



OUTLINES OF POST'S LECTURES.

PREFATORY NOTE.

These "Outlines," while giving neither the substance nor the arrangement of any of the lectures named in the title, contain the leading points of all. But to make the points consecutive they have been woven into one of the lectures—that on the Single Tax. This, however, is not arbitrary, for the philosophy of the single tax involves the elementary principles of absolute free trade, of the labor question, of poverty with progress, of the land question, and of political economy; and while exposing the fallacies of socialism it explains the problem of hard times.

The "Outlines" do not take the place of the lectures. They are published merely to prepare the mind of the reader in advance to more fully appreciate the lectures during delivery, and to assist afterward in recalling and deliberately considering and criticizing what is advanced from the platform. To this end the principal charts of all the lectures are reproduced.

The text in large type is a connected explanation. It may be read and fully understood without reference to the notes. But the notes elaborate and illustrate points which, from the conciseness of their statement in the text, may seem obscure to readers who are unaccustomed to economic theory.

I. THE SINGLE TAX DEFINED.

The practical form in which Henry George puts the idea of appropriating economic rent to common use is "*To abolish all taxation save that upon land values.*"¹

1. "Progress and Poverty," book viii, ch. ii.

This is now generally known as "The Single Tax."² Under its operation all classes of workers, whether manufacturers, merchants, bankers, professional men, clerks, mechanics, farmers, farm-hands, or other working classes, would, *as such*, be wholly exempt. It is only as men own land that they would be taxed, the tax of each being in proportion, not to the area, but to the value of his land. And no one would be compelled to pay a higher tax than others if his land were improved or used while theirs was not, nor if his were better improved or better used than theirs.³ The value

2. In "Progress and Poverty," book viii, ch. iv, Henry George speaks of "the effect of substituting for the manifold taxes now imposed, a *single tax* on the value of land"; but the term did not become a distinctive name until 1888.

The first general movement along the lines of "Progress and Poverty" began with the New York City election of 1886, when Henry George polled 68,110 votes as an independent candidate for mayor, and was defeated by the Democratic candidate, Abram S. Hewitt, by a plurality of only 22,442, the Republican, Theodore Roosevelt, polling but 60,435. Following that election the United Labor Party was formed, which at the Syracuse Convention in August, 1887, by the exclusion of the Socialists, came to represent the central idea of "Progress and Poverty" as distinguished from the Socialistic propaganda which until then was identified with it. Coincident with the organization of the United Labor Party the Anti-Poverty Society was formed; and the two bodies, one representing the political and the other the religious phase of the idea, worked together until President Cleveland's tariff message of 1887 appeared. In this message Mr. George saw the timid beginnings of that open struggle between protection and free trade to which he had for years looked forward as the political movement that must culminate in the abolition of all taxes save those upon land values, and he responded at once to the sentiments of the message. But many protectionists, who had followed him because they supposed he was a land nationalizer, now broke away from his leadership, and the United Labor Party and the Anti-Poverty Society were soon practically dissolved. Those who understood Mr. George's real position regarding the land question readily acquiesced in his views as to political policy, and a considerable movement resulted, which, however, for some time lacked an identifying name. This was the situation when Thomas G. Shearman, Esq., wrote for the *Standard* an article on taxation in which he illustrated and advocated the land value tax as a fiscal measure. The article had been submitted without a caption, and Mr. George, then the editor of the *Standard*, entitled it "The Single Tax." This title was at once adopted by the "George men," as they were often called, and has ever since served as the name of the movement it describes.

Though "the single tax" is the English form of "l'impôt unique," the name of the French physiocratic doctrine of the eighteenth century, the names have no historical connection, and they stand for different ideas.

3. When it is remembered that some land in cities is worth millions of dollars an acre, that a small building lot in the business center of even a small village is worth more than a whole field of the best farming land in the neighborhood, that a few acres

of its improvements would not be considered in estimating the value of a holding; site value alone would govern.⁴ If a site rose in the market the tax would proportionately increase; if that fell, the tax would proportionately diminish.

The single tax may be concisely described as a tax upon land alone, in the ratio of value, irrespective of improvements or use.

of coal or iron land are worth more than great groups of farms, that the right of way of a railroad company through a thickly settled district or between important points is worth more than its rolling stock, and that the value of workingmen's cottages in the suburbs is trifling in comparison with the value of city residence sites, the absurdity, if not the dishonesty, of the plea that the single tax would discriminate against farmers and small home owners and in favor of the rich is apparent. The bad faith of this plea is emphasized when we consider that under existing systems of taxation the farmer and the poor home owner are compelled to pay in taxes upon improvements, food, clothing, and other objects of consumption, much more than the full annual value of their bare land.

4. The difference between site value and improvement value is much more definite than it is often supposed to be. Even in what would seem at first to be most confusing cases, it is easily distinguished. If in any example we imagine the complete destruction of all the improvements, we may discover in the remaining value of the property—in the price it would after such destruction fetch in the real estate market—the value of the site as distinguished from the value of the improvements. This residuum of value would be the basis of computation for levying the single tax.

The distinction is frequently made in business life. Whenever in the course of ordinary business affairs it becomes necessary to estimate the value of a building lot, or to fix royalties for mining privileges, no difficulty is experienced, and substantial justice is done. And though the exigencies of business seldom require the site value of an improved farm to be distinguished from the value of its improvements, yet it could doubtless be done as easily and justly as with city or mining property. Unimproved land attached to any farm in question, or unimproved land in the neighborhood, if similar in fertility and location, would furnish a sufficiently accurate measure. If neither existed, the value of the contiguous highway would always be available.

It should not be forgotten that land for which the demand is so weak that its site value cannot be easily distinguished from the value of its improvements, is certain to be land of but little value, and almost certain to have no value at all.

The objection that the value of land cannot be distinguished from the value of its improvements is among the most frivolous of the objections that have been raised to the single tax by people with whom the wish that it may be impracticable is father to the thought that it really is so.