

Plow. "Our friend Dowdy meant that before you became a broken-down old Plow, with none so poor to do you reverence, you were continuously returning and presenting yourself to your master as a new Plow, full paid and non-assessible, as we say, with six per cent. of additional plow-shares attached. As to the manner in which this came about, it was very simple, they say. You had merely to exchange yourself or wait for your master to exchange you for the growing crop, say in yonder field, which being left to itself would by its very nature increase sufficiently not only to counterbalance your deterioration but to provide for your master an interest of six per cent. to boot. "Hold on! 'left to itself,' do you say?" interrupted the Plow, much to our surprise, for we did not think the old fellow capable of thought. "I have been in the agricultural business too long not to know what happens to a growing crop when left to itself. It's just at a time like that that the farm hands used to hitch me on to old Broad and Dime, my master's oxen, and start to sweating and gee-hawing in order to keep the weeds under, cultivate the rows, break the crust and preserve the crop. Left to itself! That's good, by Heck!" And the old Plow shook with laughter. "Leave things to themselves, that's the way to have them wear out and disappear. I have the greatest respect for my human friends," continued the Plow, with the not unnatural garrulousness of old age. "They have always treated me with consideration. Yet they could not keep me from growing old and wearing out, and believe me, they too will all do the same thing—if passing the village graveyard, many's the time, has taught me to know what I'm talking about."

Note. The Conductor begs to state that the continuation of the Fable is reserved for a future issue of the REVIEW.

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### SHOP TALK

Characters: Two new Single Tax Party workers.

Scene: At the Sign of the Cat and the Fiddle.

Young Mr. Strong: I'm tired, but am I downhearted?

Strong Mr. Young: I'm ready to drop—still I'm game.

Strong: I've been speaking every night for a week.

Young: I spoke eighteen times during the campaign.

Strong: I talk single tax in my sleep.

Young: I have become a nightmare to my friends.

Strong: I eat with emotion and have indigestion.

Young: I have to resort to Bellans to keep going.

Strong: Doesn't your family say you're a crank?

Young: Doesn't your father call you a bonehead?

Strong: My business future is problematical.

Young: I scent financial embarrassment in the offing.

(A pause.)

Strong: I adore a crowd.

Young: I play with the mob.

Strong: An audience thrills me.

Young: During my flights I feel my heart beating.

Strong: I trust in the good nature of the throng.

Young: My faith in Man does not desert me!

Strong: I try to remember the arts of oratory.

Young: My college text-book on Rhetoric comes back to me.

Strong: I eschew every reference bordering on the highbrow.

Young: I discard all hifalutin'.

Strong: I get down to brass tacks.

Young: I roll up my sleeves, as it were.

Strong: When I say a good thing I let them laugh and enjoy themselves.

Young: I too give them time to recover their equilibrium.

Strong: My hot shot I reserve for the man who interrupts.

Young: My coldest sarcasm is levelled against the smart one who knows it all.

Strong: I find that by repetition I make some impression upon their minds.

Young: By continuous suggestion and illustration I lead them to see the point.

Strong: Their questions and doubts are ever the same.

Young: I am ready for their stock objections, for I know that they are bound to come.

Strong: I believe mine is a rational way of putting it over.

Young: I am convinced I have found the correct formula.

Strong: Between ourselves, I find much to criticise in the elderly leaders of the movement.

Young: They strike me as inferior to us younger workers.

Strong: Maybe I am prejudiced.

Young: I too may be super-critical.

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Dear Sir: I was much interested in the letter of Joseph Reynolds printed in the last issue of the SINGLE TAX REVIEW, in which he stated that we should never fail to make the limitation that the laborer is entitled to the full product of his labor after the payment of economic rent, and warned us not to fall into the habit of the Socialist, who always asserts that labor is entitled to the full product, taking no note of such a thing as economic rent as a factor. Albert Rhys Williams in his "Through the Russian Revolution" tells the following story, which bears upon this question. When he was in Vladivostok the Union of Miners organized the unemployed into little soviets of 50 and 100, equipped them and sent them out to the mines along the great Amur. These enterprises were highly successful. Each man was panning out from 50 to 100 rubles of gold a day. The question of pay arose. One of the miners unearthed the slogan: "To every man the full product of his labor." It at once achieved tremendous popularity with the miners, who declared their loyalty to

this basic Socialist principle. Nothing, they said, could induce them to depart from it. But the soviet held a different view. There was a deadlock. Instead of using the historic method of settling the dispute by bombs and troops the workingmen fought it out on the floor of the soviet. The miners capitulated to the logic of the soviet. Their wages were fixed at 15 rubles a day (about \$7.50) with a bonus for extra production. In a short time twenty-six poods of gold (36 pounds in a pood) were accumulated at headquarters. Against this reserve the Soviet issued paper money. Query: What determined the wages of these men at 15 rubles a day as a fair return for their labor? And may the balance of the production be assumed to be economic rent? Query: Have we here an illustration of Mr. C. L. St. John's contention that "economic rent" may be a misnomer, so far as mines, quarries, water-powers, forests, oil-fields, etc. are concerned?

Yours very truly,

W. R. LANE.

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We submitted the foregoing to Horace Wenzel and asked his opinion of it. "It is exactly in accordance with many things I observed in Russia," he said. "Those people are so steeped in what you may call the 'folk-ways' of co-operation that they easily see the distinction between private and communal property, and are possessed with a social conscience which points out to them what they must set aside for social uses. The ancient institutions of the village, the mir and the industrial artel, not to speak of the great modern development of co-operative trading, all have made the Russian peasants and workingmen believe more or less in a 'natural order.' To them the regime of Czarism was hateful because it came into conflict, by reason of its institutions of private land ownership and privilege, with village democracy and communal ownership of land, which had descended to the Russian people from time immemorial. Accordingly when the Bolshevik Revolution of November 7, 1917 proclaimed that the private ownership of land was abolished the Russian peasants joyfully realized the resumption of their ancient hereditary rights in the soil, of which they had been ruthlessly despoiled by Peter the Great and his successors. And they were ready to undergo the greatest hardships and sacrifices to re-establish their new found freedom. How they rose in the Civil War and conquered foreign and domestic foe is a wonderful story—paying during that period to the nation the entire surplus product of their farms over and above the satisfying living-wage which they were directed to reserve for themselves and their families. As long as the Civil War continued they cheerfully contributed this surplus product for the support of the army and the government—the benefit they received in return being the defeat of the common foe and the preservation of Soviet Russia. At the conclusion of the war the situation changed. What further benefits was the government able to return to the

peasants in exchange for the continued delivery of the surplus product? The peasants naturally demanded the quid pro quo. 'Give us tools, clothing, farm implements, manufactured goods, needed foods, etc. in exchange for our grain, our eggs, our fish, our lumber, etc.' But this was exactly what the central government was unable to bring about. All Russia was boycotted by the entire trading world. Her coasts were blockaded. Her ability to exchange raw products collected from the peasants was nil, while domestic industry in factories and workshops, destroyed by the invading armies, was at a standstill, with disintegration and ruin the order of the day. It was at that time that we heard of the breakdown of the whole system—of vast quantities of fish, for example, collected and awaiting transportation, going bad and proving a total loss; with similar instances of paralysis of exchange.

Was it any wonder that the government was forced to change from a system which refused to function to a new economic policy (the so-called Nep.) that was better adapted to the country's immediate requirements? "But," said Horace Wenzel in conclusion, "I confidently expect that there will ultimately be a resumption of the earlier experiment. With freedom of trade with the rest of the world I believe the Russians will prove to have discovered a system for the production and distribution of wealth admirably adapted to the genius of their national folk-ways and an example of intelligence to the world at large—not necessarily to be followed, but at least to be studied with respect and with an open mind."

## Benevolence of the Landed Gentry

PROBABLY no wealthy Englishman is or was more humane to his poverty-stricken fellow countryman than the Victorian landed proprietor. His heart, so to speak, bled for the agricultural laborer who paid him exorbitant rent for the occupation of a filthy hovel. Thus in such books as Wilfrid Scawen Blunt's "Diary" and Arthur H. Savory's "Grain and Chaff from an English Manor," you will find most beautifully worded sentiments about old servants who died in the workhouse, and a real touching account of how Blunt's eighty-year-old wood reeve shot himself as he was about to be thrown out of his cottage because he was too old to work. It is a fair assumption that he committed suicide rather than witness poor Blunt's distress over what would have been a painful incident upon the eve of Blunt's departure for his winter residence in Cairo. Blunt's account of it corrects two false impressions in the American mind, to wit, that English landed proprietors are *not* kind to their laborers, and that a wood reeve is an insect which bites human beings. Apparently wood reeves *are* insects, but they don't bite human beings—or perhaps English Victorian landed proprietors weren't human beings.

MONTAGUE GLASS in *Life*