

SINGLE TAX V. CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE DAILY TELEGRAPH.

Sir, — I have read Mr. J. Farrell's papers on "The Philosophy of the Single Tax," with much interest and some admiration. The latter is for the poetic diction and imaginative power displayed, enhanced as they are by his earnest sympathy with the suffering sons and daughters of labor. No one who notes the information and tone of the press of today and the immediate yesterdays but must agree that the trend of its power and influence is in the direction of aid to labor and in advocacy of the mitigation of the laborer's sufferings and the elevation of his social and material condition. Mr. Farrell's paper is a proof of this. Another proof, sir, is given by your review of the article in *M'Millan's Magazine*, entitled "A Real Working Man." That article itself (which I was induced to read on the earliest opportunity after your notice appeared) is another proof, far stronger and more conclusive than Mr. Farrell's poetic prose, because, it gives a real unextenuated, unadorned picture of the hopeless struggle for mere animal existence carried on by the East Anglian laborers against privation and misery. "The Bitter Cry of Outcast London" and numerous other proofs might be adduced that the press has been alive to the fact that the poor are with us still, and that it has done its duty in calling attention to it and giving everyone an opportunity of proposing a remedy. Yet Mr. Farrell would seem to claim for Mr. Henry George that he alone has discerned that the poor are oppressed, and that he alone, after painting things in their real condition, proposes any remedy.

I would ask him to look back to the time of the forties, when Carlyle published his "Past and Present" and Charles Kingsley his many works earning him the name of the Chartist parson, and do we not find that then were painted some of the most vivid pictures of the misery of the poor? Also they proposed a remedy which has been working for good, and will work for good, and in time for complete emancipation of labor from distress and privation if followed up by all classes.

Carlyle, after declaiming against the "cash *nexus*" being the only bond between the worker, and the capitalist, and against any "quack nostrum," "Morrison's Pill" Act of Parliament, &c., being a remedy for their unequal positions, goes on to point out the real remedy. The army is the model of progress and stability, he tells the laborers, and if they will enroll themselves in "battalions" under approved "captains of industry," to be elected by themselves, they will then be able to repel assaults upon them as individuals and be able to afford each other such self-help as will make distress and privation almost unknown.

Mr. Farrell quotes Professor Thorold Rogers to show that whilst there has been a continual increase of the productive power for wealth, yet the share of the laborer has become surely less and less in that which must have remained unproduced but for his exertions. Mr. Farrell might have gone further and shown from the "Six Centuries of Work and Wages" that in the earlier times the workers lived comfortably, with abundance of food and on the eight hours' principle as a working day, and that they secured themselves their rights by combination. "In plain modern English," says the professor, "they entered into what are now called trades unions, and supported each other in resistance to the law and

in demands for higher wages." But the "Statute of Laborers," that iniquitous law, the Poor Law of Elizabeth, and the tyranny of county councils, together with the assaults made on the guilds, gradually broke down the unions and the power of combination until, to quote the professor. "What a husbandman earned with 15 weeks' work, and an artisan with 10 weeks' work in 1495, a whole year's labor would not supply artisan or laborer with in the year 1725."

And what is Professor Thorold Rogers' remedy? Why, the same as Carlyle's and Kingsley's. Hear him: "Three processes have been adopted by the working classes, each of which has had a vast and should have an increasing influence in bettering the condition of labor and making the problem of dealing with individual distress, however caused, easier and readier. They should be viewed by statesmen with unqualified favor, and be treated by working men as the instruments by which they can regain and consolidate the best interests of labor. They are trade unionism, or, as I prefer to call it, labor partnership; cooperation, or the combination in the same individuals of the functions of labor and capital, and benefit association, or the machinery of a mutual insurance society. So important do I conceive these aids to the material, intellectual and moral elevation of the working-classes to be, that I would, even at the risk of being thought reactionary, limit the privileges of citizenship, the franchise, parliamentary and local, to those, and those only, who entered into these three guilds — the guild of labor, the guild of production and trade and the guild of mutual help. Nor do I think it extravagant to believe that were those associations rendered general and finally universal the social problems which distress all and alarm many would ultimately arrive at a happy solution." There is much more to the same effect combined with elaborate proof and undeniable figures. And I would ask Mr. Farrell to read the Professor's short but scathing reckoning up of Henry George and his remedy, when perhaps he will not be so ready to quote again an author who is manifestly against the single taxing policy from one end to the other of his book.

We have now in favor of "captains of industry" and the combination of workers as the great power for the amelioration of labor Carlyle, Kingsley, Thorold Rogers and others who might be quoted. We have the practical work of trades unions done in England and in our midst. We have the stalwart figure of John Burns and the great work he has been doing as a captain of industry, and we have also here in Sydney such men as Talbot, West, Lennon, Newland and many others who have proved themselves true "captains of industry," spending their leisure in organizing and combining their fellow-workers, and whose labors are becoming every year more extended, better appreciated and more practically beneficial. Now what can or has Mr. Farrell to show against this testimony? I hope something more tangible than Henry George painting a new picture on the walls of a "castle in Spain." — Yours, &c., S. A. BYRNE. ,