

## Causerie

By THOMAS N. ASHTON

### BURN THE BOOKS

BY means of the Einstein theory of relativity we comprehend that Plato was a Single Taxer—if Emerson speaks with knowledge—because only Plato was entitled to Omar's compliment to the Koran, when Omar said "Burn the libraries; for their value is in this book."

To equate Einstein, Plato, Henry George, Emerson, Omar and all literature in one sentence taxes our crude capabilities for continuity and clarity of expression. It is the utter simplicity of the theory of relativity, alone, which brings our attempt to a form of relatively clear statement.

All things and thoughts are relative. Having a common origin, they cannot be otherwise.

No matter how greatly justified Omar may have been in his evaluation of the Koran, we are yet to be convinced that it makes more clear the virtue of truth than does "Progress and Poverty." It is one thing to point to a goal; it is equally important to point to the way when helplessness prevails. The Ten Commandments set for us limitations and objectives, mainly from a negative point of view, but leave us to discover the way handicapped as we are by the man-made theory of ability-to-pay taxes. The Ten Commandments might well be reduced to one—"Thou shalt not steal." Too few people know that they are stealing, morally, when they pocket site-values created by public improvements. Too many people have fed from the bottle of "legal" honesty and precedent whereby ground-rents honestly (?) may be pocketed by title-holders to patches of the earth's surface.

If libraries are to be burned, because of sufficient truth and procedure to be found in *one* book, then our old friend in the cultured Commonwealth of Massachusetts had justification for his ultimatum to his clergyman when he said "If I am to choose between the Bible and 'Progress and Poverty' I shall retain 'Progress and Poverty.'" Never has truth been made more clear—never has correct procedure been made more specific—never has been shown a simpler way for making the Ten Commandments immediately workable—than in the pages penned by Henry George. To teach our children the Commandments, whilst teaching them the legal honesty of pocketing site-rents, is to teach them thoughts which nullify each other. When truth and error simultaneously are taught as being identical, then chaos prevails—chaos resulting in the depression of 1929-1939—chaos resulting in WPA'S, AAA's and their allied tri-letter lunacies—chaos resulting in vice, crime and disease among the illiterate victims of smug educators and perimeter politicians enmeshed in the humbug of "legal wisdom."

The Koran is held to be a discipline "in logic, arithmetic, taste, symmetry, poetry, language, rhetoric, ontology, morals or practical wisdom," all of which may be laid waste and destroyed by an iniquitous system of taxation the like of which we now suffer. The same nouns may be applied to many great works, from the Ten Commandments to modern writings, and yet avail no attainments therefrom for the establishment of justice among humans as long as other recognized works teach procedures which nullify the virtues attributed to the Koran or what-all.

No other writing—be it Bible or Platonic or Socratic—has brought to us all the names of virtues ascribed to the Koran *together* with the knowledge of *how* to attain the fruits thereof, except that done by Henry George in the pages of "Progress and Poverty." Therein lies logic unsurpassed in demonstration—therein lies a complete exposé of arithmetic's accuracy—therein lies a "taste" which never makes mockery of culture—therein lies symmetry of observation, analysis and deduction—therein lies the poetry of spirituality—therein lies language which dispels ignorance, avoids confusion and comes to the issue—therein lies rhetoric which stands as a monument to fo'c'sle fraternities, to printing-press pedagogy, to library and book-shop universities; a monument which gives hard-press to professional propriety, elegance and force. Therein lies the ontology of taxation's metaphysicians who currently lay the cause of hard-times at the door of anyone but the taxers of industry and the exploiters of site-values. Therein lies morals or wisdom never more eloquently pleaded at the bar of conscience. Therein lies truth in all its pristine purity.

What more can priest or prophet or professor promulgate?

Plato and the Koran and the Bible have pointed to the star of truth. Henry George has built the highway to its shrine.

### SINGLE TAX . . . OR ELSE . . . !

Single Taxers who have not read Mr. Garet Garrett's two articles in the March 18 and 25 (1939) issues of the *Saturday Evening Post*, should—by all means—do so. The articles present, in a well-written and interesting manner, an illuminating, detailed description of the day's struggle between employer and employee. Where Henry George sufficiently demonstrated, in a few words, the swords-points attitudes between industrialists and hired help as depicting the effect arising from the cause of private appropriation of public wealth plus the public appropriation of private wealth, Mr. Garrett employs the time and space to show in detail and in sequence the pyramiding of chaos between the so-called "capital and labor" factions of society.

While Mr. Garrett's articles forcibly bring home to the

readers thereof, a vivid picture of serious portent, no solution is offered other than to deplore being a law unto one's self 'midst a community of fellowmen similarly obsessed. This tenor of his closing remark at once raises in the mind of the student of political economy the query "How can one avoid being a law unto one's self when the common and statute laws sow the seed of consequences which leave no alternative in the face of self-preservation?"

In adhering to his purpose (to report labor conditions as they now exist) Mr. Garrett has done an excellent job. A job so excellent in raising one's hair and horror at what is plainly evident for the near future of society, that we suspect that our Single Tax skeptics may at last prefer to relinquish their direct and indirect partnership, in grabbing the unearned increment, as against soon facing the anti-social climax made clear by Mr. Garrett's report.

The two articles may be summed up in four words: Single Tax . . . or else . . . !

And this goes for everybody—whether they be kindly, tolerant, lukewarmists who are sympathetic to Henry George's proposal but who are irked by the Single Taxer's enthusiasm for his "one idea" and by his stubbornness in refusing to accept compromised truth—whether they be ardent Single Taxers who prefer free-lance latitude to unity's organized and singleness of ways and means—whether they be in the gamut of innocent victims from the Asiatic and Mexican "floaters" 'midst California's farms to the press-ganged recruits in New York's labor unionism—whether they be portly patrons of parlor programs in swanky Back Bay's community campaign to feed and foster Boston's north, west and south-end slum anemics.

And this goes for lip-service pols, self-taught labor-leader martyrs, professors of law, of economics and of religion. And this goes too, and doubly so, for educated captains of industry and of banking who easily comprehend corporation complexity, but who equally easily become perplexed by the simplicity of single-entry, single purpose, Single Tax.

Today the "white men" of the golden west fight among themselves for pittance pay at crop-time where the ripening honey-melon waits for neither mice nor men to argue or orate—fight among themselves for brief hire among the bleached blooms of tender peas whose fragile tendrils mock the might of crackpot agitators—fight among themselves for the very jobs which once they contemptuously dropped into the eager hands of Asiatic and Mexican helpers on the wondrous soil of our western valleys. By all means, read Mr. Garrett's articles and ponder well.

"It is Single Tax . . . or else . . . !

### STUPENDOUS SCIENCE

"An engineer," says Doctor Karl T. Compton of the

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, "is one who, through application of his knowledge of mathematics, the physical and biological sciences, and economics, and with aid, further, from results obtained through observation, experiences, scientific discovery, and invention, so utilizes the materials and directs the forces of nature that they are made to operate to the benefit of society. An engineer differs from the technologist in that he must concern himself with the organizational, economic, and managerial aspects as well as the technical aspects of his work."

Taken at its face value, this definition presents an overwhelmingness of the first magnitude. After catching our breath and comprehending the all-inclusiveness of the engineer's place in society, we wonder how we ever eluded the managerial directions of the engineers long enough to bring our nation into its present pretty kettle of economic fish.

We know that there have been several engineers abroad in the land, during the past third of a century, because we personally have served our apprenticeship with a few of them during the entire period. We, personally, are still "bound out," as it were, because as an economic slave serving under the duress of ability-to-pay taxes we never have evolved from an apprentice to a journeyman engineer. Double and triple taxation has so completely absorbed our weekly wage that the independence of a journeyman engineer ever has remained a condition of which to dream, until Henry George made clear to us how multiple taxation, upon the fruits, facts and fancies of labor, killed our engineering business and prolonged our apprenticeship drabness.

We, too, always believed that a real engineer was all that Doctor Compton alleges, but we needed a Doctor Compton to define us in writing. That is, we believed it in toto until Henry George showed us how little real and apprentice engineers know about economics. Until "Progress and Poverty" hove in sight we were blithely riding the wave-crest of apprentice-engineering—illusion, and we were publicly expressing our private opinion of the law profession which dominates the legislative factories at our State House and at Washington.

At times we look back with fond recollections upon our early days of blissful ignorance—ignorant of the insidious iniquities of our present tax system—days when we held respectful contempt for all not versed in mathematics, physical and biological sciences, power to observe and analyze and deduce, invention and the forces of nature, organization and management, all so ably juggled by the engineer who gave rise to Doctor Compton's definition. Where ignorance was bliss, was it wise to read "Progress and Poverty" and shatter our engineering idols and carry an economic headache the rest of our days?

Today we wish that Doctor Compton had not included