

A Japanese Editor on the Single Tax.

(From the "Japan Daily Mail.")

In assessing land for the purposes of the single tax, all values created by individual use or improvements, in short, all values created by individual labor, are theoretically excluded, and the only value considered is that due to means of communication, situation, population and such factors. In other words, the payer of the single tax contributes to the public exchequer a sum determined, not by what he produces, but by the value of the natural opportunities which he is allowed to enjoy. Land in Japan has increased greatly in value since the Restoration; not because the quantity of its products has increased, but because their value has increased. To what is the latter increase due? Not, certainly, to greater industrial efficiency on the part of the user of the land. The same labor that produced a *koku* of rice thirty years ago must be expended upon its production to-day. The increase is due to improved means of transport, by which remote regions have been brought within reach of the great markets, and to a steady growth of general prosperity with a corresponding elevation of the scale of living and appreciation of prices. It is plainly unjust to the community-at large that the benefit of such changes should be enjoyed solely by the land-owner. The enhanced value of the nation's natural opportunities belongs to the nation. Politicians obscure the subject by talking of the petty land-owner. There is no question of degree, and there cannot be any question of degree. The principle is universally and uniformly applicable. A violation of the general right is a violation, whether it be on a small scale or on a large. The owner of land is the owner, whether he lets the land to another or uses it himself. The single tax is levied on him in his capacity of owner, not in his capacity of user.

The Religious Aspects of the Single Tax.

To the Editor of the "Japan Mail":

Sir—Will you kindly permit me a little space in your paper on the eve of my departure from Japan?

I think my friends will bear with me under the circumstances when I beg them to consider carefully and prayerfully the religious aspects of the single tax. It was not a political burden laid upon Mr. Garst's soul that caused him to overwork and made him moan in his last illness, "This is my body broken for you," and "the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up," over and over again. A man of intense sympathies, the physical misery of these Oriental nations had been a dead weight upon him for fifteen years, to say nothing of the anxiety he felt about the masses in so-called Christian and other lands.

To us the single tax (or righteous land

law) is divine, and clear as any other law of God stands out Lev. 25:23, "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine," saith the Lord, "and ye are strangers and sojourners with me" (R. V.); and Psalm 115:16, "The earth hath He given to the children of men;" and Eccles. 5:9, "The profit of the earth is for all" (in other words the rent of the land belongs to the people). The lamentable torpor of the church on this and kindred subjects of vital importance in bringing in the reign of righteousness hung over Mr. Garst like a pall day and night sapping his strength.

When Dr. Scriba said if his heart could stand the strain he would recover, I thought the weight it was bearing from disease was as nothing to the terrible burden that it had borne for weary years. Some good Christian people even have affirmed that none need be poor if they would work—that poverty is the direct outgrowth of drunkenness and laziness. Let such open their Bibles and try to substitute the drunken and lazy in the beautiful promises God has given to the poor. If there is one thing that stands out distinctly in the Bible it is that God has an oppressed people on the earth, whose cause He espouses.

The well-fed, comfortably housed Christian appropriates joyfully the sweet promises of God that as He feeds the birds and clothes the lilies so He will supply them, and rapturously sings, "Take time to be holy." But how about the lilies when potted and the birds when caged—in other words, when they are both removed from their connection with God's earth? How about those so ground down by cruel toil for the soulless millionaire that they have no time or strength to consider God's love and do not sensibly appreciate His bounty? Shut a little child in a dark unwholesome room, give it little or nothing to eat or wear, and stand outside and talk to it of the overflowing wisdom and abounding love of its fond parents!

More than once Mr. Garst has been pained by the remark, "All right, brother, you preach single tax and I'll preach the good old Jerusalem Gospel!" But the "love that suffereth long and is kind, that thinketh no evil, that seeketh not her own," was his in an unusually large measure, and no unkind speech in return betrayed the suffering he endured. Sometimes after I have been out calling he has asked me what subjects were discussed in my hearing. Once, I well remember, I had to confess with shame that it was the Carew case; another time, dress! "Yes," he said, "and if I had been there and mentioned the single tax, they would have exclaimed, 'Why don't you preach the Gospel?'" Verily, we are not always consistent!

John Baptist said, "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance"; our Saviour, "By their fruits ye shall know them"; and it

was as much part of the Gospel message to Mr. Garst to teach people what their sins were as to teach them to repent and be baptised.

I venture to say no missionary in Japan in an equal length of time has preached more sermons on the Resurrection or reasoned more faithfully on straight Gospel lines than Mr. Garst. With *waraji* on his feet and the word of God in suitable portions for ready distribution, he has tramped this empire almost, sleeping and eating, oftentimes, in places that few missionaries would enter.

During a recent visit in China I learned some of the suffering of the people there through landlordism. In some districts land is not rented unless the would-be tenant has a water buffalo, farming tools, and sufficient to live on for two years. The landlord says if he has not that much he will steal, and then the landlord must be responsible for his depredations. Sixty per cent. of his crops go to the landlord, 20 per cent. to the idols, and if the paltry fraction left is lessened by famine of water or from untoward circumstances, he must sell his belongings and, when all is gone, *beg*; and thousands of people die outside the walls of Nankin every winter.

Do Christian workers suppose that such a state of affairs does not shut the hearts of millions against God, whom we preach as a God of love, and breed atheism? It would lighten my burden of grief now if I could feel I had always been as zealous about this much-needed reform as I should have been, and also if I could dare hope that many hitherto indifferent ones would take the trouble to investigate, especially reading Henry George's "Progress and Poverty" and Patrick Edward Dove's "Theory of Human Progression."

We do not claim that the single tax will prove a universal panacea for every ill, but a scheme that will "give to all the Father's children a seat at the Father's table," as someone has well put it, is worth considering. With most tender, grateful memories of Japan, and prayer for her prosperity and advancement in the highest and best sense, very sincerely yours,

LAURA DE LANY GARST.

Tokyo, January 14, 1899.