

Letters to the Editor.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER AND THE TAXATION OF LAND VALUES.

(To the Editor of *The Single Tax*.)

SIR,—The London Electoral Committee for the taxation of land values, taking advantage of Sir William's Derby campaign, addressed a question to him, asking if he could not see his way to readjust the 4s. land tax, placing it on the value of 1895, instead of 1692, as at present, thus realising a sum of about £40,000,000, instead of the paltry £200,000 which is realised now. But the badger (if such an undignified simile is permissible) refused to be drawn. But instead, he tendered an advice to "amateur financiers" not to count their chickens before they were hatched. Of course, a little professional jealousy is excusable, more especially when we remember that our Radical Chancellor was lionised generally in Radical circles for the forward steps taken by him last year in introducing his provisions for the equalisation and graduation of the Death Duties and the graduation of the Income Tax, and for making good a deficit without increasing the burdens on those least able to bear them. But his sneer at "amateur financiers" was couched in the very worst terms, for in these democratic days everyone is expected to take part in the deliberations of the State, and to act in the interests of the commonweal, and politics cannot, therefore, be viewed in the light of an exclusive profession. The reputation of a Chancellor of the Exchequer must not be allowed to rest on what he has done in the past, but rather what he is prepared to do here, and now. He was not being asked to initiate any new principle. He was only being asked to lend his influence to have the administrative functions of government carried out in conformity with the law of the land, and so end this flagrant abuse of political power that the landlords have used in the past to rid themselves of their "legal" obligations.

This would be a task worthy of the attention of our Chancellor, and would go a great way to revive a waning confidence in the sincerity of the Liberal party managers. Their conduct in the past may have been excellent; but the water that is past cannot grind the mill, and they will be judged according to the way in which they approach the questions crying for settlement now. Democracy has brought with it its responsibilities, and it is required more and more that the administrative functions of government be simplified; and this question of finance is just one of the cases in which the bullock must be boiled down to a lozenge, even if it should prove too strong for the somewhat susceptible palate of a Chancellor of the Exchequer.

"You can fool all the people some of the time,
You can fool some of the people all the time,
You can't fool all the people all the time."

—Yours, in the cause, W. R.

LAND MONOPOLY THE DEATH OF ART.

(To the Editor of *The Single Tax*.)

Coventry, England.

SIR,—Among the most deplorable effects of the fierce struggle for existence caused by land ownership is the total extinction of architecture, sculpture, and decorative painting as living arts. This, though so incontestable a fact, does not appear to have been noticed by Single Taxers, or in Henry George's works, so much as its importance deserves. And nothing renders it so self-evident as a comparison between modern buildings and those grand old structures of which so many still exist in the ancient city whence I am writing.

Coventry contains a larger number of medieval buildings than any city in England, Chester not excepted. They date from a time when land was still the recognised property of the State, when certain specified dues, representing the Single Tax in a crude and unscientific form, were rendered by the holders for its use, and when poverty as at present understood was unknown. There was no such desperate competition for a bare living as now exists; and the workman having abundant leisure, and no fear of being deprived of

employment, was able to put his whole soul into his work, and did it with the loving effort of a true artist. There was, consequently, none of the scamped work, flimsy material, and tawdry decoration which distinguish modern erections. All the houses were constructed of well-seasoned heart of oak, which, where reasonable care has been exercised, remains hard and sound to this day. The main timbers were from nine inches to a foot, or even 18 inches square, and in stone buildings the mortar is so good as to have withstood the elements even better than the rock itself. The carving on beams, doorposts, and gables, ceilings and mantels, though bold and often very elaborate, is of the utmost delicacy and grace, and infinitely diversified. The general design of every house is highly picturesque, though there is none of that straining after effect or finicky ornament which seems inseparable from modern villas in the so-called antique style. From main outline to the minutest detail everything exhibits at once a breadth of conception, combined with a painstaking workmanship, which would be the despair of a present-day designer.

And although the stone had to be quarried, the timber felled, and both transported, carved, and moulded entirely without steam, or any but the rudest machinery, time was found not only for making each private house a marvel of art, but also for building and decorating magnificent palaces, massive and stately castles and fortifications, and glorious churches, all profusely carved and coloured. How is it that in these days, when every man's power is multiplied fifty-fold by science and invention, ninety-nine per cent. of our buildings are utterly hideous, while the remainder owe whatever beauty they possess to imitation of by-gone styles?

Is the art instinct in human nature dead? This is incredible; the love of beauty, though crushed, is still latent; and if that slavery which, in whatever form, has sounded the knell of art, were destroyed, we should soon be surrounded by greater loveliness and splendour than past ages ever dreamt of.—Yours, &c.,

EVANGELISTES A. PHIPSON.

A LETTER FROM AMERICA.

(To the Editor of *The Single Tax*.)

SIR,—Since the November election, in which the Democratic party—that party of tariff reform, slightly—was buried so deep as to obscure, for a time, the true party of reform, our popular public teachers have gone back to their platitudes, our statesmen (?) are trying to bring prosperity to this great nation by supplying it with little tin banks, gilt-lined, and stuffed with paper, to keep labour employed, and capital from over production by taxation.

In the West, the Single Tax is making considerable headway, but the East is so conservative that those who dare proclaim that the earth moves, are rare;—who dare tell the people, that we must change our centre of thought regarding the universe; that the earth is only a speck in an ocean of immensity; that we must change our centre of thought regarding taxation, and cease to tax men because they are rich; that by a wise law of nature, society produces a fund sufficient to defray its own expenses; that our present methods of taxation are as antiquated as the feudal system, and should be relegated to the past; that these newly discovered social laws, will yet do as much to advance the prosperity of mankind, as the knowledge of the physical laws of the universe has already done.

Our Massachusetts Single Tax League lately held a banquet at which we raised about five hundred dollars for the cause, and we are now about to hold a series of six meetings in our town, devoting all our energies to make them successful. If we are not disappointed, this will be but the beginning of similar attacks on other towns.

Wm. Lloyd Garrison is speaking about constantly before social clubs, church literary societies, &c., with the outward seemingly discouraging reward of making no converts; but when one remembers how many Single Taxers we have, who contribute to our cause, stealthily, and dare not let their names be known; when we remember the social ostracism that is sure to follow, an advocate of Single Tax, in small towns, one ceases to wonder at Mr. Garrison's few converts, but rather marvels at

their willingness to listen to such fundamental reform, and at his bold, brave utterances in proclaiming the knell of doom to vested interests and special privilege.

ELIZA STONE TWITCHELL.
Wollaston, Mass., U.S.A.,
Jan., 5th, 1895.

THE VICE OF THRIFT.

It is a singular circumstance that whilst the habit of scraping and hoarding is generally commended, fostered, and encouraged, and even lauded as a virtue of so high an order as to merit for those who practice it the reward of an extra Parliamentary vote, they who carry the practice out to the utmost limits of their power (instead of being lauded to the very heavens and held up as shining examples, for the world's admiration) are regarded with scorn and disgust even by the warmest advocates of the "vote for thrift." "Ah! but," say the good old votaries of cant and humbug, "there is a difference you know between thriftiness and miserliness." Is there? Then wherein does this subtle difference lie. Parents—especially poor parents—are enjoined to inculcate thrifty (saving) habits in their offspring. The child is taught to hoard up its pennies and to deny itself the things purchasable with those pennies that would minister to its childish desires, the child's "thrift" is commended; and when from force of habit it becomes more strongly developed in the man, who can manage to keep a wife and six children on 25s. a week and save five shillings a week to boot, the commendation becomes of so enthusiastic a character that Parliament is urged to give that man an extra vote for his "thrift."

But should he carry his self-denying and family-denying habits to the verge of starvation, instead of being recommended for still another vote for "thrift," he is roundly abused and denounced as a social pariah—an unnatural monster, a miser—a wretched and degraded specimen of human nature and an object of universal loathing. Yet there is no actual difference whatever in principle between the one who hoards up his gold and denies himself the necessities of life and the child who hoards up its coppers and denies itself the things necessary to its happiness. There is no difference in principle between saving one shilling out of one pound and saving the whole twenty shillings. The only difference existing is one of degree. Just exactly the kind of difference that exists between the man who advocates a ten per cent. tariff restriction upon trade and calls himself a "freetrader," and the one goes two-and-a-half per cent. better and calls himself a "protectionist." "Ah, but!" chips in our right-thinking person, "we recognise thriftiness as a virtue only up to a certain point, beyond which it becomes a degrading vice in our eyes." What point? That is the question. There must surely be some clearly defined limit, which, when passed, transforms virtue into vice—truth into error—white into black—right into wrong.

It is when we attempt to fix that limit, we find ourselves tied up in a knot—so to speak.

When we speak of "Honesty" as a virtue we make no limitations, vague or positive. We don't imply that Honesty is a virtue only up to a certain point, when it changes into a vice. When we speak of "Truth" as a virtue we don't pretend to believe that it is virtuous only up to a certain limit, beyond which it becomes vicious. But Honesty and Truth are honesty and truth right throughout. The real truth is that "Thrift" is a vice—not a virtue, and it is a vice from beginning to end—a vice which has grown as a fungus upon our Social system whose origin is directly traceable to land monopoly, the fruitful source of so much else that is vicious in our habits and social and political life.

There is nothing of niggardliness in nature, but, on the contrary, abundance of everything necessary to man's comfort and happiness upon this earth is observable. Nature is all beautiful. There is no need to hoard and stint, so long as no one is permitted to bar access to her generous stores. "Thrift," so far from being a virtue, is the meanest of all vices in its essence, and the hoary headed miser is but the logical development of the half-pence hoarding child.—

W. E. J. (In the *Sydney Single Tax*.)

Our Natural Storehouse, the Land, is Locked.