

At the Sign of the Cat and the Fiddle

CONDUCTED BY E. WYB

OLD Michael Shea came in the other evening to warm up before our cheery fireplace at the Sign of the Cat and the Fiddle. "I am growing that weary of it all," he murmured as he sank into a comfortable chair, "my time is almost come." "Come, brace up, old man," we said. "I was not able to attend the funeral of me frind, William McCabe, and that has grieved me. One by one the links are breaking. McCabe, do you mind, tho he looked more like a Maori chieftain than anything else, was half Irish, as his name indicated, and that made him the success he was—living to be eighty and the father of twelve children. We were frinds from the night he was our Grand Marshall in the great Hinry George torch-light parade preceding the eliction of 1886. "Are ye there, Mike?" cried he, imitating the Duke of Wellington. "I am," said I. "Then," said he, "let the procession go on." By me side in the ranks was Mike Murray, carrying with him his paving-hammer to honor the occasion. Oh, those were the days; I'm glad I was born to see them. No man could broil a steak to beat McCabe. One time at the Park (Merriewold Park—Bill was on the committee which discovered it and bought it) he let me into the secret of broiling a steak. By the Saints, how he handled that steak—with what science and precision! Searing it first to preserve its juices, watching it tenderly, turning it patiently, letting it brown to a turn—ah, I seem to smell it now!"

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"I see," continued the old man, "that the Hon. George L. Record, do ye mind, that veterinary ex-warhorse of the Republican Party over in Jersey, was at it agin in the late eliction. They till me that he had a circus-tint and amused a limited number of voters with his solemnity. He wore tights, I'm told, with spangles (can that be true?) and landed a neat handspring onto the platform, crying, 'Ladies and gintlemen, and you dear childen of the coming gination, here I am agin!' And then, says me informant, he threw them some kisses. It seems (but perhaps ye know) that this time he ran for the United States Sinate as an Independent, giving his support on the side, do ye mind, to the late lamented La Follette—Socialist outfit. Ochone, Widow Machree! From the eliction returns it appears that the ladies and gintlemen he addressed in the tints largely forgot he was running. He got 57,000 votes out of a million cast. However, there's the dear children of the coming ginations to consider. Some of thim doubtless will be voting for this good man's mimory, just as many old Dimocrats are still voting for Andrew Jackson." 3

We ourselves have been at some pains to analyse Mr. Record's platform. He was good enough to send to the Sign of the Cat and the Fiddle a copy of his election address, which was got up in a nice little pamphlet of 16 pages, with his picture on the first page and the following announcement: "A Candidate with a program to Reduce the Cost of Living. George L. Record, Candidate for United States Senator. Supporting La Follette and Wheeler. Election November 4, 1924. Tent meeting tonight, 8 p. m. Comfortable chairs for all." Thereupon is announced "The Great Issue." "The question is: Shall the United States be governed by and for the benefit of its people, or by and for the benefit of a plutocracy made up of a few rich individuals and corporations?" "Positive Action Demanded." "It is not enough merely to denounce plutocracy. We are in an age of reality. The men and women of today demand action. They are thoroughly sick of the empty generalities and unkept promises of politicians. They want something done to make life easier and to reduce the cost of living." "What is the Remedy?" "It is possible," hints the pamphlet cryptically, "that in the end the remedy may take a form or forms unforeseen at present." Cautious and rather pussyfootish. But listen. "Trust Holdings of Natural Resources must be Broken Up." Very good. "Where the Trust possesses lands containing the best deposits of coal and iron, which are held out of use to sustain its monopoly, we must break up this monopoly." Good again. Attaboy! But how? "One way to do this is to have the government acquire a quantity of these unused lands and lease them upon moderate royalties to competitors of the trust." In the name of the Prophet! Then follow a large number of paragraphs extolling the virtues of Government Ownership and Operation of Railroads and Oil Pipe Lines. Finally, Taxation. Any indication that Mr. Record adheres to his earlier pronouncements? "I favor," he says, "the restoration of the tax on excess profits. I favor increasing the tax on incomes over \$250,000, and the inheritance tax upon estates of \$500,000 or over." He concludes by calling his program an "American Program," and ingenuously adds, "This is not a complete program, but it is enough for one campaign." It appears to have been quite enough for the voters of New Jersey.

This little episode of Mr. Record's candidacy is but another illustration of the truth, which before long must begin to dawn upon the public, that there is absolutely no basic difference between Republicans, Democrats, Socialists and La Follette Progressives. They each and all favor governmental repression, interference and control. And one other thing is certain, they all of them differ

radically and diametrically from the Commonwealth Land Party, which is their only veritable antagonist. For in proclaiming that the Rent of Land belongs to the people and that the first duty of government is to collect it the Commonwealth Land Party throws down a gauntlet of challenge. All who are not with it are against it. And all who are against it, it will in time destroy. Although this country is probably a generation or more behind the rest of the world in the realization and the solution of this the most important of all problems, yet even here the atmosphere is growing clearer to the extent that politicians of Mr. Record's kind, who, lacking both sagacity and courage, have wasted their time in seeking alliances which lead nowhere, are now being shown up as political weaklings worthy of no more than a laugh. Better is it to be "counted" for something that counts and for something one believes in than to utter weasel words in trying to connect up, in the vain urge of opportunism, expediency and the itch for office, with others whom in the depth of one's nature one morally detests and intellectually despises.

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Similarly, with genuine enthusiasm Editor E. B. Gaston in the *Fairhope Courier* of November 7 pointed out that La Follette carried Fairhope overwhelmingly. La Follette 138, Coolidge 63, Davis 53. Doubtless this victory was largely owing to the influence of the *Courier*. Brother Gaston saw a great light and guided his readers toward it. To our way of thinking at the Sign of the Cat and the Fiddle this great light was a mere will-o'-the-wisp. But that's nothing with those eminent Single Taxers who have formed the habit of joining up with any political procession that comes along, provided it has a new flag and a big brass band. Variety, with such of our brethern, is their very spice of life—give them novelty or give them death! It is not going too far to say that there are Single Taxers (but why any longer call them Single Taxers?) who have voted in turn every ticket presented during the past forty years. Starting as stalwart Republicans or Jeffersonian Democrats they have been Henry Georgite and Cleveland Democrat, Weaverite and Bryanite, Mugwump, Moose and Farmer-Laborite, Progressive and Socialist. Observe, please, that the Commonwealth Land Party is not included in the above list. From such an abomination, good Lord, deliver us! Anathema maranatha! Index expurgatorius! Taboo! Yet how they do flop to the stranger that is within the land! Brother Gaston in the *Courier* printed the following in large type:

"SINGLE TAXERS ENDORSE LA FOLLETTE

A statement has been given to the press, signed by a large number of the best known Single Taxers of the country, urging support of the La Follette-Wheeler ticket.

It includes the names of such wheel-horses of the movement as Louis F. Post, Sam Danzinger, Mrs. Rosa Kiefer, Frank Stephens, Charles H. Ingersoll, Western Starr,

Otto Cullman, George Schilling, Frank Vierth, Frank W. Garrison, Peter Witt, Edmund Vance Cooke, Oliver Erickson, H. W. McFarlane, John B. McGauran, with many others, including a group of Fairhope Single Taxers."

We remember a year or two ago Editor Gaston made inquiries regarding the location of the Sign of the Cat and the Fiddle and wondered whether the Single Tax Party (so called at that time) had come to stay. In those days Brother Gaston was pretty thick with his friends the Democrats. While the permanent home of the Sign of the Cat and the Fiddle lies probably

"On the sunset shore of Sometimeorother,

By the beautiful Bay of Bimeby,"

yet within our hearts at this time are its magic casements opening on the foam of perilous seas. Party affiliation? In spite of his present elation over the great La Follette victory in Fairhope Brother Gaston may before many years find himself compelled to choose between our little David of a party and agglomerated hosts shouting for Goliath—between us Land Restorationists on the one side of Jordan and your sleek, fat Philistines on the other—between us who strike for Land and Freedom and your regulators, socialists and controllers, your Progressives, pussyfooters and step-by-steppers, locking arms with your heavy-weight Tories, standpatters, Republicans, Democrats, Facisti and Bourbons, all of them united against little David! In the name of Henry George, stop, look and listen!

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We take pleasure in reproducing for our readers extracts from a letter written from Europe in August of the present year by our friend Miss Bonnyclabber: "I left Andorra with infinite regrets. Fiske Warren, who is a prince of hospitality, made my visit most enjoyable. It must be remembered that our projected journey to San Jordi last year after the Oxford Conference had to be given up. This time there was quite a house party of us, the Alemanyans from Barcelona, Joseph and his three daughters, joined later by Mrs. Alemany, my old Southern friend, Yancey Cohen (the Yanceys of Alabama and North Carolina are relations of mine,) Mr. Warren and myself—in all just enough to fill Mr. Warren's mountain chalet comfortably. Built of squared stone and sensibly planned, supplied with running water, modern plumbing, electric light and an up-to-date kitchen, the manor house of the Enclave is a source of never-ending wonder to the Andorrans. The house is situated in the center of San Jordi, a tiny domain in a Lilliputian state, the whole of Andorra being about 17 by 18 miles. The Enclave lies between San Julia and Santa Coloma, ancient hamlets both, and beyond to the North is the capital, Andorra la Vella, at the end of the narrow valley. It is all very strange and unusual. The people talk Catalan, for one thing, and the ends of their sentences rise in a sort of vocal spiral, hard to describe. They are so few in number that every

one you see counts, and you want to stop and study him or her, there being only 6,000 in the whole Republic. Mr. Warren's house is the show place of the country, and when a crowd of neighbors come to visit him on a Sunday or Saint's day there is some runaway Catalan spoken, I assure you. * * * As to how or why Mr. Warren took up with the Andorrans, he says that here is a going republic, the only one in the world, where there is no army and no custom-house, and consequently there is a better field here for introducing Single Tax than anywhere else. I do hope he will succeed in carrying out his idea—it will be so interesting. * * * I naturally find myself with a tremendous *flair* for the history of the "Valleys." You know that at college I combined history with my economics and was trained in the "historic school." I have spent many hours here in delving into the famous documentary records which have given rise to so much controversy. Mr. Warren himself has been a studious examiner of the records, and one night we sat up till after 12 discussing the problem of the suzerainty of the Valleys—Mr. Warren adhering to the Counts of Foix, while my allegiance was given to the Bishops of Urgel. You may say that this was hardly worth while. But perhaps you have not felt the thrill which we students of economics and history find in undertaking solutions of ancient questions.

Well, when we got to the "Pareages" of 1278, if I do say it myself, I think Mr. Warren was ready to quit, while I was as fresh as a lark. In a word, as to my advantage in a discussion of this kind I feel that I may express it in the following way. There is a finality in history and economics which cannot be gainsaid; whatever happens happens—and considering history in the strictly scientific way in which I was trained, it is incumbent on us students of history (yes, and of economics, too) to consider them all as parts of a great whole. Who shall say that one writer's theory or system is of greater importance than another? Events to be sure have taken place, but are they forgotten? The cobwebs of the past are shot through with iridescent lights. Do I make myself clear? And so when I examined the documentary evidence concerning these controversies that have raged for centuries regarding the rival claims of France and Spain to the overlordship of Andorra, I just found myself in my element. The fact that France today collects a yearly tribute of 960 francs, while the Bishop of Urgel gets 460 pesetas, while perhaps of slight international importance, yet would seem to prove my contentions set forth above. * * * As I said in the beginning, I left Andorra with infinite regret. I cannot say whether what most I shall miss will be the continued study of the "Pareages," or many characteristic touches of present Andorra, such as Counselman Simon's Inn where we had our meals, the cooking of our food by his voluble good wife over the embers in the great black fireplace, the red wine from the leathern winebag and from the "perrone", the Gargantuan repasts,

the trout from the Valira, the blackberries by the roadway, the "Avenida Warren," the wonderful chestnut trees burdened with nuts, the views up and down the valley, the fine highroad built by the Bishop, the auto-bus lumbering in and out daily, the amiable inhabitants, the lovely old bell-tower of Santa Coloma, the well-cultivated fields of tobacco and corn, the washing of our linen in the horse trough, the destruction of our linen by the Sisters at Andorra la Vella, the twinkling of the electric lights over Las Escaldas at night, the full moon with its black majestic shadows—all these will lovingly linger in my memory of ten happy days at San Jordi.

Enclavially yours,
Adèle Bonnyclabber.

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"Trouble at the Source," it may be, is a suitable term for describing an exoteric disease which is attacking with more and more frequency the richer nations of Europe. The diagnosis is rather well established. The symptoms, of which the late War was one of the most alarming, have been studied with great attention, but the root of the disease which has heretofore seemed baffling, is now making itself manifest. This root is traceable to distant ends of earth, like many other infections. It finds its breeding grounds in the so-called European "Colonial System," born with the discovery of America and developed during the succeeding 400 years, with all the arts of diplomacy and the chicanery of statesmen, with all the forces of militarism and all the greed of landgrabbers and profiteers. This System is now experiencing shock after shock. For at last the worm at the source is turning. Faraway debtors to Europe, whole races counted by the hundreds of millions, are beginning to ask themselves, why are we debtors and how did we become such? Ugly pages of history are being reexamined and rewritten. Patriotic leaders are springing up. There is revolt in the air in these distant dependencies. There is trouble at the source. And indeed, it seems to us that, granting this situation, great political and economic changes must be impending. Little will it avail, in our opinion, for British cabinets to seek to bemuddle the issue in India with efforts to rouse religious antagonisms—the spirit of the age is getting away from appeals to strictly religious superstitions.

Observe that in the Mahommedan world the Caliphate falls, and the heavens are not rent in twain. A "Christian general" in China pursues his profession without a mob of sectaries tearing him to pieces. Instead of the old time superstitions misleading the world, a growing intelligence, mingled with a spirit of resentment and a yearning for self-determination and liberty, is astir, to the surprise and alarm of many a European chancellery. What does it mean? It means that if there is big trouble at the source, without the power to crush the trouble

in the old way, to nip it in the bud by force of arms, there is genuine reason for alarm. Has the Colonial System bit off more than it can chew? Indicia are not wanting. Russia is an example on a large scale of how the thing may work out. Turkey has proved more than recalcitrant. Egypt remains dissatisfied. Mexico is a hard nut to crack. India is a thorn in the side. The Spaniard in Morocco is driven to the sea. Is the jig up with the Colonial System? Even China is awake at last and seems disposed to defy her creditors to do their worst. Gentlemen may cry Peace, but there is no peace. Rotund privilege, still fattening off Colonial spoils, is content to play its golf. But who can say how long the stream of refreshing waters will continue to flow for such beneficiaries as these when there is Trouble at the Source?

Taxes And Land Rents

THE *Cleveland Press* in a recent issue contains this paragraph:

"County Auditor Zangerle says retail business properties will bear the increase in Cuyahoga County taxes in 1925. We don't like to contradict any statement made by the best auditor the county ever had, but we must tell you that the retail business properties will not do anything of the kind. They will raise the rents and the retailers will raise prices and the consumer will continue to be the goat."

Commenting upon this item Mrs. Charlotte Smith says:

"When Mr. Zangerle says that 'Retail business properties will bear the increase in Cuyahoga County taxes in 1925 he was discussing the reappraisal of land values in Cuyahoga County, and he meant that the increase in taxes would be paid by the land owners in the down town district. If this increase in taxes had been on the stock of goods that retailers handle or on any of the industries, the selling price of the commodities would increase and the consumer would pay.

But a tax on land values cannot be passed on like a tax on industry. Instead, it absorbs that land rent. If the land rent of a parcel of land is \$40,000 and the tax amounts to \$10,000, the \$10,000 comes out of the \$40,000. Therefore retailers will not have to raise prices as the tax will come out of the rent they are already paying and the consumer will not be the goat.

What is land rent? If you go far enough north you can get land for nothing. There will be no rent. As you approach the centers of civilization rent will appear. Here is an acre of land that will rent for one dollar. Why? Because it will produce one dollar more of wealth (corn, wheat, chickens, etc.) than land you can get for nothing or land at the margin of cultivation. Here is a parcel that rents for five dollars. It will produce five dollars

more of wealth than land at the margin of cultivation. "Rent is the excess of wealth over the yield at the margin of cultivation."

Ricardo's Law of Rent is: "The rent of land is determined by the excess of its produce over that which the same application can secure from the least productive land in use."

This law of rent applies to manufacturing and exchange. And so when you reach the land in the down town district where the most wealth is produced, there you have the highest rent. Here is a parcel of land that rents for \$35,000. It will produce \$35,000 more of wealth with the same amount of labor than land at the margin of cultivation."

Where The Value Goes

"SPEAKING of railroads," said a Cleveland man as he sat in the City Club there, "the Van Sweringens have an idea that is almost revolutionary. They know that it is transportation that creates land values. If they own the land as well as the railroads, they can afford to carry the public for next to nothing, and still make money. From my own amateur viewpoint, I think that is the secret of their amazing career. That, of course, is the way they began—they bought the Shaker Heights real estate sub-division here, and then bought a transportation line to reach it. I don't think they have ever netted much from their transit properties out there, but they cleaned up enough on the real estate to go into the railroad business on a real scale. And I think they're going on with the same policy. If I'm not mistaken, you can expect them pretty soon to open up a great deal of short haul traffic. They haven't quit buying land, by any means. They are acquiring that, just as they are acquiring railroads to carry people to it. Under such a system they wouldn't have to worry even if the railroads pile up a deficit every year."

—*Commerce and Finance.*

Wisdom From Henry Ford

THE fate of the Bull Moose attempt to float a third party taught us two things: first, that an individual's candidacy is not sufficient basis for a party, however useful and popular that individual may be. This is not due, as many think, to the lack of political organization in such a movement, but to the ingrained desire of our people to vote on principles. That the Bull Moose party was launched solely in the interests of one man was proved by the facility with which that man deserted it when it failed to advance his political fortunes.

Henry Ford in *Dearborn Independent*.

WHEN land is purchased the payment is rent capitalized.—HENRY GEORGE.