

At the Sign of the Cat and the Fiddle

CONDUCTED BY E. WYE

"**W**AS it Tolstoy or Hinery George," asked Mike Shea the other night at the Sign of the Cat and the Fiddle, "who first used the parable of the Old Man of the Mountain to describe the case of Labor?" "You must mean the Old Man of the Sea," we suggested. "To be sure," returned Mr. Shea, "the Old Man of the Sea—me eyesight and me mimory are beginning to fail. Well, that was a fine illustration. I read the Arabian Nights as a boy, and 'tis there you'll find the story. The parable is that landowners sit astride the shoulders of Labor, hanging on like grim Death, and you will find them willing to do anything within reason for the good of the victim except to get off him. Now wouldn't you think that Labor, stupid tho it is, would tire of the load? Not at all. It thinks it is carrying a beautiful young heiress home from the fair. I hear it said among certain agitators that there are stratagems afoot to have done with the incubus. But I don't know. Ye have the Old Man wid ye always, as they used to say of Sam Gompers." Mr. Shea paused for a moment to light his pipe and then continued, "However, the Old Man's strangle-hold has encountered a few rude jolts in the course of history. Wasn't it Jack Cade or Wat Tyler or some such who had the varmint off for a minute wid his shoulders to the ground? Begorra, in the Roosian ring they counted tin and he's down and out there for sure."

"Howiver 'tis in England that he'll certainly come to grief. I see that he's beginning to be recognized there for the divil he is, and even the leading statesmen, mind ye, are admitting his existence. Now the great officials of the Labor Party, like Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden, say that they hardly think it expedient to stir up bad feeling toward themselves from the upper classes (referring to the elevated position of the selfsame Old Man of the Sea upon the shoulders of Labor.) 'We will pacify Labor', says MacDonald, "and preserve the health of the Old Man by simply asking him to turn round and clasp his knees across Labor's back, instead of across his chist and abdomen, thereby giving a spicy variety to the grip—meanwhile handing the Old Man the same amount of tribute, only calling it interest instead of rint, for ye will understand that Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Snowden propose a commutation of the Old Man's privilege of collecting the rint by handing him the carefully calculated equivalent in crisp new government bonds. The only question with these gentlemen is, will the Old Man accept?"

"Now thin," pursued Mr. Shea, "along come another group of doctors, called the United Committee, otherwise known as the Single Tax Step by Steppers. These, being careful practitioners, do not wish to give too

great a jar to the elderly patient, whom they consider a very sick man. And phat do they propose? Sure and they propose a therapeutic treatment wid a mild electric current, just sufficient to make the intensive leg grip relax a little and thus allow Labor to carry its burden with less inconvenience and pain. Would they turn on the juice full and shock the Old Man down from his perch? Divil a bit! Lastly (and then I'm done) along comes a little David wid his sling—you're wrong, not David Lloyd George at all, but that political atom known as the C. L. P. And phat will that little David do? He'll let fly wid his sling at the Old Man and hit him full where the little girl had her little curl, and that, mind you, will be the end of the Old Man of the Mountain."

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If ever the day comes when this country shall witness a genuine proposal on a national scale to collect by a direct tax all or any part of the economic rent of land there will be a tremendously concerted outcry that "the homeless and the orphan" must not be despoiled. To say nothing of "the poor widow" who owns a million dollar vacant lot on which she has been paying taxes for years and to increase whose burden by a national rent levy would amount to "wicked spoliation," one will hear lengthy lamentations and witness pugnacious, if not seditious and revolutionary opposition, from the great multitudes of "innocent" savings-bank depositors and policy holders of our life and fire insurance companies. In fact, so true is it that every little two-penny "bourgeois" and, for that matter, every little penny wage-earner too has a finger in the great pie of land ownership, and so intimately interwoven are the interests of the rich and the poor in this matter of "investments" safe, sane, prime and gilt edged, that at the first danger signal of attack the multitudinous ranks will be closed up with the slogan of united we stand, divided we fall!

What cataclysm will be needed to break down the stolid opposition of millions of participants in our truly national institution of landlordism and bondholding it is beyond the vision of man to foretell. But one thing stands out clearly and that is that for several years past there has been a fixed policy on the part of our leaders in high finance to open the doors and make attractive and dazzling to the humble sons and daughters of toil the inner shrines of respectability and property. Perhaps the movement found its beginning on a large scale in the liberty loans and victory loans after our entrance into the World War. Judiciously varied to suit the purses of us all these loans to the government were so skillfully marketed that the distribution may be said to have come home to nearly every mother's son and daughter in the nation.

For conservatism and patriotism, for your genuine hundred per cent. American, give us a property holder, no matter on how small a scale. So that there has sprung into action a wide-spread impulse on the part of both great and humble to stand shoulder to shoulder and "support the Constitution." One reads that the number of stockholders in important companies has vastly increased, the average stock holdings being reduced to a very modest number of shares. One learns that bond sellers have marketed the so called "baby bond" which was issued to fill the requirements of the lowly. Riding the wave of an undoubted tendency, along came the genius who conceived the idea of selling stock at attractive figures to the working men themselves up and down the lists of the company's employees. Great! thereby making every little trade-union stockholding "capitalist" feel that he was part owner in the institution. These employee stockholders are probably now to be counted in the hundred thousands, if not the millions. Not to be outdone the trade unionists must needs set up as bankers and financiers themselves, establishing national and state banks and trust companies. So there you are: the whole socialist, trade union and workingmen's radical movement undermined, and presto, a new and unforeseen accretion made to our substantial and static pillars of society.

But this is not all. Sensing the uncomfortable probability that some day the land question in its protean phases may be the subject of common inquiry, how best shall the upholders of things as they are buttress their position still more securely? Why, it is clear enough that no better way can be found than to get the faith and honor of the nation pledged in the strong contractual defenses of a government bond. Behold then the cornice of the structure—the U. S. Land banks, innocent looking little institutions supplying loans on mortgage to our farmers at an attractively low rate of interest—yet under the law of their establishment girded with the power of a vigilant nation's promise and determination to carry out its contracts. If money is loaned in good faith based on existing land rentals and values let no man, except at his peril, do aught to invalidate this basis! So that, following the examples set by the cedula-issuing governments of Argentine and Chile and the perhaps better known operations of the great group of French guarantors of bonds based on prior mortgages made by the farmers of France (the Credit Foncier, to mention but one of them) we now have in this country the landvalues of our farms being "mobilized" into counters for operators on the stock exchange.

Let us also not overlook the great waves of land speculation that have swept over the country since the War, upsetting production and industry and converting whole States into frenzied real-estate offices, filled with gambling "realtors" and their more than willing victims. Have we not witnessed in the Northwest and in Califor-

nia, and are we not witnessing in the far South today speculative migrations and counter-migrations that for lust of gain and cynical disregard of consequences have not been equalled since Clive invaded India or the late King of the Belgians laid his hand upon the Congo? Or finally what shall be said of the vulgar exhibitions of greed that have made "real-estating" in our great cities a byword, whilst in their suburbs every petty clerk has dreamt of becoming the "owner" of a mortgaged lot bought on the installment plan from some "development" company—everybody everywhere seemingly being drawn into the alluring net of a speculative Something for Nothing Club and thereafter living in dread of the ominous and fatal approach of the day of settlement. Is it any wonder then, in view of what we have been saying, that in the midst of this universal wild orgy which has followed the masque of the red death known as the World War the Prophet of San Francisco has become as one unknown and unheeded in the land of his birth and that his actual followers have been seemingly reduced to a pathetic remnant? And yet the mill of the gods is grinding, grinding slow and grinding exceeding small. Will it be left to the barbarians of the outer world, the Tartars of the steppes, the hillmen of India, the peons of Mexico, the tribesmen of Morocco, the black men of Nigeria, the yellow men of China, to say the word and do the deeds that shall open the eyes of western civilization to its present dangerous situation?

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Mr. Upton Sinclair has issued the following communication from Pasadena, California:

The American Fund for Public Service has voted to finance the publication of a series of standard works of literature and education in the service of the movement for workers' emancipation. The series is to contain two hundred titles, to be put upon the market at the lowest possible prices. It will be known by some such title as *The Workers' Classics*, *The Radical Classics*, or *The People's Classics*. I have been asked to become editor of the series; an advisory board of twenty or thirty persons will be appointed. The first step toward the undertaking is the preparing of a list of titles for inclusion in the series, and the purpose of this letter is to ask our readers' assistance.

This series, when completed, will involve an investment of a large sum of money, not less than a hundred thousand dollars. It will constitute a permanent treasure of the labor movement throughout the English-speaking world. It is proposed to spare no pains to make the series of the utmost possible usefulness. . . .

The series will be all-inclusive and entirely non-partisan, as regards factions and schools of thought in the working-class movement. The classics of the Socialist, Communist, Anarchist, Single Tax, Cooperative, and all other wings will be represented. The series will include fiction, poetry, drama, history, philosophy, politics, economics, finance. The sole test of inclusion will be whether the work contributes ideas or information likely to be of service to the awakening workers. The series will include translations from works in foreign languages, and will endeavor to be international in point of view; but, aiming to serve that

public which uses the English language, it will necessarily include a larger percentage of works representing the English and American points of view.

We ask you to take the time to make us a list of all works which you think should be included in these two hundred volumes. Make your range of selection wide, including everything which might by any possibility go in.

Here is a chance for readers of this department to give over for once their daily cross-word puzzle in favor of still more intellectual entertainment. We hope that a response will be made to Mr. Sinclair's invitation, for it is important that the Land Question should be well ventilated in this proposed large collection. Naturally it seems to us that the land question, being the fundamental question underlying the whole labor question so-called, should be represented and illustrated by an adequate number of works on the subject. Just to start the ball rolling we venture to suggest the following:

Complete works of Henry George.

Dove's Theory of Human Progression.

Spencer's Suppressed Tenth Chapter of Social Statics.

Spence and Ogilvie.

Behrens, Toward the Light.

Behrens and Singer. Story of My Dictatorship.

The Lost Island, a Story.

Rivadavia, by Andres Lamas.

Oppenheimer. The State.

Thorold Rogers. Six Centuries of Work and Wages.

This Department will be glad to receive and print other titles received from our readers, especially those included under fiction, poetry and the drama.

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If there is anything that is getting on the nerves of this Department is is the prevailing *penchant* for economic "research." Our good friend Adele Bonnyclabber tells us that we are quite wrong in our critical aloofness to so well credited a method for the advancement of learning, but nevertheless we continue to be stubborn opponents. One should think that long before this time the inductive method of approach, with its statistics, special commissions, government reports, private investigations, etc., etc., would have laid the foundation for certain valid conclusions, to serve as bases or starting points for a genuine deductive science of political economy. But no. So intent still is the university mind on the mere collection of details that it has found no time nor inclination to seek the conversion of these laboratory investigations into principles which the ordinary citizen may comprehend. Just as such a conspicuous pundit of "economics" as Sidney Webb denies the very existence of human rights, so nearly all of the pseudo-economists of this 20th century find no starting point for man's relation to the Earth nor to his fellow men nor to himself, but claim that all morality is a morality of expediency—elevating to the seat of government groups of "supermen" to control millions of servants, serfs or slaves "under Socialism." Magnifying the

importance both of their aim and of their method these exponents of "economics" have since the publication of *Progress and Poverty* consistently sought to darken counsel in a cloud of unenlightening pedantry, the undoubted end of which has been to render support to monopoly and privilege. Taking their cues from the dry-as-dust scholarship of the German universities they have produced thousands of volumes of learned imbecility, compounding and fostering a braggart imperialism which, let us hope, found its nemesis in the *débauche* of the World War. In a shrewd paragraph in *Progress and Poverty* Henry George called attention to the tendency toward encyclopaedic investigation for its own sake and characterized it as a sign of a nation's decline—an imitation of the Chinese system of mandarin scholarship, words, words, words, signifying nothing.

Reader, have you heard of the "Economic and Social History of the World's War," presently to be published in 160 volumes? It is announced as the "biggest enterprise in the history of history" and is being financed by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "Upon this monumental work 200 of the most eminent scholars of 16 countries have been at work for the past seven years and it will not be finished for five years more." Criticism may well be reserved. But why limit the work to 160 volumes? Would not 1600 or 16,000 be more impressive? And who shall say that even this last figure would strain the resources of the Carnegie Endowment? Alongside of this colossus how very puny indeed seems the recent Donation made by Mr. Bernard Baruch of \$250,000 for a special intensive investigation of the causes of war, to be carried out, of course, under the most approved methods of "research." We mention this little endowment simply for the sake of the comparison with the bigger one above, remembering Virgil's famous distinction of great things from small—"Quantum lenta solent inter viburna cupressi." But certainly the most interesting of these endowments for "research" is the one founded five years ago by Dr. Richard T. Ely, Professor of Economics at the University of Wisconsin, entitled the "Institute for Research in Land Economics and Public Utilities." We are told that since the organization of the Institute many studies and investigations have been made by the members of the staff and reports of the studies have in many instances been published. We quote: "On the basis of the accomplishments thus far achieved, which it is believed give ample demonstration of the value of an organized movement for economic research of this nature, the Institute has opened a campaign to raise an endowment fund sufficiently large to enable it to carry on its work along broader and more fundamental lines (sic). As yet, it is pointed out, the Institute has been able only to scratch the surface of the facts to be studied and to devote attention to only a few of the many questions calling for answers. The Board of Trustees designates the directions in which

the resources of the Institute are utilized, while Dr. Ely, as Director of Research, supervises the work of the Institute's staff of research specialists, coordinating their activities, maintaining a balanced distribution of effort among the principal subdivisions of the field and generally indicating the broad lines of research projects to be undertaken." We hesitate to say more on this subject. We do however offer our felicitations to Miss Bonnyclabber in finding her career set down in the midst of such congenial people.

Herbert Quick: A Great Iowan

TWO years ago we had occasion to sum up the services of the late Emerson Hough. Death now exacts a word of tribute to the life work of another great Iowan, Herbert Quick, long a valued contributor to *The Saturday Evening Post*, and an all-round American of the highest type.

Mr. Quick's career was as remarkable as it was interesting. As a lad he suffered from infantile paralysis. He never wholly outgrew its after effects; and yet, such were his ambition, his talent and that divine driving force which makes men assume hard tasks they might easily avoid, that he made a great name for himself and served the people of his state and nation as steadfastly and as loyally as he served himself. While he taught school he studied law. He became successively lawyer, editor, mayor, student of public affairs and novelist. He helped to organize the Federal Farm Loan Bureau and rendered brilliant service as a Red Cross executive in the Far East.

Human interest and literary value are not the only merits to be assigned to Mr. Quick's novels. What is more important, they preserve for the younger generation faithful and sympathetic pictures of a pioneer American of a day that has gone. His stories are as clean as the winds of his Iowa prairies and as wholesome and invigorating as the life they depict.

Only a few days before Mr. Quick's death he brought to this office the manuscript of his autobiography. It is the typical life story of a successful, country-bred, old-stock American. It bubbles over with buoyant humor, shrewd worldly wisdom and cheerful philosophy. No one who reads it will escape the spell of the magnetic personality which shines through its pages.—*Saturday Evening Post*.

Wanted! Reviews Or Commendations Of Progress And Poverty

WE are in need of reviews and commendatory notices of *Progress and Poverty* from prominent men living or dead. Some of our friends may have kept such notices that appeared at the time of the appearance of *Progress and Poverty* or any other of the George works, or on the death of Henry George, commenting on the books he left.

The Professors' Sand-Hidden Heads

IN 1879 a book was published which put the professors of political economy and sociology in a dilemma. These gentlemen teach the branches of study which deal with the distribution of wealth and of the laws which control the state of people in organized society.

Prior to 1879 most of them were justified in telling us that poverty was inevitable. Most of them taught the "wage-fund theory."

Under this theory it was held for truth that what you and I as producers receive for our work is just our mathematical share of the produced wealth. Therefore, as our numbers grow, each man's share decreases, so that increasing poverty must come with increasing population.

It was a comfortable doctrine—for all but the producing masses. It called for no fight against existing wrongs.

The book which put them in a dilemma was "*Progress and Poverty*," written by the greatest man America ever produced, Henry George.

George showed that poverty is caused mainly by the increasing share of the wealth produced taken by the people who own the earth.

George proved that the inevitable division of produced wealth is into the three funds of Interest, Wages and Rent; and that Wages and Rent are constantly absorbed to a larger and larger extent into Rent.

It called for a fight against poverty. The remedy proposed was the taking of the unearned increment of all sorts of land, for public uses, in the form of a tax and the abolition of all taxes on improvements and other property created by industry.

It showed the way to a basic reform much more promising than socialism and without revolution.

The professors never answered him. They wrote much which they called answers, but George stands unanswered yet. He cannot be answered. The professors hid their heads in their hands and their heads are most of them still hidden.

Some of them see their very vulnerable position and have abandoned it. I have a pamphlet from Dr. Henry Gunnison Brown of the University of Missouri which, while it does not advocate the George philosophy, shows the fallacy of the various "answers" to George in our current text-books on economics and sociology. Not only fallacies, but actual false statements of history.

Dr. Brown's pamphlet is available, but it may be read in the *Journal of Political Economy* for April, 1924. His book, "*Economic Science and the Common Welfare*," is published by the Missouri Book company, Columbia, Mo. Dr. Brown has this to be said for him: He is not afraid to face the truths enunciated by Henry George. He does not hide his head in the sand. He does not lie out of an embarrassing situation.—HERBERT QUICK