

At the Sign of the Cat and the Fiddle

CONDUCTED BY E. WYE

TRUE to her promise, Miss Bonnyclabber favors the readers of this Department with the following letter from England: "It was all very pleasant at Newlands and I thought the place had never looked better. To be sure, the weather was unseasonably cold. Emblem had talked of going down to Yorkshire for the 15th (you will remember that grouse shooting begins on the 15th August) but Clara reminded him of his engagement to take us to Oxford that week, so he dutifully acquiesced. Seeing what happened later on, it made things rather miserable for Clara—but poor dear, it wasn't her fault. A lot of letters and telegrams addressed to Emblem from Tothill Street, London, had much to do with our finally being there. Well, we got over to Oxford in good time for the opening ceremonies, which included a reception and a preliminary banquet or 'Henry George Commemoration Dinner,' and quite jolly it was to see so many old friends from America, especially nice to meet Mrs. George and her daughter Beatrice, Miss Hicks, Mr. Warren, Mr. Hall, Mr. Stephens and others, and renew acquaintance with the English and Scottish contingents of the League and of the United Committee. I have mentioned, I think, in a previous letter that our friends of the Sign of the Cat and the Fiddle, Mr. Wiggins and Mr. Wenzel, with Prof. and Mrs. Dowdy, had spent a day or two with us at Newlands; and there they were at the Conference 'with bells on'—an expression I tried to explain to some English people at dinner, much to their amusement and astonishment. There was also in evidence a crowd of very ordinary looking persons from America who came to represent the Single Tax Party, their general attitude and behavior reminding me more than I can say of what one pictures as the 'Mountain' in the French Revolutionary Convention.

"Well, I came armed with my portfolio and materials for taking notes, a habit which has remained with me from my university days. I ought not to say it, for it seems like boasting, but I do believe I have accumulated the completest set of notes and diaries for the past twenty years of any woman of education anywhere. Some day I mean to start in editing and revising with a view to making them public. Professor Dowdy says that in his seminars he invariably urges his students to acquire the habit, so you see I have a powerful adherent to the idea. For my thesis which got me my M. A.—but here I am wandering; pardon me.

"We found the Conference to be brilliantly attended, for it had been announced that the chief speech of the occasion would be made by no less a notable than Mr. Asquith. Emblem, who knows Mr. Asquith very well (and Mrs. Asquith too) was confident that an able and stirring appeal would be made by the former Premier to close the ranks and work heartily for the Taxation of Land Values; and

Emblem, who is an Asquith Liberal, chuckled in anticipation of the digs his chief would administer to David Lloyd George for that one's desertion of the battle standards of 1910. Yes, there was to be an immense advertising of the 'land question.' Emblem (who on the quiet is a liberal contributor to the United Committee) was applauded on the entrance of our party and we women were in quite a flutter. This was Monday. The evening banquet was a big success. We met all the delegates; listened to some very good speeches and finally reached our hotel tired enough to sleep soundly.

"Alas, and well-a-day! Who would have imagined that within a few hours our little pleasure party would be disrupted, and Emblem, much ruffled and scandalized, be on his way to Yorkshire, with us women left lamenting? On Tuesday morning a storm broke in the Conference and there was a fearful row. I thought it never would end, and when one of the delegates shouted, 'This is no place for me,' Emblem turned to Clara and whispered something I didn't hear, but I caught Clara's reply, 'Now Ferdie, don't be silly. What do you want to do? Wait.' Well things came to a crisis when those ruffians having insulted Mr. Asquith the latter naturally refused to come to the Conference.

"After that there was no use in continuing one's presence at the play of Hamlet, with Hamlet left out, so the fading away of the audience in attendance was noticeable. Emblem seized his hat and stick and was one of the first to leave. Some of the committee rushed after him and talked with him outside. It was there that he made arrangements to have us go back to Newlands while he posted for Yorkshire. He really was enraged and quite lost his temper. Whether he will continue his friendly connection with the U. C. remains to be seen. As an Asquith Liberal he is deeply hurt. He thinks the official managers of the Conference muddled the job and allowed a small number of rank outsiders to 'put one over on them.' Of course Mr. Outhwaite acted detestably and I am quite ashamed of the Americans of 'the Mountain' who seem to have supported him throughout. I even hear that between them a new English party has been concocted. Something of a joke, don't you think? I'm glad that our friends of the Cat and the Fiddle, the Dowdys, Horace Wenzel and Mr. Wiggins acted throughout with dignity and good judgement, although once or twice I saw the last mentioned, whom I've heard called 'Greased Lightning' at home, squirming in his seat, his face red as a beet and only kept from making a scene by the restraining hand of his friend Wenzel.

"I trust the foregoing will reach you safely, and I remain
Your sincere ADÈLE BONNYCLABBER.

Note by the Conductor: We trust that our good friend, Miss Bonnyclabber, will not take it amiss if we say that this Department cannot endorse the attitude of criticism she takes toward those who have dared to disapprove the policy of the English "step by steppers"—whose step by step has seemed to us often to lead up and down the backstairs of party politics. Their selection of Mr. Asquith as a hero and standard-bearer has seemed to us grotesque. We think that the new Commonwealth Land Party is a safer proposition to hitch up to. Our sympathies are with Lord Emblem.

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Dear Sir: Single Taxers in their speeches, etc. should never fail to make the limitation that the laborer is entitled to the full product of his labor *after the payment of economic rent*, which is equivalent to saying that the wages of labor are what the laborer can earn at the margin of cultivation (the best free land) without the payment of rent or, algebraically expressed

$$\text{As Wages} + \text{Rent} = \text{Product}$$

$$\text{Therefore Wages} = \text{Product} - \text{Rent}$$

This is clear enough. But unless we are careful we are apt, in spite of our knowledge of the subject, to fall into the habit of the socialist or of the syndicalist, both of whom never fail to assert that labor is entitled to the full production, taking no note of the existence of such a thing as economic rent as a factor.

Respectfully,

JOSEPH REYNOLDS.

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Horace Wenzel writes us that he did not remain at the Oxford Conference after the Asquith episode, but hastened away to spend a few weeks in Russia. He fell in with some of our Western statesmen at Petrograd and being (as we know) connected with a well known and influential banking house in New York he was persona grata to these Americans and to the Soviet authorities as well. He writes that in his opinion Russia is pointing the way to many improvements in methods of industry and exchange, strange as that may seem. Just leave them alone for a few years, he writes and we shall see something.

On the other hand, so eager are the leaders of Moscow to get production fully under way that they are not far from compromising some of their earlier radical principles. Still Horace says it is all very wonderful. He is especially interested in the new standard of value and exchange known as the chervonetz—a composite unit of value not unlike the one originally suggested by Professor Jevons forty or fifty years ago. What they do in Russia is this: they actually experiment and put things into operation instead of forever dilly-dallying and palavering as elsewhere. When the grotesque downfall of the German mark is mentioned the men of Moscow simply put their tongues in their cheek and look childlike and bland. Horace says that the outstanding indication of progress in the Russian complex

is the way in which the energies of nature are being harnessed for the common good. Communism seizes for her own the newest developments of science, and is transferring to public uses what formerly went to the enrichment of the few. If we think there is no activity among Russian experimenters in the fields of electricity, radio—activity, bio-chemistry, agricultural chemistry, etc., we are mighty mistaken. Ground rent, which after all perhaps should not be considered in terms of money (God save the mark!) but rather in terms of universal energy, is being studied and understood and realized by the Russians for the first time in history. And the approach to a genuine communism of ground rent is the outstanding wonderful thing which is happening in Russia. Horace says that Single Taxers ought to be humble and penitent in the face of the intelligence evidenced by these maligned and hated men. As for the chervonetz, he says that in his opinion it will eventually give way to a really scientific measure for the exchange of the energies of nature, which in the future will be available to relieve the arduous labor of mankind. Russia, according to him, is a gigantic laboratory, in which the dreams of Georgians are partly on the way to coming true, willy nilly.

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The following are the final words of Latona, from the play entitled "The Wrath of Latona" by E. Yancey Cohen:

"What you have seen today will be a tale
That ever poets will delight to tell,
The tale of how Latona haply taught
A fundamental lesson to mankind—
That this fair earth must not sequestered be
By cozening louts and wolves and greedy tricksters
To the undoing of all others, but that those
Who this bright jewel of the universe
By providence of the immortal Gods inhabit
Shall equal right and privilege have to use
The natural gifts of bounteous Earth and Heaven,
The fertile soil, the air, the sunlight warm,
The water, wind and fire, that with these aids
Secure the sons of men may lay their heads,
And without let or hindrance live their lives
And without killing labor live their lives.
So be the Oracle's pious words fulfilled!
And may a golden age at last appear;
May goodness, truth and justice be enthron'd
And ignorance and evil be destroyed—
May Heaven and Earth be joined in one accord
And peace be with us after many days."

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SHOP TALK

SCENE: Smoking-room of a Safe-deposit Company

CHARACTERS: Two wealthy "Single Taxers."

MR. HARDLY: (nervously) If they don't heat this place better I'm going elsewhere.

MR. SOFTLY: I agree with you, but what can you expect?

MR. HARDLY: (quickly) Anything wrong with the Company? Retrenchment, that's what it is.

MR. SOFTLY: Believe me, one yearns for those festivals of expansion that lasted all through the war. By the way, my son William is off today to his military training camp.

MR. HARDLY: (interrupting) May I offer you one of these Porto Rico regalias?

MR. SOFTLY: Thanks, I've given up smoking. Still, I like the odor—

MR. HARDLY: Perhaps you've heard of *My* son's good fortune. He's made his Frat at college—a first class Frat, I can tell you.

MR. SOFTLY: My warm congratulations. I hope you haven't tried to read that libel by Upton Sinclair on our colleges? I threw it away in disgust. Such damned bad form I never—

MR. HARDLY: To tell you the truth, I rarely read more than the various quotations now-a-days. I find them quite filling for the price. He, he! Have I ever asked you if you subscribe to Moody? Very informative and conservative. An excellent safeguard against the day of adversity.

MR. SOFTLY: I've got something surer than that—my daughter is immensely interested in Christian Science and is trying to instruct me. Know anything about it?

MR. HARDLY: Years ago I tried to read the book, but gave it up. Last Sunday morning in Church I was wondering how anything could be found more beautiful than the words of our service. The older I grow the more of a Fundamentalist I become.

MR. SOFTLY: Fundamentalist? Haven't heard of that.

MR. HARDLY: Ask Dr. Watson. You may come upon him sometime playing golf at Englewood—

MR. SOFTLY: I limit my talents now to auction. I've become quite an authority. Strained a ligament, so no more golf for me.

MR. HARDLY: Ha, ha! I'm struggling now with "ma jong." Have you tried it? Wonderful people, those Chinese. Well, I'll have to run over to my broker's office now. I'm nearly out of my stocks. What do you say about oils?

MR. SOFTLY: Sorry, no interest. I'm just closing out some vacant lots in Flatbush that I've been tied up in for years. A very remarkable "realtor" has come to my rescue. Hope to see you tomorrow. So long.

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A few days previous to the expected arrival of the Americans back from the Oxford Conference old Michael Shea walked to the Sign of the Cat and the Fiddle and asked if there was any news? "I hear," said he, "that the steamer will soon be here. Somebody has been after sendin' me a report of the procedin's there. A great shindig they had, and me restin' securely over here beyond the pur-

lews of Donnybrook. I should have been in the castle blowin' me horn like Hernanny. Well, do ye know, I praise the Saints that there's one man in England that has Irish blood in his veins, that's Outhwaite. What does he say? 'Get out, all ye spalpeens of politicians and labor leaders and respectabilities and stand aside. The common people, the ones that pays for the goods, are on to the game at last, and by Hiven, they'll run candidates of their own! That's what he says. And he's started a Party. Here's what he calls it (and he drew a small paper from his pocket) the 'Commonwealth Land Party.' Good name, better than Single Tax Party, which later on will be after changin' its name too. Listen to this: 'The object,' says he, 'is the foundation of a Commonwealth based on the assertion of the common right to the land!' I'd be puttin' a garland round his head for sayin' that. It takes me back to the brave days, the stirrin' days of Hinery George and Father McGlynn. Outhwaite's right. I know he's right and I can prove it. The common right to the land! Have yese ever heard of the affair of 'No Man's Quarry,' which happened over there by the Palisades when Fernando Wood was Mayor? Me own family was mixed up in that event, and Hivens, such a lickin' came to Pat McGloin and his pals that ivery Bowery boy knew the story. Say Mike,' says my partner along side of me layin' stones on Broadway, 'let's us emigrate again. Over in Jersey there's a free quarry, its free land—let us go!' Well, ye doubtless know the story, so I'll not detain ye now. But this man Outhwaite—keep your eye on him. He's the stuff. I'm sindin' him tin dollars by registered mail for the good of his soul and to aid the stringth of his elbow. All these do-nothings who sit at home by their cheerful fireside and prate of propaganda and nothing else, they make me tired. Critics, always critics of those who step out and lead. What are they but quietudes and roys faynants—a choice crowd of respectables who scorn parties and represintative government, being alarmed lest their own dear ideas should iver be represinted in politics? Wouldn't it be terrible to see a man sent to Congress with a mandate to open his mouth there and say what he's elected to say! If that is reprisintive government the more represintives the better. Otherwise what'll our respectable friends see? Faith, what ther-'ye seein' in Europe now, if they have eyes, what Hinery George foretold and predicted forty years ago, the downfall of represintive government and the appearance of the man on horseback, the dictator, the strong arm, like we see this day in Italy and Spain and Hungary and Greece and Bulgaria. By Hivens, I wish I was forty years younger so's I could resume my original role of Howlin' Dervish and indulge in the emotional insanity of the year 1886, addressin' the people and tellin' them a thing or two!"

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If they don't stop making laws, there will not be room in the libraries for any more books.