

At The Sign of the Cat and the Fiddle

CONDUCTED BY E. WYE

I APPEAR, ladies and gentlemen, at the threshold of our hostelry, The Cat and the Fiddle, to bid you a hearty welcome within. We who have opened this new addition to our Single Tax establishment hope here to be able to supply you with "entertainment for man and beast." Here you may rest cosily before our cheerful fire, forgetting for the time being the winter rigors of a cruel world, the while putting to yourself the time-honored query, "May I not take mine ease in mine inn?" Undoubtedly you may—for at the Sign of the Cat and the Fiddle we would have you feel that the house and its contents are your own. Beside the portal of our Inn we have placed a tablet, reading "Within these walls dwells forever the Spirit of Henry George." We should like you to find a resemblance between our Inn and those famous hostelries renowned in history and fable—The Tabard at Southwark, The Boar's Head in Eastcheap, Will's Coffee House, The Club—veritable sanctuaries for refreshment. Let the Fine Arts here come tapping, not like a stately Raven to perch above a bust of Pallas, but rather like a bright-winged humming bird poised within our sunny window. We would have our writers bring us truth severe in fairy fiction drest, with a dominant note of optimism and rebirth—a poetry to open the sacred source of sympathetic tears; a drama to lash ignorance and hypocrisy and to point boldly the way to life and liberty. On the bookshelves of our Inn we want to find a new brood of novelists and poets, whilst on the green in front of our door we want to present plays and pageants of the life of man and of the deep-delved Earth. I have said enough. I make my bow as Boniface and bid you all to enter.

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THE CAT AND THE FIDDLE, which is a moderately old structure of unpretentious architecture, is soon to have an overhauling. Carpenters, roofers and plumbers may make life miserable for a while for all of us. Of course buildings have a way of wearing out. And that reminds me. Adele Bonnyclabber has had much correspondence with the Treasury Department on the subject of "deterioration." She claims to have discovered "the curve" to apply in such a case. She got it in her research work on "the genesis and rationale of the U. S. Income Tax." Really clever of Adele, you must admit. As I was saying, we have The Cat and the Fiddle at the threshold of reconstruction. I say that space *must* be found for an auditorium for Single Tax moving pictures. And let us by all means co-operate with Dr. DeForest and co-ordinate the voice with the action. Just imagine a scene with O'Shea raising his voice while personating the Howling Dervish he's been these forty years past! It is a great idea.

I wanted The Cat and the Fiddle to have the glory of first applying it. But alas, we must come in as second

fiddle. Enter first our wide-awake co-workers 'way down on Mobile Bay. The seriousness of our situation is shown by the following from the *Fairhope Courier*: "Our good friend, R. S. McMahon, of New Orleans, whom we mentioned last week as being so much interested in the visual presentation of the Single Tax and expecting to spend the week-end here to take up the subject of a Single Tax and Fairhope scenario, came in on Sunday evening and Monday evening Mr. Hoellscher, of the Cosmopolitan Film Company, came over, and we had a conference, which included Judge Totten of the Magnet Theatre." If my readers know Fairhope as well as I do they will appreciate the gravity of this action. If The Cat and the Fiddle is to save its face I see what we've got to do. We've got to get into immediate communication with William C. deMille in California and Mark M. Dintenfass in New Jersey and put it up squarely to them to get a movie on.

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AT the Sign of the Cat and the Fiddle, gentle reader, you will make the acquaintance of several of our interesting neighbors. Adele Bonnyclabber, mentioned above, frequently runs over from the great house on the hill to see us, mainly because she is "so devoted to her dear Economics." Lord Emblem, over here from England, frequently accompanies her. Among others who come in once in a while to air their ideas (or blow off steam) are Professor and Mrs. Dowdy, Horace Wenzel (the great operator in real estate), Larry Wiggins, Mrs. Livingston, Royal Andrews and Michael O'Shea, the last of the Howling Dervishes, relic of the famous days of 1886. "Greased Lightning" Wiggins told a mighty good story last night, but I haven't room for it here. With patience on your part, dear reader, you shall meet all of these people.

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SPEAKING of Cats, I was talking to Adele recently about one thing and another, when she told me that for a limited period she *thought* she had seen through the cat puzzle. It was in Economics 23, she avers, and the Professor just *made* her see it, she says. I forget whether she said it was at Barnard or Cornell or Radcliffe. She has been at all three, you know, but she got her master's degree at Cornell. You will remember that she went in for "research work" in Economics, her graduation thesis being "The relation between the Communes of Northern France in the 14th century and the development of the Guilds in England."

Well, one of the girls asked the Professor what was meant by the expression "Seeing the Cat?" The learned man promised an explanation for the following day. So he goes home and digs out of one of his portfolios an old print, such as the Single Taxers were accustomed to in the early days of the movement: it must have been that venerable

picture of the Tree with the blasted branches and the famous sub-title. "Now," said the Professor, "I will show you the celebrated animal known as the 'Single Tax Cat.' Look at it intently and tell me if you see it." Presently came a voice, "I see it!" Then another, "I see it!" "I felt extremely embarrassed," said Adele, "for try as I would, I could not see it." Turning to me, "Do you, Miss Bonnyclabber, find the outlines?" the Professor inquired. Adele hesitated. "Why yes, uh-huh, I believe I do. But the Cat I see is standing on its head."

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THE Editor of the SINGLE TAX REVIEW advises me not to call this Department a "Column," for fear that in the growing dislike of the reading public for "columnists" I may find myself, like St. Simon Stylites, in the desert on the top of a lonely shaft venting my voice solus to the circumambient air.

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I REMEMBER an incident wherein the Cat and the Fiddle became associated in rather an amusing way. In one of the Hon. George L. Record's ingenious campaigns for the spreading of the light (*lucis a non lucendo*) a New Jersey county manager induced a certain substantial lawyer, named X, to stand in the primary for the Assembly along with the Record outfit of the Republican party. Mr. X was duly instructed, in ways that are dark and tricks that are vain, to try to "put over" the Single Tax without the unsuspecting voter knowing it.

After a number of lessons Commuter X decided that his business (he was a real estate speculator in a considerable way) did not seem to connect up with the true doctrine profitably or safely, so he decided to eschew discipline and run his own campaign on different lines and to suit himself. Instead of making lengthy addresses like the other candidates he brought with him his violin and opened up the street meeting with a tune, feeling that music hath charms as well as political economy.

The idea was not bad—provided he had known how to play; but so villianously rotten was his performance, so slow-footed and lugubrious, that it invariably wearied and bored the audience, who soon began to drift away from the automobile, indulging in not a few jeers and cat-calls. You must admit that Mr. Record's tutoring of this pupil was not a success. Yet the sequel was not unnatural. Next year Commuter X, going it entirely in his own way, was elected to the Assembly on the Republican ticket.

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BY THE way, speaking of the protean Mr. Record, we must observe for the benefit of our Western subscribers that the Hon. George has been at it again. This year he balanced for the U. S. Senatorship from New Jersey. In his tent, as usual; folding it about 11 o'clock each evening and silently and sadly stealing away to the next stand, where, sure enough, the following night he turned a lengthy handspring (*clash of cymbals*) exclaiming, "Ladies and

gentlemen, here I am again!" Well, well. "Is that you, George? Glad to see you. Haven't seen you since we met in Chicago, when you and the Boys of '48 ran up against the Farmer-Labor windmills—or was it their armored tanks? Still on the road, are you, playing the old game?" And after the show in his dressing-room George told me, "My company and I are through with the '48ers and all similar dilettante trash. I am a politician. My place is in the sun of a Republican primary. There some day perhaps I shall die, but hard, mind you, hard." And we turned away tearfully, murmuring, "Ibi requiescat!"

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BY SPECIAL arrangement with his publishers we are able to print in advance of publication the two following extracts from the forthcoming Memoirs of the Right Honorable David Lloyd George: "About that date (1910) I was especially active in my advocacy of the principle of the Taxation of Land Values. I was convinced that here was the strongest, most popular and *best vote-getting* plank in the Liberal platform. How inspiring to me it became to address those huge meetings in London and the provinces, greeted as I always was with their tumultuous cheering, the meeting ending with their rising and singing in mighty unison their wonderful Land Song! Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman, it seemed to me, had indeed discovered the open sesame to the inner soul of the workingman." Vol. I, page 411.

"With the multitudinous demands made upon the Government by the War (and especially made upon the Cabinet) I found it expedient to dismiss present consideration of that tiresome and very unpopular question of the taxation of land values. A small group of unmannerly members in the House were the only persons in the country who appeared to espouse what they termed 'The Cause,' and they made me quite miserable when I spoke in the House. They were worse than the Irish members with their interruptions and general bad form. My friends in the Cabinet supported me to a man in my attitude of coolness toward all their overtures and questions—their ingenious efforts to nag me on to the Land Question, as they strove to dignify it.

My friends, Sir John Banbury, Austen Chamberlain and Winston Churchill were ever at my elbow, whispering me to beware of this pit concealed by innocent-looking shrubbery and flowers, into which these enemies sought to lure me to a fall. We parried their attacks with our well conceived policy of Housing and Land Settlement, which all three of my above-mentioned friends considered adequate to quiet these disturbers . . . I am too well along in years now to take up this question. My personal interests and those of my family and children are, I feel, also against it. I bequeath the entire issue to the Labor Party to wrestle with." Vol. II, pp. 302 et seq.

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LAND cost of growing crops increases faster than labor cost is reduced.—H. M. H.