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HENRY GEORGE IN IRELAND

DUBLIN*, Saturday, July 13.—I expect to sail in the Umbria from Liverpool next Saturday. The Umbria is likely to get into New York harbor on Sunday, the 2Stli, though if she makes a specially good trip she may land us on Saturday night.

I go to London to-morrow morning, and shall be busy there, seeing various friends until Thursday, when there will be some sort of little farewell ceremonial, after which I will go to Liverpool where I am to speak for the Financial reform association in the Rotunda, and the next morning take ship. I have missed William Lloyd Harrison here, but hope he will be with us both at London and Liverpool. He will get a warm welcome from our friends here.

For four weeks now I have found it impossible to write for THE STANDARD. It is impossible to say all I would like to say, consecutively and in detail, so that I will merely jot down some notes.

The conference at Paris was a success, and accomplished all that Mr. Saunders or I expected from it and more. It would have been better, I think, to have adhered to the original intention and waited till this month, as more Americans would have been present, but as it was there were some of our single tax people present. W. E. Hicks of Brooklyn, William S. Sims of New York, and John T. Hopper of the Harlem single tax association, who, together with a number of our English friends, came forward liberally to make up the deficiency in finances. We expected nothing more than to make the acquaintance and exchange ideas with some of the continentals who are inclined our way, and this we did, although the difficulty of tongues was very much in the way of those who, like Mr. Saunders and myself, understood hut one language. A report of the conference itself has been given to the readers of THE STANDARD by Mr. Hicks. Owing to the serious illness of one of my daughters I was unable to be present

during the greater part of the proceedings, but was able to make a short speech. The banquet in the evening was a really splendid and spirited affair. Of the differing schools of land reformers who were represented at the conference those who came nearest to the single tax idea seemed to be the advocates of the metrical ax, represented by MM, Simon and Toubreau with whom I conferred a good deal during my subsequent stay in Paris. In fact, the only difference is as to the method of assessment. What they want to accomplish is to free industry of all taxation, and to give the holder of land assurance that he may improve to the utmost without increasing his taxes. To this end they propose to divide land into different classes according to the elements of value, and impose within each class a tax according to area, so that highly improved land shall bear no greater tax than unimproved or poorly improved land, and full incentive be given to the highest cultivation and the largest improvement. These men are absolute free traders and would remove every barrier to the free play of productive forces. They would abolish monopoly, but have no fear of capital under conditions of freedom, and unlike Herr Flurschein, who thinks that the appropriation of land values by the community would abolish interest by depriving capitalists of the opportunity to invest capital in buying land, and thus produce a plethora of capital, they believe as I do, that the vast increase in the opportunities for the profitable employment of labor would greatly increase the demand for capital and thus tend to the increase, not the decrease, of interest.

My good Hollander friend, Jan Stoffel, whose acquaintance I made in Paris, and for whom I took a great liking, has become a disciple of Herr Flurschein. He has got up a single tax scheme for Holland which seems to me a very curious affair. I cannot remember the exact proposition, but this is the general idea: The government is to borrow at three per cent and pay all landholders a certain proportion of the value of their land. Then it is to impose a tax on land values to that proportion. This, destroying the value of land ownership to that extent as an investment, is to produce a decline in interest. Then the

government is to borrow again at two and one-half per cent, pay another proportion of the value of their land to the landowners, and impose another installment of the single tax. This is to produce another fall of interest to two per cent, when the government is to borrow again, and repeat the same operation and so on until interest goes down to zero, when the government can borrow for nothing, and while the ex-landholders may be paid off in what would yield them no income, the government will have all the income which is to be derived from the ownership of the land.

I mildly suggested to Mr. Stoffel several snags which seemed to me to lie in the path of his scheme, but without making much impression. In fact I did not try very hard, for I think he will before long see them for himself.

I have met a good many men who thought interest was bad and wrong. But I have yet to meet one who has any plan for abolishing it unless the socialistic notion of making the government the sole owner and the sole user of capital can be called a plan. And if any one is disposed to think that the abolition of monopoly will bring interest to an end, it is hardly worth while to dispute about what is then a speculative matter. For if interest be unjust, that is to say unnatural, we have but to give freedom and it will disappear. If, on the contrary, it be just, that is to say natural, it is impossible to abolish it.

Of course the loose thinking as to capital and interest on the continent and elsewhere comes from the failure to discriminate as to what is and what is not really capital, and is born of the habit of speaking of all rich men as capitalists. But there, as elsewhere, thought on such subjects is being aroused. When our ideas get fairly before the people they will make their way.

Certainly there are object lessons enough. Paris is a beautiful city, but the great improvements which have made Paris so beautiful have all

exemplified how the pecuniary benefits of such improvements go to the owners of the land. Under the third Napoleon the imperial ring made enormous fortunes by buying land where avenues were to be cut or other improvements made, while a debt was piled up, the interest on which is defrayed by taxation that falls on the cost of living.

I wish Horace White and some of the other tariff-for-revenue-only men, who, at the Chicago tariff reform convention last winter were so horrified by the idea that free trade meant no tariffs at all, were to stand at the gates of Paris awhile and watch the operations of a tariff for revenue only, for that the octroi is. Not a basket can come in but what it is examined and a few coppers in duty collected; not a wagon or cart pass but what its contents are hauled over and long steel probes stuck into bags of beans or bales of hay; not a piece of meat or bottle of wine or faggot of sticks but what must pay duty for revenue only, for they do not manufacture such things in Paris, and there is no pretense of protection, except the protection of certain interests against the taxes they would have to pay if those onerous taxes were abolished.

I very much enjoyed my visit to Amsterdam. The low countries were beautiful in the glorious June weather, and the famous old city, with its canals, and sloping houses, and galliots and galliot built yachts, and great museum where the models of the ships with which Van Tromp swept the English channel, a broom at his masthead, and its pictures of old guild feasts, in which citizens dead these hundreds of years yet seem to live, was full of interest to me. I met with a warm reception there and spoke to a large and very intelligent audience in a beautiful hall. The audience seemed to fully understand me, for I presume no one who could not understand English came, and English is largely studied in Amsterdam. To make sure, however, Mr. Stoffel gave an abstract of what I said, in Dutch.

I left London for Belfast last Tuesday evening in company with Silas M. Burroughs and Charles L. Garland, president of the New South Wales single tax league. It was the worst night in the year for Belfast, for it was not merely mid-summer, but the eve of* the battle of the Boyne, and the large Ulster hall was not as crowded as when I spoke here before in the winter, for the Orangemen were all busy in getting ready their drums and regalia for the great annual event of the next day, The meeting was a most sympathetic and enthusiastic one, however, and gave abundant evidence that the advance of sentiment of which my English meetings gave such proof has been going on this side of the Irish sea. Rev, Bruce Wallace presided, and both Mr. Garland and Mr. Burroughs made good speeches. We met here James P. Archibald of New York, who is organizing branches of the Knights of Labor on this side.

Wednesday we went, to Toome bridge at the foot of Lough Neagh, where, in Moore's melody, the fisherman strays as the cool, clear eve's declining, but where now-a-days Colonel Bruce pays the O'Neill family L1,200 a year for the privilege of catching eels, and where they told us how three fishermen, who had been catching eels in defiance of the legal rights of the O'Neill family, were caught between a storm on the lake and the royal Irish constabulary on the shore, and, preferring to take the risks of the waves rather than the risks of a prison, were drowned. Here we spoke in the Temple of Liberty, an edifice which it would take Mark Twain to adequately describe, It is a large hall with absolutely no ventilation except the one front door, embellished with the most astonishing frescoes-of Venus, Jupiter, Mars, Samson, Solomon, and such like, and having in front of it the queerest carved dog to represent, watchfulness and the queerest sheep to represent innocence, that were ever beheld. It is however a grand hall in that part of the country where halls are very scarce.

Here we talked to an audience of the kind I like to talk to—the country people of the neighborhood, most of them farmers and laborers.

On Friday Mr. Archibald went on to Derry, and Mr. Burroughs, Mr. Garland and I came back to Belfast, where we saw the great Orange celebration, after which they took the coast route while I came on direct to Dublin to attend a gathering of the Contemporary club, called to meet me.

Last night—for as I write it is Sunday morning—I spoke in the Rotunda, with Michael Davitt in the chair. The meeting was a great one, the Rotunda being packed, and nothing could exceed the warmth of the reception which they gave us, or the enthusiasm with which they received the doctrine of the land for all the people. Davitt made a speech which was all any single tax man could have desired.

This is now clear to me: Purchase and peasant proprietary cannot, stop the development of the land movement in Ireland.

HENRY GEORGE