

At the Sign of the Cat and the Fiddle

CONDUCTED BY E. WYE

A reader of this department sends us from Houston, Texas, the following:

The Re-discovered Continent

A book of verses underneath the bough—
A loaf of bread, a jug of wine—and thou
Singing beside me in the wilderness!
Ah! Wilderness were Paradise enow.

THE RUBAIYAT.

But someone claims the land beneath the bough—
Though God created it, 'tis "his'n" now—
And you shall quit your song and get to work
To pay him rent, or there will be a row.

But if we show the sense that God gave geese,
And vote the single tax, this graft will cease,
And Lo! A re-discovered continent
Opens her arms to Industry and Peace.

PETER SPEN.

As bearing upon the contention made in this department that novel economic changes are taking place in Russia which have received scant attention as yet, the following, taken from the monthly review of Russia in *Current History* for July, 1924, is of interest. Professor Alexander Petrunkevitch of Yale University, who writes these articles on Russia, says that until recently the method of taxation was a cause of discontent on the part of the peasants. The Government had long been aware of this, but had not known how to meet the difficulty. We quote: "It has now decided upon a Single Tax for all landholders, but with a sliding scale and an elaborate system of categories. From now on payment will be entirely in cash. (It was at first in kind and later partly in kind and partly in cash.) There are three categories of land acreage, nine categories of harvest and twenty-five categories of localities. Special charts have been prepared for each locality for the computation of the tax. The principle of taxation has been worked out with great care and in great detail, and Soviet officials expect much from the new law and look upon it as a real achievement." We trust that readers of LAND AND FREEDOM will remember Horace Wenzel's prize of \$25 for the best contribution bearing upon this question of the Single Tax in Russia.

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THE WRATH OF LATONA

LAND PLAY IN TWO ACTS, A PRELUDE AND AN EPILOGUE

CONTINUATION OF ACT I

BION. Welcome again, Neocles. You will not object to our remaining here in the shade?

GLAUCUS. (Coming forward.) The heat is oppressive—delightful idea!

NEOCLES. (Turning.) Hold your mouth, will you! Speak when you're spoken to! (To Bion.) I should be glad to take up with you, excellent Bion, the matter that has brought us together today.

BION. Will you kindly outline the transaction, as proposed by yourself to the Council? I shall then see if it is clear in my mind.

GLAUCUS. (Breaking in.) We suggested to the Council—and I was instrumental in wording the petition—that—

NEOCLES. (Scowling.) You were not.

GLAUCUS. That this property here—

NEOCLES. How dare *you* claim—you greedy hanger-on—you miserable sponging parasite—

GLAUCUS. (Undisturbed.) Your worship must remember the circumstance. Let me relate it to his excellency.

NEOCLES. Shut up! Silence! Or I'll send you flying down the hill!

BION. Gentlemen, I pray you cease this controversy. I will myself try to state the facts, as I understand them. Correct me when necessary. Some time ago you placed in the hands of the Council of our beloved little city—

GLAUCUS. (Again breaking in.) And a city, I may say, destined to become the metropolis of Lycia, a city whose fame will reach from Egypt to Babylonia and from—

NEOCLES. There you go again. Cease talking, you infernal windy chatterer!

BION. You presented a petition in which you proposed to purchase from the city, for a sum to be determined by the Council itself or by commissioners, a certain tract of territory, including fields, woods and water-courses, contiguous to this locality and including this very sheet of water. Am I correct?

NEOCLES. Most correct, your excellency.

BION. You sought to gain first the assent of the Council, and then the appointment of the commissioners to appraise the sum to be paid.

NEOCLES. Correct, your excellency.

BION. You produced a map or sketch of the region in question.

GLAUCUS. (Searching for and taking a tablet from his pouch.) A copy of which I have here.

BION. That is unimportant now. You also stipulated that these roads (indicating the two highways) might be diverted to some extent from their present lines—a most unusual proposal—in order to make room for certain “improvements” contemplated.

GLAUCUS. (Interrupting.) Contemplated, but not specified. I particularly objected to divulging in advance the nature of said improvements. As speculators it would be suicidal for us to make known our plans.

BION. (Addressing Neocles.) Worthy sir, this is precisely the point on which I, as a magistrate, am required by the Council to obtain more definite information. Let me ask you, what is your purpose in acquiring this property from the city? Silence on this point can only jeopardize your undertaking from the very start.

NEOCLES. I will only say that I regard this as an ordinary business transaction, in no way different from many another in which I have been interested.

GLAUCUS. (Breaking in.) Yes, an ordinary everyday deal. In the course of a season we put through at least a dozen much bigger, far more important.

BION. Being a wealthy man, you perhaps contemplate the beautifying of this attractive spot with a votive altar in marble or a small temple of worship for the wayfarer?

GLAUCUS. On this point, if it comes to particulars, our lips are sealed. We refuse to answer.

BION. (to Neocles.) Or, worthy sir, perhaps your idea is to make of these surroundings a modest gymnasium or palaestra, to which the youth of our nearby city may resort for exercise and minor games—and, having made the requisite improvements, to present all again to the city?

NEOCLES. There you are decidedly mistaken. I contemplate nothing of the kind. I do not believe in pauperizing the poor. But I will not detain you, for you seem incapable of judging the nature of ordinary business when you see it.

GLAUCUS. Hold on, master. Don't get angry. Perhaps his excellency—

BION. I confess I do not see your drift. I am, as indeed all our citizens are, acquainted with your business ability. We know that as a dealer, in land especially, you have been eminently successful and your profits as a speculator have been the talk of the baths and of the market-place. Therefore I wonder what your motive may be in desiring to make the purchase in question. This location is too far from the city to admit of any hope of immediate profit. Perhaps you see a future increase in value, to accrue to your descendants?

NEOCLES. On the contrary, I have confidence in the present. I foresee an awakening from the business leth-

argy of the past few years. In my opinion, our foreign commerce is about to take a leap forward. I don't mind hinting to you that it is in connection with foreign trade that I have this investment in view.

GLAUCUS. Preparatory thereto I have started taking lessons in no less than four foreign languages.

BION. Well, let us get on. Now as to the terms. Being a captain of industry, you have, I presume, not overlooked these?

NEOCLES. My man of business here (Glaucus puffs up with the compliment) has gone over very carefully the financial end of the proposition. His suggestion is that the city furnish the money by borrowing same at $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. As a banker these figures appeal to me.

BION. One moment—

NEOCLES. An issue of long-term bonds to be offered to the public at par.

BION. But one moment—

NEOCLES. Coupon or registered, at the option of the investor.

BION. Ah, you do not propose to put in any money of your own?

NEOCLES. Do we not take all the risk? Isn't that enough?

BION. Let me see. With the money you ask the city to borrow for you from the public you propose to enter into an undertaking not yet specified. Is that all?

NEOCLES. By no means. We intend to issue our preferred and common stock to the amount of twice the bond issue. Naturally, these securities we shall keep as commission for ourselves, as originators of the enterprise—ordinary promoters' commission.

GLAUCUS. For *ourselves* did you say, master? Would it be convenient for you at this time to hand me something as advance payment for my services in this matter?

NEOCLES. You?

GLAUCUS. I told you that I should expect at least a few gold shekels as evidence of your good faith.

BION. Gentlemen, I do not see on what grounds I can go back to the Council and advocate this piece of business. First of all, I am unable to tell the Council what the nature of the business is.

GLAUCUS. (Becoming uneasy.) Your excellency, you miss the point. I cannot see why you keep harping on this. We ask you to sell us the property we require, that is all. After you have sold us the land, it is ours, is it not? We have a perfect right to do with it then what we please.

BION. (To Neocles.) In short, you want us, the city, to part with this land by selling it to you—

NEOCLES. Beyond a doubt. That much is settled.

BION. For which you propose to pay us (looking at proposal, which he has taken from his girdle) a sum not to exceed four thousand minae.

GLAUCUS. (Taking out and looking at his own copy of proposal.) You are mistaken. *We* propose to pay you

nothing. You are to convey the land to us for a nominal consideration, the usual one drachma, and then to agree to hand us in due time the proceeds of the city's bond sale.

BION. What kind of finance do you call this?

NEOCLES. Why do you ask that question? Until *you* came into the Council all my transactions were of thus or a similar character, as the records show. And they went unquestioned. My system of developing the resources of the country and of the community has always been of a popular character. The public has always been taken into my confidence. *You* come as a "reformer" now and expect to change—

BION. One moment more. You are, I believe, known to be one of our leading and most respected citizens?

NEOCLES. I do plume myself on my social standing, as well as on my assured position in financial circles.

GLAUCUS. We are eminently conservative and respectable people.

BION. Well, in spite of what you say, I do not see my way clear.

NEOCLES. I suspected as much. I always felt, when the "reform" party elected you, the industries of our town would have a set-back.

BION. I am not the whole Council—you flatter me.

NEOCLES. Nevertheless, the others defer to you. Why did they appoint you sole committeeman in this matter?

GLAUCUS. Gentlemen, softly! We want to bring this business to a happy conclusion, without harsh words. I feel convinced that his excellency will see the point if we approach him in the right way.

BION. What do you mean by that?

NEOCLES. Now see here, Councillor, I am a plain, blunt business man, and I think our city should be run on business principles. How much do you want for putting this thing through?

BION. You dare suggest!—

GLAUCUS. No doubt my master puts the matter rather crudely. The way he expresses it is too raw. It's only a "commission" we ask you to accept. Let us say, for instance, that a happy speech by yourself before the Council disposes of the matter and the business goes through as proposed. A block of preferred stock is set aside for you and in time is recorded either in your name or in that of any one you may suggest. Is it not a clean, business-like transaction?

BION. I have heard enough. I now return to the city to make my report to the Council. What the outcome will be I do not know.

GLAUCUS. Speaking for myself, I do not doubt that the proposal will be accepted. It has many merits.

BION. I pray you will excuse me now. I have a word or two to say to my daughter. (He turns and Myra meets him.)

NEOCLES. (To Glaucus.) You fool, you have messed this thing up as usual! I expected as much.

GLAUCUS. How so? He was visibly impressed. My little scheme worked. The mystery we are making of our intentions, according to my prearranged plan, is a winner. Keep 'em in suspense—that's the way to work 'em. But, your honor, how about a little money? You will remember your agreement with me to hand over part of my commission on the conclusion of today's conference. Would it be convenient?

NEOCLES. (Affecting not to hear.) All that argument about land ownership was rotten!

GLAUCUS. A gold-piece on account would help me out immensely. I owe fifty obols to Chremes, the salt-fish man, and one drachma thirty for interest to a money-lender in the market-place. I *should* appreciate a gold-piece, say a shekel. Can't you let me have it, master?

NEOCLES. (Taking coins from his pouch.) Here are forty obols.

GLAUCUS. Forty obols! Your honor, a man of my station cannot use a paltry sum like that.

NEOCLES. Well, here is a gold-piece for you, and I hope you are satisfied. You are the most impertinent, good-for-nothing parasite that ever I had.

GLAUCUS. Thank you, your honor.

NEOCLES. Now go to the deuce.

GLAUCUS. Thank you, your honor. (To Bion, who comes forward with Myra:) Would your excellency name an hour this afternoon when we could meet you here again to learn the result?

BION. I cannot say for certain. But I shall endeavor to come up again. Your master will have to take his chance.

GLAUCUS. We shall not fail to be here. (To Neocles:) Why not go home for your dinner and siesta, master, and meet us here later on? I prefer to stay—it is a delectable spot. Besides, if you will let one of the slaves remain with me, I should like to measure the neighborhood a little carefully to perfect our plans, which, between ourselves, I still have confidence are likely to go through.

NEOCLES. Do as you please. Keep the slave and let him meet me on the road this afternoon and help me up—for it takes two of them to do it. Come a short way with me now. (They go down the road, Glaucus, in dumb-show, measuring and surveying until they all disappear.)

MYRA. (Who with several of the children about her comes forward with Bion.) Father, I've been thinking it over. Never in my life have I heard anything so outrageous as what you say these two men proposed. I overheard a great part of what they said. It is disgraceful.

BION. They appear to me to be addle-headed. They are both fools.

MYRA. More than fools, father. They are greedy gluttons, asking for favors from the city and giving nothing in return.

BION. Their idea of finance is farcical. The Council will not listen to it.

MYRA. Their desire to acquire natural sites of value and then bleed the good people of our city is crafty—and it is dangerous. One wonders at the wicked ingenuity of certain of mankind.

BION. That parasite of Neocles's is known as a shrewd schemer.

MYRA. Neocles himself is no better than a dupe.

BION. He is more greedy than the other, whom he makes his scapegoat.

MYRA. Well, father, I hope we have seen the last of these people and their precious scheme for getting something of value for nothing. But I have an idea that something further will develop in this case. Why shouldn't they disclose their idea? (A pause.) No wonder such people wax rich!

BION. Neocles is the richest citizen we have.

MYRA. I *never* would part with any natural resources owned by our city. To do so is a stupid crime. Think of this lovely little sheet of water, the delight of wayfarers, being diverted to private hands—is it not sacrilege?—this resting-place where the weary, thirsty traveller pauses to drink at will of the crystal water and gaze enraptured on the valley of the Xanthus! Here should he bless Zeus for sending down the rain in its season and causing it to be gathered in this perennial basin! Why, father, on this very subject I have composed for the children an ode, in celebration of the waters, and we are to rehearse it with a dance by and by.

BION. I should like to remain to hear it, dear child, but I must go now. My reappearance is far from certain. If I do not return, come safely back with your children. (Exits with servant.)

A CHILD. Dear Myra, we know our verses perfectly. Oh, won't you let us dance the Water Dance? (The shepherd boy's horn is heard.)

ANOTHER CHILD. That is the shepherd boy. We must ask him to dance with us.

OTHER CHILDREN. (Clapping their hands, etc.) Of course! What fun it will be! Can he really dance? He said he couldn't, etc. (Enter shepherd boy. The children run to him.)

A CHILD. We're glad you've come. Myra says you may dance with us. We'll say the words—we know them.

SHEPHERD BOY. I hurried up as much as I could—I didn't want to miss seeing you. But I was kept on the road.

ANOTHER CHILD. Did you stop to pick flowers, as we did?

ANOTHER CHILD. Couldn't you find your sheep?

SHEPHERD BOY. It wasn't that. A dark, beautiful lady asked the way.

MYRA. A lady? A dark lady?

SHEPHERD BOY. I mean she was dressed in black.

MYRA. And she kept you from coming?

SHEPHERD BOY. She was walking very slowly, and she didn't seem to know her way.

MYRA. What did you do?

SHEPHERD BOY. I don't know. I don't think I did anything. I only stood and gazed at her.

MYRA. Was she strange looking? You said she was beautiful.

SHEPHERD BOY. She was different from my mother and from the women I've seen in the market-place. Yes, different from you. She carried a baby in her arms, and a girl with her carried another.

MYRA. Poor wanderers—perhaps they have been shipwrecked!

SHEPHERD BOY. She said she was very tired. I told her there was good water to drink up here, and that this road leads to the city.

MYRA. Did you not offer to lead her this way?

SHEPHERD BOY. Where I met her was a long way off—on the sea-road. (He indicates.) She told me not to wait, that she was used to walking slowly. But she thanked me, and said she would come this way after a while. She smiled, (a pause, as if thinking)—I have never seen any one like her before.

MYRA. The children want you to dance with them, and if you do not care to dance, then to look on; afterward to eat some fruit and other things with them and join in their games.

SHEPHERD BOY. I thank you.

MYRA. Come, children, let us make ready and begin. Now we are to celebrate the divine waters of the Earth, without which our life would be impossible. Upon this altar we will pour a libation in honor of Zeus and of Poseidon. With this clear pool of water at hand, here is a fitting spot for our festal Water Dance. Let us once more be grateful for the gifts of nature which are intended for us all to use. Our ode is called "The Waters of Lycia." I shall read each strophe and the epode; and do not fail to dance properly the movements I have taught you. (Music. Myra recites the words, each strophe and the epode preceding its dance movement.)

CHORAL ODE

THE WATERS OF LYCIA

STROPHE

From the Acroceronian mountains,
The snowy, steep heights of the north,
Down-dripping in tremulous fountains
The waters of Lycia come forth;
And the warm heart of Earth throbs to meet them
And melts in a welcome profuse,
While the joyance of life springs to greet them
And rises to Zeus!

ANTI-STROPHE

In the parching brown midsummer valleys,
All scorching with Chimaera's heat,
O boon when a runnel outsallies
From its cold and most secret retreat!

The gold on the floors of the rivers
Is a glittering mockery then—
In the *water* the Gods are the givers
Of riches to men.

EPODE

O waves of the far circling Ocean,
O Father Poseidon, to thee
We turn with a soul of emotion,
To the marge of the loud-sounding sea.
Ye venturous triremes and galleys
That trade from the Lycian shore,
Go forth with a kiss from our valleys—
Then homeward once more!

(Toward the end of the dance Glaucus and the slave return. Glaucus, finding the wood emptied of the children, enters it and covertly helps himself to a meal made up of pilferings from the baskets.)

The dance being concluded, the curtain falls.

END OF ACT I

The Income Tax

I CANNOT agree with the statement that the worst aspect of the income tax is the comparatively few who pay it. The income tax confuses the unthinking as to human or natural rights; it corrupts morals and ideals; it appeals to passion and ignorance; it makes no distinction between earned and unearned fortunes; it disturbs business and aggravates the unemployment problem; it causes monstrous litigation, disputes and chicanery; it increases the cost of raising revenue; it creates a new profession, that of "tax expert."

Most of our numerous methods of taxation produce bad results not foreseen by legislators. Income and inheritance taxes are popular on the theory that the condition of the poor can be improved by taxing the rich, or "wealth," or "capital." Socialists teach that error. Republicans, Democrats and Progressives encourage it. La Follette's platform causes wonder as to how he would raise revenue if there were no rich to tax.

You show in your interesting editorial of July 8 that the bulk of income taxes falls on citizens of small fortunes. Wage and salary earners are unable to dodge; when the rich dodge, it disarranges industry and decreases opportunities for employment.

If we must use the income tax, common sense calls for:
1—Abolishing all other taxes, for they reduce incomes.
2—Having a uniform rate as low as possible. 3—No exemptions or exceptions whatever. 4—Utmost publicity.

HOWARD M. HOLMES, in *Cleveland Plaindealer*.

"I HAVE the right to live because I breathe and because the air is common property of everybody."

—GUY DE MAUPASSANT, in *The Vagabond*.

NEWS—DOMESTIC

Illinois.

FOLLOWING are the names of electors of the Commonwealth Land party in Illinois:

Malcolm P. Black, Ernest N. Braucher, Lillian B. Cronin, Mary C. Connor, Lorenzo C. Daniels, Walter E. Elfrink, William A. Gilbert, Andrew A. Gour, Henry P. Hansen, Henry H. Hardinge, William Edward Harper, Charles Henry Hartmen, James Derrel Hart, Oscar E. Hedrich, Charles J. F. Kraft, Axel Lyngholm, Barbara C. Leu, C. Edward L'Hommedieu, George Chandler Madison, Jennie L. Madison, John O'Connor, Alexander Pernod, Frederick Peake, Anton S. Rossing, Detlef Sievers, William K. Smith, William D. Tate, Carl G. Williams, and H. Edward Williams.

The Commonwealth Land party have nominated a full state ticket in Illinois, as follows: For United States Senator, Lewis Dana Spaulding; for Governor, Morris Lychenheim; for Lieutenant-Governor, John B. Reilly; for Secretary of State, William A. Wittick; for State Auditor, John F. Cronin; for State Treasurer, Robert T. Aiston; for Attorney-General, Joseph W. Vistain; for Trustees of the University of Illinois, Hulda L. Potter Loomis, Albert Henniges, and Clayton J. Ewing; for Congress, Dora Welty and James W. Hill.

Illinois Single Taxers all over the state are wheeling into line for party action. The inspiring presence of James A. Robinson, the National Organizer, who has been for two months in the state, has been the means of stirring the apathetic to action, and our readers will note in the foregoing list the large number of names not hitherto affiliated with the party.

Under date of July 7 Mr. Robinson writes: "I am gratified to be able to report that the feeling in Illinois toward our party is much more favorable than it was four years ago, and that the action of the Cleveland Convention has proved greatly disappointing to the Progressives in Chicago. I addressed three thousand persons in Washington Park, and to my appeal for abandonment of hero worship, naming Bryan, Roosevelt and La Follette as types, received an ovation. I presented the claims of our party and was amazed at the generous approbation, the number of sympathetic questions asked, and the invitation to make a return date extended by viva voce vote. A Mr. Lamb, of Chicago, was present and exhausted his stock of books and pamphlets, actually *selling all he had with him, quite a stack*. Mr. Madison, a staunch party man, helped at this meeting, and Dr. Joseph H. Grier, a former socialist, announced his conversion to the Commonwealth Land party and made a generous contribution to the campaign expenses."