

garding the natural and inherent rights of men, and make clear to him also the true basis for private ownership in the things a man produces by his labor and capital, be they many or few.

And now listen to his remedy. But no, I will not spoil the interesting article by a brief quotation. Should such rank socialism be advocated by a Bryan or a Gompers what a hue and cry it would raise, because these men stand for action as well as principles. Impractical theories are quite safe.

One idea expressed by "X" is extremely entertaining, in that it is wide of the truth, but can be brought so near it by the addition of only a word or two, here and there; all of which goes to show how very near he is to a great truth, but alas, how blindly he is groping after it. I quote in full, changing his socialism to Single Tax philosophy, by means of a few parentheses.

"The time, indeed, is perhaps not distant when everybody possessing private property (in valuable land or in franchises) will be required to answer these two plain questions: 'How much have (do) you withdrawn (withdraw) from the common store (ground rent)? and 'What service (tax) did (do) you give in return for it (such privileges)?' And again: 'Unless some moral (and economic) basis * * for present grossly unjust inequality * * is soon found * * we may encounter in the coming Presidential election, a situation infinitely more disturbing and infinitely more dangerous than ever has before been encountered.'

Does not this remind one of what Henry George said at Saratoga sixteen years ago? "Gentlemen, don't quibble and split hairs about this matter. It is too solemn, too important. It involves the happiness, the health, the lives, the very souls of human beings. It involves the progress of society, the fate of civilization." * * "In turning from us, even though it be to milk and water socialism, you are turning to the road that leads to revolution and chaos." * * "You must chose between the Single Tax, with its recognition of the rights of the individual, with its recognition of the province of government, with its recognition of the rights of property on the one hand, or socialism on the other." * * "If you reject the Single Tax, look to it, from what you turn, toward what you are going."

ELIZA STOWE TWITCHELL.

HON. TOM WATSON AS AN ECONOMIC PHILOSOPHER.

The latest opponent of the Single Tax is Thomas E. Watson, editor and publisher of *Watson's Magazine* and quondam candidate for the presidency in the last campaign. Many Single Taxers supported him for the want of something better to do. We are unfortunate in our political alliances. That we, who are the foremost

apostles of liberty, should be found in alliance with a gentleman whose theory of human rights excludes the black man and the brown, was sufficiently grotesque. But politics, as has been said, makes strange bed-fellows, and it may be said in apology that the virulence of Mr. Watson's hatred of the negro was hardly suspected until he started a magazine devoted to "reform."

Mr. Watson has written a very picturesque history of France; he has also given us a Life of Thomas Jefferson, and he is a rapid and engaging writer who may say many foolish things, but never in a wholly uninteresting way. But that he should be taken seriously by the friends of reform is one of the humors of the situation. For his ignorance of economics is amazing; his suggested remedies, as far as he has any, are the borrowed trappings of a pseudo socialism, and his brutal and unfeeling assaults upon the negro are a measure of the man who comes before us as an advocate of a higher civilization.

In this, his latest attack upon the Single Tax philosophy, printed in *Watson's Magazine* for April, Mr. Watson assumes to be the practical teacher addressing the purely theoretical—and of course wholly impractical—advocate of the Single Tax. "Mr. Doctrinaire," he calls him. There would be no objection to this if he were not himself occupying a position which is *par excellence* the doctrine of the doctrinaire. From what he assumes to be this vantage ground he advances to the attack. He talks of "a state of Nature;" of men resigning a portion of their individual freedom when they enter the nucleus of families that compose the State; of the benefit of this voluntary surrender in the new advantage derived from the protecting arms of the community. He assumes that out of this voluntary agreement arose the institutions of private property through a perception of their advantages, and thus that they are well nigh impregnable to assault. He accuses Tolstoy of avoiding history in his speculations, and if this is the kind of history Mr. Watson refers to he is quite right, for there is no such history in time of which man has any written or even traditional knowledge.

What is all this but a modification of the purely doctrinal structure, of the *a priori* sort, of the "*Contrat Social*?" Rousseau taught that the origin of government arose out of an agreement by which the individual subordinated his own volition to the general will. By voluntarily surrendering his rights in nature, or his primitive rights, the individual is indemnified by the gift of civil liberty and the protection of the government. Out of this compromise grew our institutions of property—property in chattels, property in land, and of course property in slaves.

Now this theory is metaphysically attractive, and lends itself with fatal facility to explanations of much and varied social phenomena. When dogmatically uttered it looks authoritative.

But it is baseless. There is no historical fact to which it can appeal. The State of Nature is non-chronological. Governments and institutions of property developed out of the friction of opposing interests. Some phases of it—those which involve inequalities, are essentially irrational, and were the offspring of oppression or of robbery.

"Mr. Doctrinaire," as addressed to the advocate of the Single Tax by a believer in Rousseau is amazing, for he was beyond all philosophers an impulsive and emotional doctrinaire. There was little in his social philosophy that was not visionary.*

So much then for the philosophic basis of Mr. Watson's criticism of the Single Tax. But whereas Rousseau held that corruption and inequality began as man passed from a state of nature into civilization and claimed as private property what had previously been common to all, Mr. Watson says he is unable to see the distinction, *in principle*, between the private ownership of a cow and the private ownership of a cow lot." Rousseau said: "The first man who, having enclosed a piece of land, took upon himself to say, 'This is mine,' and found people simple enough to believe him, was the true founder of civil society. How many crimes, wars, murders, miseries, horrors, would have been spared the human race by him who, tearing up the stakes, or filling up the ditch, should have called out to his fellows: 'Beware of listening to this impostor! You are lost if you forget that the fruit belongs to all, the earth to none.'

Mr. Watson is among the first to boldly

"It is sometimes attempted to make the doctrine of natural rights repose upon Rousseau's theory of the Social Contract, and the disproof of one is held to include the disproof of the other. But the claim for the natural rights of man rests upon the nature of his being. No law can abridge them, for his development depends upon the observance of such regulations as, first, conserve his animal needs, and, second, the satisfaction of his mental and spiritual nature.

It is sometimes said that "society is not due to an agreement by which men pool rights previously and independently possessed; it is a combination whereby rights are created." But the individual is first of all a man. Society cannot create any right which man as man does not possess. Association, the object of which is the development of the individual, cannot begin by depriving him of those advantages or opportunities which are necessary to his development. It cannot do so without depriving him of what is his by right. This is what is meant by those who intelligently apprehend the doctrine of natural rights. Such rights are independent of association only in the sense that they exist, not prior to association but that they would exist if we could conceive of man at all as existing prior to association—in other words, they belong to man as an individual. It is absurd to say that society by the mere act of coming together obliterates the individual, or substitutes for rights the individual possesses a body of rights of its own creation. What has become of Man if Society is all?

Editor *Single Tax Review*.

avow that he sees no distinction in principle between the private ownership of a cow and the "private ownership of a cow lot." It is fortunate that few economists and philosophers—and fewer still claiming to be reformers—are blind to such distinction. The instincts of the average man are truer that guide him to almost immediate recognition of the distinction. No difference between the private ownership of a cow and the private ownership of an indestructible portion of the globe! Surely Mr. Watson is joking. Jefferson, for whose name Mr. Watson has some respect, saw the distinction: the law giver Moses at the dawn of history provided for the essential difference in such ownership, and the laws of every civilized country recognize the distinction in some shape or form.

For one who can see no difference in principle between ownership in things produced by labor and the great reservoir from which all that is produced and even the very tools of production must be drawn, it is of course an easy step to this amazing conclusion:

"I can conceive of no revenue in any community which is so just as that which lays itself with an equal burden upon all kinds of property in proportion to the amount thereof." It is of course of small importance that Mr. Watson contradicts himself further on when in his category of things that require to be done he includes "the removing of all taxes from the necessities of life." The interesting thing is its self-revelation. Of course the merest tyro in economic knowledge knows that a five per cent. tax levied upon certain values and in certain ways may be more burdensome than a one hundred per cent. tax levied on other values, or in other ways. The editor of a reform magazine ought to know this: if not his place at the editorial desk should be declared vacant at once. Here again Mr. Watson seems to have read his Jefferson without profiting by his teachings, for that great democrat has touched upon the incidence of indirect taxation with his usual searching clearness.

All this might be borne with patience. We could accord in all charity such exculpation as obvious lack of knowledge seems to plead, but what shall be said in reply when Mr. Watson accuses us of advocating the Single Tax, not because we believe that the rights of all men to land are equal, not because we demand for all men the opportunity to make farms of their own, but because—and Mr. Watson has said it—we "*want the farm some other fellow has made.*" Single Taxers were of old accustomed to the accusation of looking with envious eyes upon the possessions of others. Every man who has pleaded for a more equitable distribution of wealth since the world began has been compelled to meet the same charge made by the ignorant or vicious. We used to read these charges in

the editorial columns of metropolitan dailies, in the screeds of George Gunton, or the more dignified pages of Mallock. But we had a right to expect different treatment from the Hon. Tom L. Watson, for is he not the editor of a "reform" magazine?

Mr. Watson continues: "Especially doth he crave a slice of the Astor estate, which doctrinaires have talked of so much that they can almost identify their shares therein."

Does Mr. Watson then think it so difficult for us to "identify our shares" in that estate? If so, he has reflected little upon the growth of land values in a city such as ours. The value that has come to it is by reason of the myriad activities of the population. Every breath that labor draws keeps alive that value. Upon this labor the Astor feeds, and thus has become so great. Every stroke of rod and piston, every pulsation of the mighty enginery of production, help swell those dividends. To whom, then, do these shares belong—to whom would they belong if the population of New York city were transported and set down on those acres which Mr. Watson "owns" in Georgia? Immediately Mr. Watson's revenues would be equal to those of the Astors. He could stay in New York—or go to Europe as some of the Astors have done, and his revenues would be independent of any labor he might perform. *Whose, then, are the shares, Mr. Watson?*

"I do not consider it any part of my task to assail the position taken in Progress and Poverty," says Mr. Watson. But he does, or thinks he does it by writing: "To say that we can so frame a social fabric as flexibly and automatically to give an equal share of everything to every child born into the world hereafter, regardless of whether that child's parents were thrifty, industrious, virtuous people, or, on the other hand, were thriftless, indolent, vicious people, seems to me to be one of the wildest dreams that ever entered the human mind." It is indeed. But what set of social or political economists is this an answer to? The Single Tax would give to every child born into the world an equal opportunity with reference to its use of land. He would not be born a tenant to any estate, doomed to part with a portion of his earnings for permission to live upon this planet.

Perhaps some of us have thought that Mr. Watson had founded a magazine for the purpose of so improving social conditions that all men might have a better opportunity—that life might be sweeter and more worth living to masses of our fellow-men who are deprived, in great part, through no fault of their own, of the advantages of civilization. Not at all. We—all of us—get all that is coming to us. The fault is in ourselves. We are lazy, or shiftless, or vicious. Let us stop preaching

and agitating. Let us put up the shutters and go home. Let us stop trying to induce people to subscribe for *Watson's Magazine* or any other reform publication. There is nothing to reform. For by the analogy which this Georgian reformer attempts to institute, we must all be doves or hawks, tigers or sheep to the end of the chapter.

If anyone thinks this is a caricature of what Mr. Watson really says, let him read:

"A dozen different traits, or combination of traits, make failure or success in life, and to say that success or failure, vice and virtue, good and bad, are the results of environment and social conditions, is as misleading, as a general statement of fundamental facts, as to say that the dove and the hawk, the tiger and the sheep, the rattlesnake and the harmless "black runner" are the results of environment."

There is much that is amusing in Mr. Watson's screed. To print all these curiosities of reasoning would require more space than we can give to them. When the Single Taxer objects to the fencing in of great areas he is told that "to put up the fence was heroic work, and to keep it up was as just as heroic." So was the work of every highwayman who dominated the road, of every pirate who ruled the seas. Heroic work, indeed! Is that the justification of private property in land—heroic work, not justice, nor equity? And not all, nor any great portion of these fences were, as Mr. Watson seems to think, composed of actual barb wire. They were legal fences, paper titles giving the right to exclude, and originating often in fraud and chicanery. They condemned part of the population to pay tribute to the other. "Some men naturally lead; some naturally follow," says Mr. Watson. Are some men born, *naturally*, rent payers and others rent receivers? "Some men were born tired," says Mr. Watson, sapiently. But there is no means of identifying the new born infant as being born *naturally* a landlord or *naturally* a tenant. There is no such distinguishing birth mark. As there seems then no means of identifying him as belonging to either class, why not be just to the new comer, and declare in our laws that he shall have an equal opportunity—that all infants shall be born landlords, or, what may amount to the same, equally tenants of the State?

We know men differ naturally and physically. But we know that they do not differ with respect to the need of land. We know that deprived of the use of land they are helpless—that permitted the use of land only at the option of others—they are the creatures of those who control the only means by which they can live. Mr. Watson has discovered that men differ *naturally* in powers mental and physical—will he tell us if men differ *naturally* in this—that some men must own land and that others must pay tribute?

Mr. Watson quotes approvingly the plank of the People's Party which says that "there should be no monopoly of land for speculative purposes." But the plank is meaningless. Either it wishes to condemn land monopoly or speculation in land. We may conjecture whether it condemns only speculation in monopolized land—or monopolized speculation in land—or if it wishes to be understood as condemning only such speculation as includes large areas of land, or—but why pursue the tortuous inquiry further? It is a plank which appeals to "reformers" of a certain stripe because it means nothing. But if land is as justly property as houses or horses why is speculation in it singled out from speculation in other kinds of property for special condemnation? Mr. Watson says he "sees no difference in *principle* between the ownership of a cow and the ownership of a cow lot." Of course, he does: otherwise he would advocate a plank to read; "There should be no monopoly of cows for speculative purposes."

Mr. Watson denies that the power of railroads is the power of land ownership, and this is the way he does it: "The thing which hurts us is that franchise which empowers the corporation to tax the citizens and the property of the citizens as they pass along the highway." In other words, the railroad franchise is the power to tax the user of the highway. Of course, the highway is not land. But what is it? And what is the franchise but the title to it—a title to the exclusive use of a piece of land extending in strips and bounded on each side by rails. The power of such franchise and the power of a title to land in fee simple are the same—the power to tax the user of the area indicated. "The road which the transportation companies use could never have inflicted harm upon individuals or communities," says Mr. Watson. No, for roads are not sentient things that can rise up and smite us. "The thing which hurts is the franchise." And all this leads us to inquire if after all Mr. Watson is really serious.

The marvel is that this Georgian, who has been a not unimportant figure in Congress and in one presidential campaign, should have acquired so little real information as to the fundamental principles of economics. This generation has had its surfeit of showy but superficial characters who have attracted popular attention by their volubility, their oratorical powers, or their glittering promises. We are no sooner through with one than another steps resplendent upon the stage. We see one after another unmasked, but we seem never to be able to recognize the tribe. The procession is a long one, and we are probably not yet through with them. Maybe they serve some useful purpose—as half truths prepare the mind for the reception of whole truths; and

these men with their little two penny candles of reform offer us that which is better than no light at all. Some of us, for whom the real light is too strong, may even be prepared in this way to look with naked eyes upon the sun. JOSEPH DANA MILLER.

SINGLE TAX WOMEN IN CONFERENCE.

WORK OF THE SIXTH ANNUAL CONVENTION.

The Sixth Annual Convention of the Woman's National Single Tax League was held in Brooklyn on May the 29th, the 30th and the 31st. The sessions were opened by a business meeting on the afternoon of Tuesday, May the 29th, in an upper hall at Edgett's, cor. Fulton St. and Flatbush Ave. All the various meetings were held in this building. At the first meeting reports from various states and organizations were heard, and two addresses were made. Miss Eva Turner of Brooklyn spoke on The Block Kitchen, which started an interesting discussion. And Mrs. Isabelle Schindler, of Fairhope, Ala., gave a most interesting account of the progress and flourishing condition of that little Single Tax Colony. This is the first time that an official woman delegate from Fairhope has been present at a Convention, and Mrs. Schindler's personality as well as what she could tell, won much sympathy. Violin selections by Master Hugh Aitken enlivened the programme for the afternoon meeting.

That same evening the first public meeting was held, before an audience that taxed the capacity of the hall. Mayor Bird S. Coler gave a cordial address of welcome, which was responded to by Mrs. Florence Burleigh, of Philadelphia. Mrs. Burleigh has a simplicity and directness in her manner of speaking, and an easy use of popular metaphor, which, combined with a thorough understanding of the subject, makes her a welcome addition to the slender corps of women Single Tax speakers. The main address of the evening was made by Mr. John Z. White, who spoke for nearly an hour on "The Single Tax." Mr. White was in his very finest form and has never spoken better here in New York. The audience followed his every word with absorbed attention. A pleasing musical programme was given between the addresses.

The following morning—Memorial Day—a number of delegates and other Single Taxers met in Greenwood Cemetery, to pay the customary homage to the memory of Henry George, by laying a wreath on his grave. The date for the Convention had been chosen with a view to allowing delegates from a distance to be present at this ceremony.

In the evening a banquet was held at Edgett's at which two hundred diners sat down. Speeches were made by Mmes. Belle de Revera, Amy M. Hicks, C. Schetter, Jennie L. Munroe and Grace Isabel Colbron,