

jects: (a) The separate assessment of the value of land, apart from improvements; (b) The taxation of land values, upon this assessment, both in rural and in urban districts; (c) The taxation of land values for national and local purposes? (2.) Will you support the taxation of land values as a means of opening up to industry the agricultural, mining and building land now held out of use, thereby helping to solve the unemployed problem? (3.) Will you support the substitution of a rate on land values for the present rates on building values, which tend to discourage building, and thus to make houses "fewer, worse and dearer?" (4.) Are you in favor of abolishing the taxes on tea, coffee, cocoa, sugar, etc., and all other taxes on food, substituting a tax on land values?

African farmers and the land tax.

From the Natal Advertiser of September 21, we learn that the Inanda Agricultural Association, a county organization of Natal farmers, has been agitated deeply over the question of land monopoly and of land value taxation as the remedy. This agitation is traceable to the work of Henry Ancketill, a member of the provincial parliament. At the agricultural meeting in question, the following resolution was unanimously adopted:

That this association advocates a universal taxation of land values, remission to be given to lands beneficially cultivated, occupied or built upon.

Commenting editorially upon this action of the farmers, the Natal Advertiser of the following day, September 22, disclosed the prevailing sentiment of the colony by saying:

What is wanted is a general land tax which will operate in the direction of bringing all uncultured or unoccupied land into beneficial use. We do not go so far as to say that it should be on the Harry George principle of appropriating to the state the whole of the land values; but it should be sufficient to bring in a good revenue and to form a substantial inducement to land owners to put their land to use. It is acknowledged on all hands that the system of holding large areas of uncultivated land is a curse to the Colony, and it is time effective measures were taken to remedy the evil. . . . The importance of the question arises from two considerations. One is the necessity of the policy as an economical measure. Without it we shall never get the full and legitimate usufruct of the land. We must have a

land tax, accompanied by compulsory expropriatory powers, if we are ever going to do anything substantial in the way of closer settlement, and increasing the agricultural population. . . . The second reason why a land tax is important is that it is, or soon will be, necessary as a source of revenue. There is little doubt that, before long, we shall have to make up our minds to a large diminution of revenue from our railways. Throughout South Africa the cry is for a reduction of the heavy transport charges. . . . Yet there is small reason to believe that the expense of administration can be reduced in proportion. Consequently some new sources of income must be opened up. One of these is a land tax, which is far preferable in many respects to an income tax—though there is more than a possibility that we may have to put up with both. But the land tax, if regulated on a fair and reasonable basis, is a thoroughly legitimate means of raising revenue, and when we see it advocated, as at Verulam on Wednesday, by a purely agricultural body, we may reasonably hope for its adoption in the near future.

This indication of a tendency toward Henry George's remedy for the evil of withdrawing land from labor and thereby creating a relative oversupply of labor and labor products, is widely observable—not only in South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, but also in the municipal politics of Germany and the national politics of Great Britain.

How prosperity is diverted.

At the meeting of the League of American Municipalities at Toledo last Summer, Mr. Oscar Leser delivered an address, published in the October number of American Municipalities, which discloses some remarkable economic effects of the destruction of Baltimore by fire. Most important of them all is the effect upon site values. "Strange as it may seem," said Mr. Leser, "land in the burnt district increased perceptibly in value almost immediately after the fire. The sudden opening of opportunities for development upon modern lines by the enlargement of building sites and the erection of structures adapted to modern needs; the high civic spirit displayed after the fire; the prospect of a municipal dock system; wid-

ened, regraded and better paved streets—all these considerations portended increased activity and enlarged prosperity in the near future." So great was this effect that "in spite of the fact that about one-eighth of the private property in the burnt district was absorbed for public purposes, the taxable basis in that portion of the city, considering the ground alone, has been raised by about \$6,000,000;" and "a very considerable part of this represented enhancement after the fire." The singular thing about such phenomena is the common obtuseness to its significance and the common indifference to public duty in the premises. Yet a candid answer to one question ought to cause an awakening. Why should the values of a city's site, when enhanced by increased activity and enlarged prosperity, why should they be diverted from the whole population to whose activity that prosperity is attributable, and poured into the coffers of mere appropriators of space? Why, in other words, should we allow prosperity to be diverted from land users to land-owners?

Charles Frederic Adams.

A remarkable character who is about to take the place of secretary of the Borough of Brooklyn in Greater New York, a place second in authority to President Coler who appoints him, is Charles Frederic Adams. Mr. Adams's peculiarity is not his natural ability, though that is of an order unusually high, nor his accomplishments as a lawyer and publicist, though they are exceptional in their completeness, but his rigid probity. He is honest with every one, including himself, and about everything, including his own competency—so honest that he has possibly been less useful than he might have been, from underrating his own power of usefulness. One of a coterie of Brooklyn young men of a generation ago, of which Wm. M. Ivins was another, and all of whom have made their mark, he grew up professionally in one of the largest law offices of New

York, where his legal acquirements and his familiarity with three languages made him valuable in spite of his scruples. It was said of him that he was allowed a large salary, but agreed to remit most of it for the privilege of refusing to participate in cases which did not commend themselves to his sense of justice. It would not have been a bad arrangement for the firm, for such legal service as his sense of justice allowed him to render was of the first order. To this many an opinion in the Interior Department at Washington, signed by the Secretary but written by Mr. Adams while a law clerk there, will amply testify. So will his brief in one of the Philippine cases, the brief against the government in the only one in which the government lost. Mr. Coler's selection of Mr. Adams for second place in Brooklyn Borough is one that will prove its merit. And it will be neither less meritorious nor less acceptable to a rapidly growing sentiment throughout the country as well as locally, when the fact appears, that Mr. Adams of Brooklyn, like Dean Williams of Cleveland, has long been an unwavering advocate of the doctrines of Henry George.

The postal censorship.

It would be impossible to follow, instance by instance, the arbitrary acts of censorship by the Post Office Department (p. 420), but in occasional instances the circumstances are suggestive. One of these was the postal "hold up" of a Des Moines newspaper, for reporting a local social card party and naming the winner of a cut glass water pitcher. The Des Moines postmaster so construed his Department instructions that he stopped the mailing of the paper for half an hour while he telegraphed to Washington. He was advised in reply that while his construction of the rules was literally correct the Department had never enforced them against society card games! Another case was the "hold up" of Wilshire's Magazine

for two days, to enable the Department to decide whether or not one of the advertisements should be censored. According to this magazine for November the Department ruled that while in fact there was nothing objectionable in the advertisement, yet, as it related to a guessing contest, the neglect of the publishers to submit a proof before publication was against the rulings of the Department. If this statement is true, as it doubtless is, the editor's comment is entirely reasonable, that "if this ruling is valid as to advertisements it is valid as to editorials." As we have shown in previous articles, the rulings of the Department on these matters are absolute and final. The censorship is Russian in its absolutism. It is worse than Russian in its methods, for in Russia they only blacken censored articles, while sending the paper through the mails, but here the whole paper is "held up" for one censored article.

GERRIT SMITH A FORERUNNER OF HENRY GEORGE.*

A generation ago the name of Gerrit Smith, of Peterboro, N. Y., was widely known throughout the country, especially in anti-slavery, temperance, and other philanthropic circles. In the exciting days of John Brown and Harper's Ferry he unjustly suffered proslavery opprobrium for alleged complicity in the plan attempted.

Gerrit Smith inherited large landed possessions to which, later, he added extensively, becoming the owner of a princely domain. His father, Peter Smith, of Holland descent, was a partner of John Jacob Astor in his youthful days of enterprise and adventure, when the great fur trade that enriched both partners was in process of establishment.

Each had a keen instinct for land investments; Astor more shrewdly placing his in the heart of New York City, while Smith acquired vast areas in the center of the State. Beginning with sixty thousand acres at \$3.53 $\frac{1}{2}$, from the

Oneida Reservation, the latter subsequently bought lands sold for taxes, and, in the single county of Oneida, paid the State \$3 per acre for 80,000 acres. He was reputed to own nearer a million than a half million of acres, his property being measured by square miles.

Inheriting his father's business aptitude, Gerrit Smith also became an immense purchaser and dealer in unoccupied lands, buying 18,000 acres in the town of Florence when scarcely more than 21 years old, an investment of \$14,000, which, in a few years, reached a valuation of half a million.

The singular part of the story, as his biographer says, was the fact that his power of wealth "was his help, not his ruin; that it was his opportunity, and not his temptation; that it furnished a solid base for his intellectual and moral operations, not a grave in which his manhood was buried; that he could wear the purple and still be a king." There is hardly anything stranger in fiction than this plutocratic land-monopolist arriving at the same conclusions regarding the wrongfulness of land monopoly as those later enunciated by the needy San Francisco printer, Henry George, in "Progress and Poverty."

The conviction which forced itself on Gerrit Smith soon took action in lavish gifts of land to landless people. He evidently questioned the justice of keeping what he had not earned and could not improve. In 1846 he wrote: "I am an Agrarian.—I would no man were so regardless of the needs and desires of his brother men, as to covet the possession of more farms than one." To the colored men of New York State he made out 3,000 deeds, conveying land of 40 to 60 acres each, placing the selection of beneficiaries in the hands of a committee of well-known citizens. In 1849, he selected a thousand persons living in 58 different counties, to receive gifts of land, \$10 in money accompanying each deed. "Nor shall I be blamed for distributing the thousand parcels among white persons exclusively," he wrote, "by any who are informed that 3,000 colored persons have received deeds of land from me, entirely free of all charge either for the land, or for the expense of the perfected deeds thereof."

* This editorial, contributed by William Lloyd Garrison, was written at Boston on the seventieth anniversary (October 21, 1905) of the historical assault upon Mr. Garrison's distinguished father by a proslavery Boston mob.