

At the Sign of the Cat and the Fiddle

CONDUCTED BY E. WYE

THIS Department from its inception has held that a mere discussion of the Land Question, however widespread, can not be a sufficient sign of its emergence into the field of imminent popular acceptance; nor even can its entry into politics foreshadow any certain vital enthusiasm and welcome on the part of the public. Great upheavals and revolutions in thought are accompanied mainly by agitation of the emotions. There comes a time in the emotional condition of a people when the mass, having undergone great silent changes, is not unlike that seeming chemical equilibrium that needs the presence of a catalytic to set the combination into instantaneous action. It is through art that the emotional find adequate expression; through art all great crises in the history of man have found a large utterance. "Let me but write the songs of a people and I care not who makes the laws" may be a magniloquent phrase—but it comes near to the heart of truth. Therefore, as a sign, this Department awaits the appearance of the Land Question in art. Will it be in our day? Will it come from your Single Taxer, who, while in logic a great critic, is often deficient in the social milk of human kindness? Will it come from the idealist in the socialist camp, who is often a handy writer tho not a very profound thinker? Will it come from your trained professional man of letters who writes so "detachedly" of so many things from his ivory tower? God forbid! Land songs and ballads ought to write themselves. They should reek of the warm earth and be as spontaneous as the music of the sky-lark. They should be the product of no one authenticated poet, but rather should grow and grow like the old sagas, without source and without insincerity—perfect expressions of the inner spirit and emotions of man. When we begin to have land songs and ballads such as these then we may say that the greatest of all Revolutions is at hand.

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It was a lovely and heartening sight at the recent National Convention of the Commonwealth Land Party to see the greeting that old Michael Shea gave to his long lost friend, William McCabe. The appearance of Mr. McCabe was unexpected and dramatic—a sort of Hamlet's father's ghost revisiting the glimpses of the moon, yet with a difference too, for like the heroine in *The Mikado*, Mr. McCabe (a Sam Johnson for avoirdupois) might say, "We're very wide awake, the moon and I." One found that during the recesses Mike and Bill had gravitated together like double stars; and lo, the battles of 1886 were rehearsed by the two, one reminding the other and the other reinforcing the first, so that for sheer interest to genuine Single Taxers no converse like this has been heard since

the passing of Henry George. "And do you mind, Bill, how we started that camp at Merriewold Park, with a vague idea and intintion of demonstrating something or other? Let me see, that was in 1890." "No, you're wrong, Mike, it was in 1889, for I was one of the Prospecting Committee, and I know." And again they fell to reminiscing. And as bearing upon this very subject the Conductor places before the readers of this Department the following ballad, written in 1889 and first read before the original Merriewoldians in December of that year.

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A Ballad

Read before the
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
of Merriewold City,
A. D. 2001

Now list to me, and I'll unfold
The story as it ran.
The place it was called Merriewold,
The County, Sullivan.

In good old Indian times, they say,
The bear and eke the mink
Were wont to swagger every day
All over Minnisink.

Now in the year two thousand one
What once was but a thorp
Doth one continuous city run
From Black Brook to Mongaup.

Aloft on Ida's noble crest
An Eiffel tower stands—
Nor from its top, to east or west,
Are any vacant lands.

But to the tale. The legends tell
Of three, who sought a land
Far west of where they wont to dwell
On rent-bound Hudson's strand.

These Argonauts brought back a tale,
A tale of golden fleece;
In barter shrewd they might prevail—
Long may their tribe increase!

They'd view'd the land, and breath'd a vow
The land it should be theirs,
For usage full, for then and now,
For them and for their heirs.

What if the wild, unharrow'd waste
Unsett'l'd had remain'd?
What if the wild-cat were unchas'd,
The cat, that's now reclaim'd!

One night a hundred years ago,
So legends tell, I ween,

A band of pilgrims very slow
Those roads to trudge were seen.

Duke Gilman's stronghold in the East
They'd leave at once, they guess'd,
And fearless all of man or beast
Strike boldly to the West.

Where now electric launches ply
The spiky bullhead swam—
The night was dark, they would not try
The bogs of Beaver Dam.

So twice three miles of savage ground
For four long hours they trod,
And slow their pilgrim path they wound
O'er rocks and miry sod.

The way was dark, the night was cold,
Most furious fell the rain,
And some were heard to swear, "For gold
They'd ne'er come there again!"

But *labor vincit omnia*. "See!"
Cried many, "Here we are!"
But oh, what fools we mortals be!
They were not there, by far.

At length the cock crew midnight drear,
The distant watchdog bay'd;
The pilgrims felt a fearful fear,
They fear'd they were betray'd.

They plied the men that lanterns bore,
"Now still how far?" they cried,—
The lantern men, suspecting gore,
Like wise men calmly lied.

Around the walls of Castle Jones
At last the pilgrims turn'd,—
Then warm'd the marrow in their bones,
Their dying hope it burn'd.

They pierc'd an ancient, black pine grove,—
(Where now flit nurses trim,
And park policemen love to rove
Mid infant cherubim.)

They spied a light, they storm'd the gates,
The front stair up they shot:
They'd won the race, they'd down'd the Fates,
But all exclaim'd, "Great Scott!"

For there stood Murray, gaunt and bold,
A hermit in his den,
To welcome them to Merriewold,
And warm their inner men.

The feast was set, the hour was late,
But mirth and spirits pass'd,—
For appetite on brawn doth wait
When long hath been the fast.

That night a hundred years ago
The ancient saw we scan,
That he who ventures, howe'er slow,
Is oft a weary man.

Yet who this ballad once have read,
And for its truth I stand,
Have seen that valiant spirits led
In those old ventures grand.

If now, A. D. two thousand one,
The wight that wishful is

Hath more than half the distance run
And "home" is almost his,

E'en let us drop a gentle tear
For those of bygone days:
If we live now in wealth and cheer
To them belongs the praise!

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Very diffidently this Department offers to its readers the following piece of writing bearing on the land question, asking for it a candid and not unsympathetic reading. Its author has striven, as all writers of fiction should do, to furnish entertainment first of all. The moral and the lesson, if there be such, must take care of themselves. Yet the author does not hesitate to count himself an adherent of that school which fears not on occasion to write a novel or a play "with a purpose." The trick is to conceal the purpose and allow the reader or the playgoer to think it all out for himself.

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THE WRATH OF LATONA

LAND PLAY IN TWO ACTS AND A PRELUDE

PRELUDE

CHARACTERS

The Goddess Latona
The Oracle of Delphi

SCENE

At Delphi. A deeply shaded grove, in the midst of which glimmers the fabled Rock. Through its crevices issue the divine vapor and the Voice of the Oracle.

Latona enters the grove and, greatly agitated, approaches the rock with outstretched hands.

LATONA. I am Latona. Hear me.

ORACLE. Speak.

LATONA. I scarce can speak. Oh, I faint—

ORACLE. Rest a moment, my daughter. (After a pause) What would you of me?

LATONA. I am with child. I can go no farther.

ORACLE. Strive to calm yourself.

LATONA. I have begged my way. Am I to die disgraced? Has great Zeus, my lord, no power to restore me to my home? Is He overruled?

ORACLE. Nay, daughter, do not assault the ways of Heaven. (A pause) Whence came you?

LATONA. Fleeing I came by distant Tempé and by Thebes. I have wandered many days. Oh, shall I be forgiven and restored?

ORACLE. What seek you here to know?

LATONA. From the cloudy heights of far Olympus have I wandered. The fault, the fault was mine. Yet sweet was his love-making, soft it was as the golden veil that hangs above our palace. Sweet were his words in my ears as the song of birds and his kiss was sweeter than nectar—

ORACLE. Did great Hera then show no pity?

LATONA. Her face was dark as the clouded veil of Heaven. Cruel and implacable she drove me forth. My lord was far away.

ORACLE. But tell me, was not Hera wronged?

LATONA. The King of Heaven wooed me and won my love. I could no otherwise.

ORACLE. And then—

LATONA. She taunted me, reviled me and with cruel words cast me forth — down the steepy sides of high Olympus.

ORACLE. Yea, my daughter, to learn of many things.

LATONA. Upbraiding me with stealing her Lord's love, full time, she said, I should have to learn of many things. Storming she bade me leave her court and go seek adventures on the Earth. She drove me forth. "Go, go," she cried, "and mingle with the wily race of men. Begone and remain away forever!"

ORACLE. And now?

LATONA. And now I wander over the Earth, a suppliant and a dishonored outcast. Oh, bitterly I feel the wrongs I suffer.

ORACLE. Nay, daughter, do not harbor evil thoughts.

LATONA. Sweet is revenge—

ORACLE. Seek not revenge, but understanding.

LATONA. Yet my woes are hard to bear.

ORACLE. Tell me, what have you encountered coming hither?

LATONA. I have shared the food of shepherds and of other lowly folk. They have been kind to me. Generously have they housed me and given me of their fruit and milk and cheese, offering them freely and with no thought of recompense.

ORACLE. Yea, the bounty of the Earth is for all. The gifts of Deméter are free. Only man is crafty; avoid his snares.

LATONA. In the hamlets and villages never have I been refused—I have never known hunger nor thirst.

ORACLE. Think not that these you will escape.

LATONA. Alas, will my punishment then be so great?

ORACLE. By necessity it is ordained.

LATONA. But I have everywhere met with kindness, not rudeness. On my way to Delphi many have showed me the road, even accompanying me part of the time.

ORACLE. Yea, but seeking the nature of men, such a test as this is not sufficient.

LATONA. I was never refused lodging at night when weary after my day's journey I sought succor and refreshment.

ORACLE. Your divine smile of thanks was sufficient. In truth there is good and there is evil among men. You have not encountered the ignorance and the greed of man.

LATONA. Never can man equal the brutality of Tityos, who waylaid me coming hither.

ORACLE. Him your son will slay.

LATONA. The lustful giant! He attempted violence—but a cloud came between us and I escaped.

ORACLE. Your son will avenge you and thereafter pilgrims will journey hither to Delphi in peace.

LATONA. Oh, may I never again meet a monster like Tityos!

ORACLE. After many days and many trials you will turn homeward.

LATONA. Return homeward? Oh, blessed words—

ORACLE. So it is decreed. You are Latona. On Olympus will you dwell forever.

LATONA. Alas, I am Latona. Sprung from the grey and misty brood who ruled the clouded skies before great Zeus gave them war and drove them, gods and giants tho they were, headlong from on high—

ORACLE. But you, Latona—

LATONA. Princess of a vanquished race, once daughter of the mighty tribe of Titans, yet now weak and trembling at this wisp of vapor—

ORACLE. Will be honored and remembered—

LATONA. Remembered, alas, for her unhappy love—

ORACLE. Remembered and honored because the union of Zeus and Latona will bring peace in Heaven: for now have ceased the ancient wars with the giants and Titans.

LATONA. The victory of my lord I rejoice in!

ORACLE. Hera's rage will be forgotten. And in the issue of mighty Zeus and Latona—

LATONA. Blessed be the name of Zeus, my lord!

ORACLE. Will come a wondrous change. Taking Hyperion's place your issue will light the skies; while you will be remembered for the goodness and the wisdom you will teach to men.

LATONA. To men? Shall I also, like my kinsman Prometheus, be a friend to man?

ORACLE. Yea, bringing gifts of wisdom as useful as the fire he gave to man.

LATONA. What I, a feeble woman? Perchance I shall be punished by my lord Zeus even as was Prometheus—

ORACLE. Nay, hear me. The lesson you will teach will be your deliverance. Until that time your sufferings will not cease.

LATONA. Must I wander ever farther and farther away from the homeland of the Dorians and the Achaians?

ORACLE. Even to the distant land of the Ionians, across the fabled sea.

LATONA. Oh, tell me, shall I encounter folk of greater knowledge and with manners even more kindly than those here?

ORACLE. Nay, everywhere are Pandora's gifts to man: Evils shall you find in distant Lycia.

LATONA. Tell me, what words of wisdom, O divine Oracle, shall I teach to men?

ORACLE. Themis and Minerva will inspire your soul.

LATONA. How shall I know?

ORACLE. At the crossways where stands an altar to

Deméter, there will you know.

LATONA. Piously will I bear my growing burden. Willingly will I undergo increasing hardship. But how shall I know the crossways?

ORACLE. A shepherd boy will lead you.

LATONA. And shall I in truth there learn the ways of men and teach them wisdom?

ORACLE. You will also encounter those who will test your strength.

LATONA. Oh, if I fail?

ORACLE. Not so. But first you will encounter the baseness of man.

LATONA. Only Tityos the giant was false.

ORACLE. Not every man is false. The breast of the fruitful Earth is for all—yet some will deny you.

LATONA. What, is there not food in plenty and for all? Oh, may never I nor my unborn babe want for succor.

ORACLE. Yet succor will be denied you. Fainting with thirst a draught of water will be refused you.

LATONA. Woe is me!

ORACLE. Your story will be a lesson to man. After many, many days goodness will cast out evil.

LATONA. And is always the wrong-doer punished?

ORACLE. In mysterious ways. Nemesis is almighty.

LATONA. And do the mighty fall?

ORACLE. When they do overreach their power.

LATONA. Alas, that I, a feeble woman, should be fated for so dangerous a task as awaits me.

ORACLE. You will prove yourself worthy of restoration to your longed-for home.

LATONA. And the babe I bear?

ORACLE. Your offspring will be the double lights of Heaven. In the skies will they dwell forever.

LATONA. Will my lord Zeus receive both them and me?

ORACLE. So has destiny decreed.

LATONA. And where shall I find rest and give them birth?

ORACLE. Cruelly will many turn you away. Weary wanderings await you.

LATONA. Oh, churlish men! Oh, me unhappy!

ORACLE. The islands of the sea will refuse you.

LATONA. O gods of Heaven!

ORACLE. Till reaching Delos, more hospitable than the others, your prayers will be heard and there refuge will be given.

LATONA. Oh, kind after all is the nature of man—

ORACLE. But long will these folk hesitate, consenting to receive you only on condition that you swear by the Styx.

LATONA. I will swear even that oath—

ORACLE. That your son's first shrine shall be erected there and that abundantly he will honor and not despise so barren and unproductive a spot.

LATONA. I will swear it.

ORACLE. But terrible will be the birth-pangs, endur-

ing for nine days and nine nights.

LATONA. Oh, oh, oh.

ORACLE. Yet Themis and Amphitrite will assist. Eileithyia, hastening to Delos, will aid you. The attending goddesses will care for the new-born, wrapping them in fine linen, and Themis will give them nectar and ambrosia.

LATONA. Praise to the Gods!

ORACLE. And Delos will gleam with a golden light.

LATONA. Now all ye deities, give me strength to bear my burdens and my joys to come. O Love, restore me to my lord, the sovereign of the skies.

ORACLE. Restoration awaits you.

LATONA. Oh, may those words be fulfilled.

ORACLE. Doubt not. The good will triumph and the evil-doers be punished.

LATONA. Farewell, O Divine Oracle, farewell.

ORACLE. My daughter, farewell.

The curtain falls.

(To be Continued)

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Why I am a Member of the Commonwealth Land Party

VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE LINCOLN
GIVES THE REASONS

IT is because this party is the only one that has a scientific programme for the just distribution of wealth. Take a large look at the world and what do we see?

The Creator has supplied the sunlight and air and rain and land that are necessary to the lives of his children.

The mere fact that we are alive gives to each of us an equal right to those things that the Creator has provided for all of us.

The common right of all of us to the sunlight and air is generally recognized. The common right of all of us to the land and such of the rain as now falls on privately owned land is denied. When we remember that all the food we eat and the clothes we wear and the houses we live in must come from the land, it is clear that the denial of the common right to land is the denial of a fundamental right. The Commonwealth Land Party proposes to reassert the right of all of us to what the Creator has provided for all of us. Is it not evident that the hard coal in Eastern Pennsylvania was put there for the use of all of us and not for the benefit of the owners of the legal titles to the ground under which the coal lies? Do any of us doubt that the iron ore and copper in Minnesota and upper Michigan were put there for the benefit of all of us and not for the benefit of the steel companies that hold the titles to the land on which most of the ore lies, or for the benefit of the Calumet & Hecla Mining Company that owns the title to the land under which the copper lies? Is it not evident that Niagara Falls belongs to the people of the