

## RENTS AND TRANSPORTATION.

### Effect of Increased Facilities on Land Values—The Single Tax.

*To the Editor of The New York Times:*

"A Commuter," in a letter setting forth that the Pennsylvania tunnel is no rent saver, has touched the "quick" of a large subject. Of course it is no rent saver. No transportation improvement ever reduced rent. It is the nature of such things to increase the value of all lands affected, save certain small areas affected by the nuisances necessary to the conduct of a great railway. Some weeks ago THE TIMES published a letter from me showing how the great Subway itself, so far from affording relief to the people, had enormously increased their rents and built up enormous fortunes for lucky owners of lands along its route. The proposed tunnels to Long Island have already caused such a boom in Brooklyn, Queens, and Nassau County lands that the reaction, when it comes, must be most disastrous; and there is yet little or no sign of its abatement.

Of course, this extension of transit facilities affords the well-to-do a chance to escape from the city, but for the ordinary workers earning from \$12 to \$18 or \$20 a week—what relief is there in it for them? The speculative advance in suburban values is as effective in choking the masses back into the tenements as any lack of transportation could possibly be.

One thing I cannot understand. THE TIMES has said, and "A Commuter" correctly quotes it: "It is not easy to think of any practical benefit more essentially valuable to a community than a substantial reduction in the cost of rent without any reduction in comfort or healthfulness." Yet THE TIMES has an apparently incurable habit of regarding all proposals of a public nature from the standpoint of their probable effects on property. Will a certain project "benefit property," (that is, raise values?) Then it is a good thing; otherwise not. Now a raise of value is a raise of rental value, which is the only value land has; for selling value itself is but the real or expected rental value capitalized according to prevailing or expected rates of interest.

There is a way of "reducing the cost of rent without reducing comfort and healthfulness." Were we to diminish or abolish the taxation of buildings and improvements we would make these things cheaper, both in construction and in maintenance. Were we to go further and increase the taxation of land values, even to the point of collecting the whole public revenue therefrom if necessary, we would discourage or entirely stop land speculation by making it too expensive to hold land vacant for a rise.

Now, why does THE TIMES allow its bad habit of regarding all things from the property standpoint to blind it to the great benefits that can be derived from this tax system? STEPHEN BELL.

Brooklyn, Sept. 19, 1906.