

August Heckscher sailing back to get men and women out of the slums by Easter or thereabouts. The impulse in each case was as decent and generous as the practical realization was dubious * * * * * the elimination of the slums in Manhattan should not mean their prompt development in Brooklyn and the Bronx, which under the Heckscher plan, might readily prove to be the case.' Besides stressing the merits of Governor Smith's solution for the housing problem over the Heckscher plan, *The Nation* offers no remedy and gives no reasons. I shall proceed to do both.

"To the land policy of our boasted civilization may be traced a long train of evils, of which the slum is by no means the most flagrant; a policy which creates vast wealth for the few over night, but causes 'countless millions to mourn' all the time, since from the masses is drained the wealth which is meagrely doled out back to them by the more fortunate, the shrewd and alert.

"So long as the many can use portions of the earth's surface at the suffrance of the few only, no genius will ever arise who can propose a cure for present social and economic ills. Fundamental wrongs cannot be righted by superficial expedients.

"Not so long ago, while riding in a Fifth Avenue omnibus, I counted one hundred and ten vacant lots along the east side of that avenue. When my forebears emigrated from Germany to this country and helped swell the incipient slum population of the east side, those lots could be bought for sums of two or three figures, now they command sums running up to five, six or seven, and quite a few of them still lie serenely in the grasp of the insatiate. Idle land, kept out of use so that the holders thereof may fatten on the enterprise and thrift of others, or used only to the extent of producing taxes and carrying charges, all over Manhattan; in vast areas in the outlying districts, of easy access from the slums, supplies the only natural and effective means for putting to an end a housing condition as easily preventable as it is grossly disgraceful.

"Now, the Creator only could give a title deed to land, as He only could give a bill of sale for a slave, and He has done neither. Human ingenuity has usurped the divine prerogative. This, in the words of Herbert Spencer is how it happened; "Violence, fraud, the prerogative of force, the claims of superior cunning—these are the sources to which those titles may be traced. The original deeds were written with the sword, not the pen; not lawyers, but soldiers were the conveyancers; blows were the current coin in payment and blood was used in preference to wax. Could valid claims thus be constituted? Hardly. And if not, what becomes of the pretensions of all subsequent holders of such estates, so obtained? * * * * * How long does it take for that which was originally a wrong to become a right?"

"Elsewhere in his 'Social Statics' Herbert Spencer says—and this should serve as a hint to those who sub-

stitute charity for justice and eleemosynary enterprise for effective endeavor and sound sense—'Our social edifice may be constructed with all possible labor and ingenuity and be strongly clamped together with cunningly devised enactments, but if there be no rectitude in its component parts, if it is not built up on upright principles, it will surely tumble * * * * * Not as adventitious, therefore, will the wise man regard the faith that is in him * * * * * and made subordinate to calculations of policy, but as the authority supreme to which his actions should bend."

"In an article appearing some years ago in the *Times* of London, Tolstoy urged the acceptance of the philosophy of Henry George as the only means of curing Russia's agrarian ills, claiming that its application would be effective, equitable and expedient. But there, as well as elsewhere, on this round globe where so many of us play the wise and the foolish, men still adhere to the circumlocutionary and the involved."

Is This A Fabled Country?

This admirable "skit" appeared in the *Pennsylvania Commonweal*, a paper published by R. C. Macauley. The terms of subscription for this little paper which appears monthly, are designed to secure a large circulation. These terms are ridiculously small. Our readers are urged to write Mr. Macauley at 1247 N. 13th Street, Philadelphia, Pa., for sample and particulars.—EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM.

IT is related a certain country adopted a taxation system which absorbed the value of every improved process of production the ingenuity of its citizens could evolve.

A striking feature of this unique taxation system was that a certain privileged few (for some real or supposed service to the State) were permitted to participate in the division of the revenue arising from the aforesaid unjust and confiscatory taxation.

When this special privilege was first granted, the returns to its beneficiaries were quite meager, for the reason that man's power of production was but little in excess of what was required to sustain life and keep him in condition to continue producing.

As years passed, however, by reason of their invention and industry, men became able to produce much more than was needed to satisfy their desires; and the surplus was promptly confiscated under the unique taxation laws of the country.

Soon the few who were privileged to participate in the division of this now greatly swollen fund successfully conspired to divert the major portion of the nation's surplus wealth to their private use.

This action of the specially privileged conspirators aroused severe opposition from the producers, who finally rebelled and refused longer to work for the benefit of the conspirators.

Champions of the conspirators (barristers, they were called) attempted to invoke the law to compel the people

to work. These pleaders contended their clients would be deprived of a "vested right" unless the workers were compelled to continue their usual production of wealth.

The controversy, which was waged long and bitterly by both workers and conspirators, was finally "adjusted" by the State awarding to the conspirators large tracts of public lands in lieu of their "vested right" to confiscate the major portion of the taxes, which, in their entirety, were now collected by the State.

With only the public needs to be met out of the people's production, there was now a great surplus of revenue, and the producers were soon relieved of more than half of their former taxes.

In a short time, however, as a result of the nation's prosperity, resulting from the low taxation, the population of the country increased, and demand became great for the use of the land, most of which was now "owned" by those to whom the State had "given" it as "compensation" for their former "vested rights."

As no more land could be produced and the entire supply was now "legally" in possession of the former conspirators, the large demand for its use enabled them to take an even greater part of the people's production, in the form of land rent, than they had ever received when they participated in the confiscation of public revenue.

This new form of privilege caused another outburst from the producers. They declared that the conspirators, now called GROUND LORDS, did not produce land; that the workers produced all the wealth; and that as the GROUND LORDS rendered no service in the production of wealth, they were not entitled to any part of it.

The GROUND LORDS, now grown powerful through their accumulated wealth, none of which they had rendered service for, with the aid of their friends, the barristers, and their allies, the politicians, however, were able to defeat the producers, who, it is recorded, are still compelled to give the major portion of their production to the GROUND LORDS for mere permission to work.

How easily, in these days of enlightenment, we would abolish such injustice through the governmental collection of ground rent and the abolition of all taxes.

Although not generally conceded at that time, everyone now agrees the earth is the birthright of all mankind, and that the rent value of it arises from the mere presence of population and its activities. It follows, therefore, THAT THE RENT OF LAND BELONGS TO THE PEOPLE, AND THAT THE FIRST DUTY OF GOVERNMENT IS TO COLLECT IT.

As population grows land values rise,
But privilege has a key!—and takes the prize!—HORATIO.

THE earth is man's inheritance from on high,
But some heirs, born too late, must rent or buy.—HORATIO.

The Farmers of Montana Waking Up

WE have received the programme of the Progressive Farmers of Montana. In its Declarations of Purposes it says:

"First. We believe that all community-made values belong to the community.

Land exists for the people—so we demand a system of land tenure that will eliminate landlordism and tenantry and will secure the land to the users thereof."

The Western Progressive Farmer is the official organ of this organization of farmers and is edited by Elihu Bowles at Prosser, Washington.

John Filmer is Ninety Years Old

TO Single Taxers outside of this immediate vicinity where he is a familiar and well-loved figure, the name of John Filmer is not so well known as it should be, though many of the older disciples of Henry George in other parts of the country will recall him as one of the editors of the *New Earth*, published in the '80's, a New Church Organ that preached our message and was a welcome visitor to Swedenborgian and Single Tax circles.

John Filmer is one of the keenest analytical minds in the movement. But he is also one of the most charming and gentle spirits who has endeared himself to hosts of friends in the city of Brooklyn where he has been active for so many years.

On the evening of January 12th John Filmer was ninety years old, well and hearty and mentally vigorous as ever. His birthday was fittingly celebrated by a gathering of about 35 of his closest friends at the home of Mrs. Thomas P. Beggs in Brooklyn, called together by Mrs. Cebelia L'Hommedieu and Miss Jennie Rogers. Among those present were Mr. Chas. O'Connor Hennessy, Mr. and Mrs. Aiken, Mr. Seaver, Mr. and Mrs. Mansur, Mr. Thomas Ryan, Mr. D. B. Van Vleck, Miss Miller, Mr. and Mrs. E. B. Swinney, Mr. McGuinness, Mr. Vernam and others. Speeches, recitations, music and cards enlivened the evening.

Mr. Aiken sang a parody of his own composing in honor of the guest:

"He's still but a boy, a mere nonogenarian,
Soon he'll grow up a big strong centenarian,
Then you'll do well to be careful and ware of him
Should you engage him in argument warm,"

and more of the same swinging rhythm sung in good voice and with extraordinary verve.

A generous luncheon was served in the dining room and it was 2 A.M. before this party to the greatly loved disciple of our cause broke up, each of those present carrying with him as a souvenir of the occasion a photograph of John Filmer with an appropriate sentiment inscribed by his unfaltering hand on the back of each.