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Patrick Edward Dove and the Single Tax.
James Middleton

PATRICK EDWARD DOVE was born in Scotland in 1815.

His ancestors had for generations been rich and prominent.

He was a gentleman of refinement and of broad culture. He was to some extent a traveler and to an unusual degree for a country gentleman, a profound student not only of economics but of philosophy in general.

There is not space here to enter into the details of his life as I wish to quote from this Scottish landlord a few of his arguments for the Single Tax.

His arguments can be found in two books, one *Elements of Political Science*, very rare, and the other an elaborate of philosophy of life, *The Theory of Human Progression*, published in 1850 in a small edition.

Fortunately the Humboldt Publishing Company of New York have brought out a paper edition at 50 cents "edited with biographical sketch by Alexander Harvey."

The original work was highly praised by such men as Carlyle, Sir William Hamilton, who said it was epoch-making, and Professor Blockie.

Charles Sumner, one of the great United States senators, "circulated many copies."

The following quotations give the essence of the argument for the Single Tax and should be pondered by all students of social conditions. "Either, pauperism and degradation are the work of the Creator of our system, the all powerful, who has placed present man in circumstances where the natural capabilities of the earth are insufficient for his support; Or, pauperism and degradation are the work of fallen man." p.p. 257-258.

The evil is expressed in a few words; and, sooner or later, the nation will appreciate it

and rectify it. It is "the alienation of the soil of the state and the consequent taxation of the industry of the country." p. 59.

"Let the political arrangements be what they may, let there be universal or any other suffrage, so long as the aristocracy have all the land and derive the rent of it, the laborer is only a serf, and a serf he will remain until he has up-rooted the rights of private landed property.

"The land is for the nation and not for the aristocracy." p. 289.

"The question then is, upon what terms, or according to what system must the earth be possessed by the successive generations that succeed each other on the surface of the globe?" The conditions a given are:

"First, that the earth is the common property of the race.

"Second, that whatever an individual produces by his own labor (whether it be a new object, made out of many materials, or a new value given by labor to an object whose form, locality, etc., may be changed) is the private property of that individual, and he may dispose of it as he pleases, provided he does not interfere with his fellows.

"Third, the earth is the perpetual property of the race, and each succeeding generation has a full title to a free earth. One generation cannot encumber a succeeding generation.

"And the condition required is, such a system as shall secure to successive individuals of the race their share of the common property, and the opportunity, without interference, of making as much private property as their skill, industry, and enterprise would enable them to make." p.p. 308-309.

"The actual division of the soil need never be anticipated, nor would such a division be just, if the divided portions were made the property (legally for they could never be so morally) of individuals.

"If, then, successive generations of men cannot have their fractional share of the actual soil (including mines, etc.), how can the division of the advantages of the natural earth be affected?"

"By the division of its annual value or rent; that is, by making the rent of the soil the common property of the nation.

"That is (as the taxation is the common property of the state) by taking the whole of the taxes out of the rent of the soil and thereby abolishing all other kinds of taxation whatever, and thus all industry would be absolutely emancipated from every burden and every man would reap such natural reward as the his skill, industry, or enterprise rendered legitimate-By his, according to the natural law of free competition." p.p. 210-211.

"When the land is taxed, no man is taxed, nor does the taxation of land interfere in any way whatever with the progress of human industry. On the contrary, the taxation of land, rightly directed, might be made to advance the condition of the country to a high degree of prosperity." p 313.

These extracts give the essence of his views on what the greater and later economist Henry George called the Single Tax, and what that school of profound thinkers of last century, the Physiocrats of which Turgot, France's great statesman, was chief, called the impot unique. May latter day statesmen grasp their meaning.

James Middleton.