

into the clouds," said the wise Goethe, having in mind the fate that overtook Napoleon. So there is a provision under natural conditions that will determine the height of buildings, and in business sections there seems no reason to believe that they will not often be many stories high. But on the other hand it is quite impossible to imagine that any but the very few will prefer sky-scrapers to two or three-storied houses for homes. At least we will have removed the incentive to huddle together in tenements, and if there is under present conditions the same unhealthy stimulus to sky-scrapers in the business sections of a city, that stimulus will also have disappeared.—EDITOR SINGLE TAX REVIEW.

SPECULATION IN FARM LAND VALUES.

The problem of today is the high cost of being allowed to get a living. Forty years ago the writer was a boy upon a New England farm. The farm contained about forty acres of which fifteen were woodland, and the remainder was about equally divided between rocks and stone walls, and dirt. We had no farm machinery except a churn, a winnowing mill and a grindstone. Outside of a harness, a buggy and a farm wagon, fifteen dollars would buy today our entire stock of farm implements. We raised an abundance of apples, pears, peaches, grapes and small fruits. In the fall the barn was full of hay and other fodder for the cattle. In the granery were corn, rye and beans, and the cellar bins were loaded with potatoes, turnips, beets, cabbages, carrots, parsnips, celery and the fruits of the orchard. There was a barrel of pork, many jars of lard and sausage, a hundred quarts of preserves, and a hundred pounds of honey. In the garret was popcorn, walnuts and butter-nuts.

During the winter we cut wood and ate. We coasted down the long hills and ate. We skated and ate. And when there was nothing else to do, we ate. Health foods and appendicitis were still uninvented. We had no ailments that could not be

cured by thoroughwort tea, and few died under eighty.

My grandfather's farm cost \$1,000—about the value of improvements. It took a generation to build the stone walls. My great-grandfather put up the buildings immediately after the Revolution, and the farm changed only as the stone walls grew until I became of age. At that time it was worth \$4,500. Today it is worth several times that amount, for a great city has grown around it.

In the last forty years there have been many changes, but they have been mainly beneficial to the landowners. Prices of farm products as compared with manufactured articles have increased enormously and a few dollars today will purchase comforts and conveniences that were not dreamed of then. The great progress of the last forty years is all in favor of the farmer. If he can own the farm. A pound of butter will buy four yards of cotton cloth. My grandfather gave two pounds of butter for one yard of cloth.

I met a negro the other day who was lamenting the fact that he was out of work. "Why don't you go farming?" I asked.

He stared at me a moment as though undecided whether my question was prompted by ignorance or derision, and then answered:

"I can put a load of boards upon my wagon and go as far as I can drive my mule and wherever I unload some men will come along and holler, 'I own that land, nigger; get off.'"

Less than 5% of the land in this county, (Baldwin County, Alabama) has ever seen a plow, but it sells as high as \$100 per acre. The United States is very sparsely settled and could easily support the population of the globe. Land Monopoly is the parent monopoly. It is the source of power of the trusts that dictate prices, and it is the power that is divorcing people from the land the world over. The earth yields as bountifully as ever. We have millions of acres of virgin soil, and millions of sturdy laborers in our great centers who are in every way the equal of the American yeomanry who stood at Concord Bridge, except that *they have no land.*

Land is so cheap in this county that a month's work of a common laborer ought to buy a farm, but owing to the fact that the cheap lands are held in large tracts and can only be bought as a whole, the laborer is helpless and if he does buy he often pays fifty times the price at which land can be bought at wholesale.

Land speculation differs only in degree and detail the world over, but I speak from personal knowledge of this county.

A land company purchases in large tracts for two or three dollars per acre, which price is all that the land is worth and is the value at which it is taxed. People who are anxious to get out of the cities are induced to purchase this land at from \$25 to \$100 per acre, frequently buying on the installment plan. Perhaps the victim is induced to purchase the so-called tobacco land, the company agreeing to buy the entire product at a stipulated price. A certain selected acre can always be pointed out that has produced a certain amount and the crop is represented as a "sure thing." But the season may be unpropitious, or the victim may be short of capital, or he may be inexperienced, or all these conditions and others may intervene, and the man who with five acres and no debts might get an excellent living for his family with little labor, becomes bankrupt and goes back to the struggling mob.

Or it may be oranges. A certain orange tree, (I will vouch for the truth of this story,) bore over 2,000 oranges. A land agent came by and bought the entire yield of the tree at two cents each, total over \$40.00. We cannot all have a block in Standard Oil, but we can own an orange grove, for we can buy twenty acres of \$2. orange sand for \$50 per acre, and it is plain to anyone who has been to school that—

1 orange tree—\$40—100 orange trees = \$4,000.

I do not wish to discourage any man from setting out fruit trees or from raising any crop that he has no use for, but it is not good policy to "put all your eggs in one basket."

It was said that a "Land Congress" that was recently held in Mobile, added a

million dollars to the wealth, (prices,) of lands in Alabama. I wish to call attention to the fact that our landed wealth of which we boast is not wealth at all, but merely the prices that are asked because of the monopolization of land.

Accessibility to land is the key to our social welfare. There are millions of acres of land in the United States as good as the best that can be bought for less than \$5 per acre. These lands can be purchased, subdivided and sold in small tracts at a good profit at \$10 per acre. If this work were undertaken by a responsible company, if these lands were sold in five and ten acre lots to all who desired, the retail price of farm lands in this country could not go above \$10 per acre. Owners of wild land who did not care to sell at this price could keep them until they were worth less. The literature of this company would increase farm values, (prices,) in the United States by many billions.

I do not wish to discourage any reform work, but the work that is being done in our cities toward exemption of improvements, etc., is merely whittling a shaving from the apex of the pyramid. High values, (prices) of our agricultural lands are the base of the great pyramid of speculative values in which are entombed the ideals of our latter day civilization. If we destroy the base, the superstructure will fall of its own weight.—PRESCOTT A. PARKER, Volanta, Ala.

CORRESPONDENCE.

A. D. CRIDGE DEFENDS THE OREGON CAMPAIGN.

EDITOR SINGLE TAX REVIEW:

William Ryan in your January-February number explains at length that some progressive tax measures proposed by the Oregon Tax Commissioners and a legislative committee were opposed by the Single Taxers. He is correct, and so am I. Had it not been for the campaign of the Single Taxers these measures would not have been proposed. At the meeting of worthy gentlemen who submitted the official tax measures to the electorate of