

The True Path of Reform.
By James Middleton

IN THE LAST issue of Harlequin Mr. Clement Lacey comes back at me for advocating municipal ownership as a real advance independent of the land owner's interest.

What he has to say regarding the evils of land monopoly and land speculation is very good but he certainly is very weak when he tries to show that we should depart from the policy of some of the ablest advocates of the single tax who, like their leader, Henry George, have been conspicuous advocates of other reforms.

In dealing with politics we come into contact with the people who endure or change things as seems best to them. The practical reformer and statesman, like Lincoln, does not allow himself to get so far ahead of the people that they lose sight of him and he thus fails to be a leader.

We must thank Mr. Lacey for saying, "Wouldn't cheaper water and greater conveniences make this a better town to live in? Wouldn't more people want to come here to live? Wouldn't the people that do live here be gladder they were living—and living here?"

Certainly they would and hence a real step to better conditions would be taken, and one form of land values would return to the people. Is it not indeed strange that Mr. Lacey should oppose a partial realization of his views!

He seems unduly concerned about the landlord. Granted rents do advance somewhat, it is because renters get *more*; and the rent belongs rightfully to the present possessor as against any single individual. It is only the community as a whole, that can make any claim against him.

Society at present allows a large part of the unearned increment to go to the individual. If land owners use it wisely the expenditure benefits all; if illy then in the long run the land owner will be the chief sufferer.

Certain it is that a large part of land values goes to the community, indirectly and in a costly way though it be. I think even Mr. Lacey will grant that 50 percent of the security of the investments of which our savings banks and insurance companies (those great bulwarks of the middle classes) rests upon land values and franchises. If so, in that way they are coming back in a round about way to the great mass of the real producers. It is unreasonable to demand that, if we sweep

away fifty percent of that security, we make a provision for the change?

Herein is the strength of the socialist that Mr. Lacey "will none off." He offers something definite and, as many think, something vastly better than our present exceedingly imperfect systems of saving bank and insurance, a new system under which no willing worker and no disabled one will lack for the comforts of life. It is the great weakness of some single taxers like Mr. Lacey that they are blind to all things except their one little pet hobby, the single tax, as though it were the only means of giving to the people their heritage.

It is nothing to him that a shrinkage of fifty percent in assets of institutions the masses are so vitally interested in might wreck those institutions.

The man who would deliberately destroy in mid-winter, his old tumble down cabin without first providing some other shelter for his family would be about as rational.

I want to see the old tumble-down shanty of our present civilization go but I want a good home open for us before it goes.

It is not my desire here to advocate socialism. I leave that for its adherents. I point out their strength that I may show to single taxers their weakness in the hope that they will see the importance of preliminary reforms in currency savings and insurance.

If they want "pure individualism," which I much doubt, let them secure a law abolishing the voting power of capital in all corporations hereafter to be formed; one owner, one vote only, instead of so many votes for so many shares; and they will take a longer step towards pure democracy than even the single tax.