

## Richard Cobden

RICHARD COBDEN was born on June 3, 1804, in the village of Heyshot, England. His early life was a hard one, although his father was a man of moderate means—a malster by profession—and for many years was the chief magistrate for the town of Midhurst. He afterwards became a farmer, but the venture proved unsuccessful and young Cobden became dependent upon his mother's relatives for support. At the age of fifteen he was given a position as a junior clerk in the counting house of his uncle in the city of London. Here he spent five years of his early life, existing upon scanty fare and sharing a portion of his income with his parents. It was during this period that he equipped himself for the intense conflict in which he was to engage in the over-throw of the obnoxious "corn laws," and so-called "protective tariffs" which had prevailed up to that time in England. At the age of twenty, with two other young men, he engaged in the calico and muslin business. Their capital amounted to about \$3,000., part of which was borrowed, and he became the commercial traveler for the firm.

About this time Charles Villiers, the English Commoner, had divided the House on the corn tax, but his notion was defeated by a majority of 187, the number being 342 against 195. The effects were depressing upon the followers of Cobden, but in 1838 the "Anti-Corn Law League" was founded. No organization in the history of the reform movement grew with such rapidity, notwithstanding the deep rooted prejudice and political hatred which had to be overcome. Cobden was the life of the organization. His wonderful energy directed the work. Papers and pamphlets were scattered by the hundreds of thousands. Speeches were made in every city, town and hamlet. The cost was enormous but the funds were raised by the public.

Up to this time Cobden had not been in Parliament, but his efforts and that of the League outside had been so great that it overthrew Lord Melbourne's government; in the general election following, he was returned to Parliament from Stockport, Lancashire, with many other prominent Leaguers, but the Conservatives were successful in Parliament. Robert Peel entered the House as Prime Minister with an overwhelming majority. Robert Villiers again divided the House and his motion was defeated by a majority of 303. Long and hard debates were entered into. The excitement throughout England was intense and many distressing scenes were enacted. The Chartists were carrying on their propaganda and Daniel O'Connell, the Irish Liberator, carried the repeal cry into Ireland with telling effect. The distress throughout Great Britain and Ireland was so great that quite frequently the verdict of the juries was, "Death by Starvation."

The failure of the crops was bringing death and distress

on every hand. It was at this time that Cobden gave utterance to his memorable words to John Bright. Death had robbed this great statesman of his young wife. Cobden had visited his as a friend and after tendering to him his sympathy, he grasped him by the hand and said: "There are thousands of homes in England today where wives, mothers and children are dying of hunger made by the law. When your grief is past, come with me and we will not rest until we have repealed those laws." John Bright accepted the invitation and worked whole-heartedly with Cobden until the "corn laws" were repealed.

In 1843 the League spent nearly one-half million pounds educating the people. The harvest had been a good one, but in spite of this the farmers were in a very bad way. The government was compelled to inquire into the state of agriculture. The memorable session of 1846 was opened by her majesty, the late Queen Victoria, in person. The prevailing distress was the subject of debate. The duties on many articles of food were modified. Cattle food was placed on the free list and on all grain the duties were to cease in three years. Long and angry debates were again entered into, but on the morning of May 16, 1846, the Ministerial proposition was passed in both Houses and the first great victory for commercial freedom was won.

There was great rejoicing throughout England. Cobden's name was on every tongue, and he wrote to his wife that his work was done. His rugged and robust nature was wrecked by the rigorous strain that he had undergone, but the people of England came generously forward and presented him with 75,000 pounds. He intended to retire from public life and after considerable pressure was prevailed upon to go to France and negotiate commercial treaties which were of lasting benefit to both countries.

He died in 1865. The following verses appeared in a country newspaper the week after Mr. Cobden's death:

Pure-Hearted Hero of a bloodless fight!  
Clean-handed Captain in a painless war!  
Soar, spirit, to the realms of Truth and Light,  
Where the Just are!

If one poor cup of water given shall have  
Due recognition in the Day of Dread,  
Angels may welcome this one, for he gave  
A nation bread!

His bays are sullied by no crimson stain;  
His battles cost no life, no land distress'd;  
The victory that closed the long campaign,  
The vanquish'd bless'd!

No narrow patriot bounded by the strand  
Of his own Isle—he led a new advance,  
And opened, with the olive-branch in hand,  
The ports of France,

Charming base hate of centuries to cease,  
And laying upon humble piles of trade,  
Foundation for that teeming reign of Peace,  
For which he prayed.



This the sole blot on which detraction darts,  
 Willing to make his rounded fame decrease:  
 That in his inmost soul, and heart of hearts,  
 He worshipp'd Peace

But One bless'd Peacemakers long years ago;  
 And since, in common clay, or stately vault,  
 Seldom has Hero rested, stained by so  
 Superb a fault.

JOHN M. MOORE.

## Keeping Step With Progress

### IS WEALTH A CRIME?

Predicated on the concept that every person is entitled to access to natural gifts to sustain life and comfort, our forefathers adopted an arrangement for the production and distribution of wealth. Production, then as now, meant the application of human skill and energy to natural products of the land, the water and the air, to increase and multiply material things and make them more useful to mankind. The thing so produced was private property. It meant ownership which included the right of enjoyment of property and income from it.

Wealth is the material thing that we need for food, clothing, shelter and enjoyment. The more wealth any man produced the greater credit was accorded him. He enriched the whole community as well as himself. He was a benefactor.

Land and labor were the two big factors in production. Because production could be increased by cultivation and fertility of land farmers were given perpetual title to land on the theory that this policy would encourage the greatest possible production. Surplus wealth, when used to clothe, feed and house workmen, or for making tools, assists production. This we call capital. It rightly shares credit with land and labor as the three factors in the production of wealth.

The great institution of private property encouraged every person to produce wealth. It left him free to use it as he would. The only restrictions on him were that he must do nothing to deny others the rights and privileges which he himself enjoyed under the general plan, that he be honest and decent in his relations with others and share of his wealth in the necessary costs of operations in the common cause.

We just cannot turn all at once to the new theory that our present troubles all come from a surplus of wealth, and that the way to recovery is to destroy what we have already created. To plow under the third row, fallow fertile land, destroy the growing pigs, work less days in the week and less hours in the day, loaf, spend and borrow, and tax ourselves out of trouble, are notions foreign to our school of thought. They are abhorrent to our economic sense. In all experience the easy-going spendthrift has had his holiday and joy-ride spending other people's money, but the community never waited in vain for the predicted calamity.—*Rural New Yorker*.

### EVILS OF LAND MONOPOLY

The depression now universal throughout the civilized world is nothing but an extension of the conditions introduced into Ireland by land monopoly—the rack rents, barring the people from any chance to work. The condition of the Irish farmer under English rule is only an exaggeration of the condition of the American workman, the European storekeeper, the mechanic out of work.

The State of Mississippi is holding an auction of 7,000,000 acres of farm lands on which the farmers are unable to pay taxes; 60,000 farms, one-quarter of the total area of the State. Land monopoly has been as disastrous to the land owner and to the State as it has been to the man barred from the land. If the State of Mississippi would take title to these forsaken lands thus thrown into its hands, and rent them, unemployment would cease, and the State would have such revenue that it would end the frantic efforts to avoid bankruptcy.

The refusal of the Irish farmers to pay the annuities to the Irish

Government is really a refusal to let the Irish Government dispose of the property which it should hold in trust for all the people; and the refusal is a blessing. If the Irish will go back to their old laws and forget the diabolical economic system unloaded upon them by the conqueror, Ireland can lead the world once more.

Of all the evils unloaded upon Ireland, the foreign language, foreign philosophy, and foreign methods of thought, none was so deadly as the foreign system of land monopoly, and none was more effective in turning Ireland into the world's poorhouse. The wiping out of the system of land monopoly, and the holding in trust of the land of Ireland by the Irish Nation, for the Irish people, would place Ireland in the forefront of prosperity.—HENRY J. FOLEY in *Gaelic American*.

### THE SINGLE TAX IS SOUND ECONOMICS

If, as may be, the share going to the private owners of capital or land seems unduly large, it is economically a grievous wrong to interfere with the natural processes. The proper method is to let these shares flow on, and then tax them. Rent cannot be abolished, but the whole share may be taken from the landowners in taxes. All the arguments of conservative economists have failed to make a dent in this fundamental proposition of the Single Taxers, simply because it is sound economics.—PROF. NEIL CAROTHERS in *Herald-Tribune*.

### PROGRESS IN CHILE

The women of Chile 21 years of age and over have been granted the right to vote at municipal elections. They are to exercise the franchise for the first time at such elections scheduled for April next pointed out L. D. Baker, American partner in the dry goods store in Valparaiso for the last ten years.

He also observed President Alessandri of that country has approved another measure which enfranchises for all city elections resident foreigners who have lived there for the last five years. It is estimated this will affect about 25,000 foreigners, including 10,000 Italians and 2,260 Americans.

"Another new law," he added, "incorporates the main principle of Henry George's Single Tax theory for a limited period in order to promote extensive building projects. From the beginning of August 1, 1933, until 1945, this law eliminates taxes on all new buildings erected between August 1, 1933, and December 31, 1935. There is, however, a tax on the land."—*San Francisco News*.

### THE DEVASTATING BLIGHT

The prospective failure of slum clearance as a government undertaking cannot be separated from speculation in land values. Most of these rundown properties are assessed at a low figure, so that, by sufficient overcrowding, owners of slums can make a profit at the small rentals charged the poverty-stricken inhabitants. But the instant the government offers to finance housing in a blighted neighborhood land values shoot upward. The land speculator reaps all the profit the government is asked to pocket a loss.

City governments, chambers of commerce, real estate boards—everybody, practically—side with and serve the land speculator. Our whole system of assessment and taxation is built to protect him. The only visible solution is to raise assessments in blighted districts until the owners of property are compelled to unite and improve it themselves or let it be taken by the city for taxes and improved with public funds. That's a drastic solution, but the cities of America will have to come to it some day, for the alternative is the steady spread of the present devastating blight.—*St. Louis Star-Times*.

### SINGLE TAX

Henry George, the great disciple of the Single Tax philosophy must be greatly excited in the world beyond when he realizes the agitation going on in this and other countries concerning the idea he so ably de-