in preference to the example of England. There was a reaction when it was shown we were wedded to a protective tariff. It was followed all over, and has at last even affected poor Sweden. We are responsible for the edict which has shut out American manufactures and all the products of our farmer? Is it not for us who have set the example to turn the other way? (Applause.) We have led the world into the swamps by our will-o'-the-wisp; now we must lead it out. If we have the courage to adopt a hold policy of free trade, depend upon it, it will not be five years before our policy will be followed in every country in Europe. (Applause.) As to the single tax, everyone here knows that free trade is indispensable to the establishment of the single tax in the taxation of the federal government. To secure the single tax we must abolish all other taxes; and when can we abolish so many taxes at once as by attacking this hydra-headed tariff? There are 4000 enemies of the single tax in that one statute. Wipe out that statute. (Applause.) The difference between the advocates of the single tax limited and single tax unlimited is one which excites no interest whatever in my mind. I never did care about that which is of no sort of consequence. (Laughter.)

Mr. Shearman then showed how he became a single tax man by starting as a free trader. He concluded by alluding to the fact that he himself was a large owner of unimproved land; but that did not trouble him. The prosperity of this country under the policy of freedom would be great that owners of improved as well as unimproved land would bless the day when they were liberated from a false system and false hopes and illusory profits by the open field which would be presented to us for the investment of capital and for the exertion of labor. His speech was followed by great applause."

I am glad to see that an effort is to be made towards the adoption of the "single tax" principle in a single state in America, and to this end the concentrated energies of the single tax party there will

doubtless be immediately directed.

It is, therefore, obvious that the scheme is not so completely outside the range of practical politics as many people imagine, and we may shortly have the satisfaction of seeing it in actual operation, at least, in one of the States of America. Its successful establishment in one state must speedily lead to the general adoption of the principle not only throughout the whole of the United States but here also in New South Wales, and subsequently in other parts of the world. With apologies for the length of this communication. — Yours. &c.,