

if I have used too strong language in their defense, I hope it may be pardoned. I frankly admit that I do feel proud of my comrades and their record in the war for the Union. The humblest one who volunteered and followed the old flag has thereby earned the right to have his name inscribed upon the roll of honor and to be cherished and remembered through all time and eternity; yea, even until the "heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll," and the universe shall be dissolved in showers of star-dust never again to be gathered.

Frank Bell.

II. — REJOINDER BY PROFESSOR SLOANE.

YOUR readers will doubtless admire, as I do, the repression and good temper of Mr. Bell's letter, but they cannot fail to note exactly the same unmoral pleas to which the article on "Pensions and Socialism" called attention.

1. He admits that right-minded veterans have not drawn the pensions they might legally have secured under the Arrears Act because disability through army service was not such as to prevent their earning a living for themselves and their families; but he can see no difference between these patriots and those who, taking the law as their only standard of right, clutch what they can get, without caring whether their disability was due to military service or to hereditary ailments and the ordinary risks and toils of the times of peace between the close of the war and 1880.

2. He also admits with creditable frankness that soldiers enfeebled by age, or sickness not due to military service, are, under the act of June, 1890, the recipients of alms disguised under the name of pension. But he says nothing of the dismay of the honest pensioner who sees the name prostituted to cover quite another thing, nor of the well-used opportunities for dishonesty which the bill created. I cannot hear of a single rural community where public morality has not suffered by the tolerance in it of men known to be drawing pensions (*sic*) they have not deserved, secured too often, alas! by false swearing.

3. It is not true that the soldier who returned from the war in good health was handicapped in the race. (The preference of veterans in the public service is well illustrated by the case of Mr. Bell himself.) On the contrary, the life of the moral soldier was a wholesome life; the training of the army made him more adaptable for all uses than other men, and it is generally believed that most of the fighting and exposure throughout the war fell on less than one-third of the total number enlisted. The general poverty of the so-called veterans to which Mr. Bell refers, if it exists at all, and its existence is certainly doubtful, is due to causes utterly unconnected with the war.

4. Your readers will also observe the phrases, "due him under the law," "legally due him," at the beginning of Mr. Bell's letter, and the very different ones, "inscribed upon the roll of honor," "cherished and remembered . . . until . . . the universe shall be dissolved in showers of star-dust," etc., which occur at the close. To him there appears to be some connection between them, as if the latter were the climax of the former. My object was to show that in yielding to temptation and taking advantage of public sentimentality and a fallible human law, the claimant so far destroyed his

own claim to either respect or honor, and, more heinous still, dragged in the mire the very name of veteran so cherished by the honest soldiers and the nation at large.

The generation of men now coming into the ranks of public service, while too young in 1861 to enlist, knew well the questions at issue and the horrors of the war. It yields to no older one in devotion to the principles for which the army fought, and cannot endure to endanger or lose those very jewels thirty years later by weakly yielding either to the threats of sturdy beggars or to the unconsidered requests of honest and honorable feebleness, which takes refuge too often with the former class instead of seeking help where alone it can be had without dishonor, among the Christian philanthropists who are abundant in all American communities, and who would gladly pay millions for their country's honor, but refuse one cent for tribute even to their loved veterans. It would be very instructive to print the letters which have been sent me within the last month by soldiers who fought for three years, or more or less, actually demanding the repeal for their sakes of the acts which disgrace their true manhood; but the space at my disposal of course forbids me to do so now.

William M. Sloane.

Weakness and Danger of the Single Tax.¹

FIRST.—The advocates of the single tax on land values, with one accord, emphasize the epithet "single." Their distinguished leader has declared all other taxes to be either stupid or unjust or both. To make room for this exclusive plan all existing ways and means of raising revenue, national, State, and local, must be cleared away. The tariff, the internal-revenue imposts, the liquor licenses of States and cities, any existing taxes on franchises, on railway receipts, on successions—all must be abandoned, and no other projects for raising revenue, such as an income tax, must be entertained. The single tax is nothing if not "single"; it is not one which might be engrafted upon the stock of an existing system, whose elements might gradually give place to its expanding efficiency. It calls for the obliteration of all our traditions and ideas regarding taxation; such as the idea that as all persons are under the protection of the state, so all persons may, if the public needs require, be called upon to contribute not only their services but their wealth to the support of government and its reasonable purposes. The single-tax doctrine is not to touch persons as such, but only as they are receivers of the public in the income and profit of land. There is an idea that as all forms of property are protected by the state, they may all be, of right, subjected to taxation, if the public needs require. The single-tax men know of only one kind of property which may be justly taxed. Again, there is the idea that as all industries and employments are protected by the state, the government may, if public needs demand, collect some fraction of the income and profit of industry. There is no possible room nor justification for an income or succession tax under the single-tax regime.

There is another idea which has played a great part

¹ The reader is referred to a discussion of "The Single Tax," by Henry George and Edward Atkinson, in *THE CENTURY* for July, 1890.—Ed.

in the history of the Anglo-Saxon race, embodied in the epigram, "No taxation without representation." Defiance of this immemorial tradition cost one of the Stuart kings his crown, and his head to boot. "No taxation without representation" was the cry which nerved the hearts and steadied the aim of the embattled farmers at Lexington and Concord. Long usage has settled the import of this maxim. It imports not merely that they who are not represented are not to be taxed, but also that they who are *not taxed* ought not to be *represented*. In conformity with this established usage, and in obedience to universal sentiment, the framers of the national Constitution provided that representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned according to population, and not according to property or values of any kind. Representation and direct taxation are, in the national code, coextensive and inseparable.

These ideas are embodied in our State constitutions, some if not all of which provide specifically that taxes shall be as nearly "equal" as may be. It will take a long time to persuade American taxpayers that "equal" may mean the laying of all taxes upon some one class of people or some one kind of property.

Supposing, however, that all such ideas and traditions had been by some magic eradicated, and a single-tax scheme to have been actually formulated, how would it work under a system of government as complicated as our own? We have three systems of taxation working side by side, and two independent government agencies of tax administration. We have a national system of indirect taxation by means of imposts on imported merchandise, and by internal-revenue excises on certain selected articles. We have State taxes and local taxes, mostly direct, administered by a mixed agency of State and local officials. The single-taxers demand a revolution of these systems. Suppose that possible, the question arises, What agency do they propose to employ? There would be no sense in using two or three agencies for administering a single-tax system. Some one of these must be made the primary agent for obtaining the single-tax revenue, and be required to pay over to the other one or two their respective shares as the same may be ascertained. Would the State government subordinate itself to town and city authorities in this matter? On the contrary, the power of local taxation by cities and towns would vanish away, and the municipalities would have to content themselves with such moneys as the legislature would dole out to them. Local government, the pride of American and Anglo-Saxon freemen, would of consequence disappear.

But how would the State governments fare when it came to the question whether they or the national Government should be primary collectors of the single-tax revenue? Does not every school-boy know that we changed the government of the United States one hundred years ago from a confederation to a national union chiefly because the States could not be persuaded nor compelled to collect and pay over the "single tax" on improved lands provided for in the Articles of Confederation?

The framers of the Constitution applied themselves to make a national government which should not need the interposition of any State to raise and collect its revenue. They put into that document a power to raise revenue, absolute, unassailable, irrevocable, and this

power has been defined and supported by a long course of supreme adjudication. The single-tax scheme, if worked at all, must be executed by the general Government and its agents, and the States and all municipalities throughout the States will enjoy only such revenues as Congress may see fit to apportion and pay over. Under such a scheme the forms of democracy might indeed survive, but the state and the government would, in essence, be imperial.

For these reasons, (1) the impossibility of clearing away at a single sweep all existing taxes, (2) the persistence of ancient custom and doctrine, (3) the peculiar and complicated nature of our American government—for these reasons, not to mention others, the exclusive tax on land values has no claim to consideration as a practical working scheme in this country in our day.

SECOND.—If the single tax be examined as a mere theory it will be found that its advocates make certain tacit assumptions which, when expressly stated, are seen to be false. They assume, for example, a state of universal and continuous peace. Deprived of every means of raising extraordinary revenue for war purposes, the nation, invaded and beleaguered, must lay down its arms and accept the terms of the foe at the point where the single-tax receipts shall have been exhausted. Were that the doctrine of the world, one single nation not so scrupulous about collecting taxes from persons, chattels, incomes, franchises, and successions, might soon dictate the conditions of existence to all the rest. The single tax thus endangers, if it does not deny, the right and power of nations to maintain their organized existence. The old common-law doctrine is safer and better, that a free and brave people may "rob the cradle and the grave" to recruit their defensive force, and throw the last dollar they can wring from the orphan and the widow into their military chest.

These single-tax dreamers assume the continuous and universal advancement of society—population always on the increase and evenly so, wealth increasing, intelligence and virtue always abounding more and more. The world does move, has moved, but never on any continuous line of advance by steady and unbroken march. The lot of civilized man in general has been painful and stormy. The progress of particular nations has been "by fits and starts"; periods of depression succeed epochs of advance as by a kind of rhythm. There have been times in the history of this country when the rental value of land in some States would not have paid the salaries of the town clerks. Fortunately our "unjust and stupid" taxes on imports and incomes, on property of many kinds, saved us from political marasmus.

The progress of wealth and population is not uniform in different parts of the country. Population shifts and industries migrate. Rents go down in New England and go up in the Dakotas. The census returns show that the population of counties in the older States, and even in some of the newer ones, is declining from decade to decade. In such counties the revenue from a single tax on land values might be a minus quantity. It may however be expected by the single-tax advocates that the great national taxing machine will in some way compensate for such inequalities.

The enthusiasts again make no allowances for those disasters which in every generation wreck cities, dis-

mantle provinces, and even involve continental areas in vast loss and ruin. Famine is chronic in India and China. In the latter empire only three years ago 1,500,000 people were homeless or starving from the overflow of a single great river. Would an exclusive tax on land values be the only appropriate source of revenue for the provinces thus desolated? It is only a few years since several counties of a Western State, on the eve of a promising harvest, were visited by the red-legged grasshopper and swept as clean of vegetation as the pavements of a city. Would the doctrine of the unearned increment have been a solace to those stricken farmers? Would a single tax on city lots have been a convenience and a boon to the people of New Ulm and Rochester and Sauk Rapids after they had been swept by the tornado? States, like men, do wisely not to carry all their eggs in one basket. It is a principle of taxing systems to distribute the burden so that no one class, nor any one kind of property or industry, shall be ruined in case of disaster. There is no safety-valve to the single-tax boiler.

Passing by a group of other assumptions of interest to economists, such as that land is the only form of wealth which increases in value as population swells, that value and utility are interchangeable terms, and that value is a result of production and not an outcome of exchange, we reach the fundamental postulate of the single-tax optimists, which is that all land belongs to everybody. This statement is only the exaggeration and caricature of a doctrine that is true, but only true within reasonable limitations, and as understood by reasonable persons, who know the inadequacy of language to express all that is in the minds of men. We assert the equality of all men, and we understand that word in a certain reasonable way. We say, for example, that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, and the statement is true, but only true in a reasonable sense. The words do not import that any individual or clique or party may withdraw consent, refuse to pay taxes or to serve on juries, nor that resident aliens, minors, paupers, and idiots may vote. The state in a certain true sense owns all its territory, but that truth does not conflict with the right of citizens also to own lands. The doctrine that the land of the world belongs to God's children is a harmless truism of no practical efficacy; "void," as lawyers phrase it, "for uncertainty." Property is an institution, an inheritance, not a theory. Rights, practical, reasonable, legal rights, do not descend from the clouds; they have grown up out of human experience and the nature of things. Finally (under this head), these amiable proselytes neglect to take any account of the probable political consequences of their scheme, provided it were possible to clear the way for it.

It is a common experience of nations that changes in their economic institutions are followed by totally unexpected consequences: so short is the sight of the wisest men. But there is one consequence of the scheme under discussion which experience may warn us from pursuing. Put all your taxes on any one class of persons and you at once consolidate the members of it into a compact body, ready either to embarrass and to oppose the government or to take possession of the powers of the state and to dictate the laws. If the class selected be the land-holding people,—and that class embraces a large majority of the voters,—all ex-

perience teaches that they will surely and rapidly establish themselves as the ruling class in the state. In this day of large production, when the fashion of large farms worked by machinery is coming so widely into vogue, we should not have long to wait before a landed aristocracy showed its powerful grip upon our legislative departments, placed its best man in the executive chair, and filled the bench of our supreme tribunal with judges whom it could depend upon. Mr. George himself suggests the best reason of all for expecting this result. On page 384 of "Progress and Poverty" he says: "The tax on land values is the only tax of any importance that does not distribute itself. It falls upon the owners of the land, and there is no way in which they can shift the burden upon any one else." He was thinking at the moment as an economist, not as a politician. Lay the taxes on landlords and you may trust the real-estate lawyers to find them a political way of escape from the burdens.

It is with difficulty that the people now submit to direct taxation in amounts sufficient to support the institutions which modern states must needs maintain. The public schools are ill equipped, the teachers poorly paid. Would things be bettered if the fortunes of the state were placed in the hands of the land-holding class? That class would name the assessors, dictate the rates and valuations and the purposes to which revenue should be applied, or human nature will have undergone a new creation.

THIRD.—Finally, the single-tax plan is not a plan of taxation at all in the proper and accepted sense of the word, and it was not originally proposed as a plan of taxation proper. There are two ideas inherent in the word tax, or rather two phases of one idea. The word, at bottom, means to apportion by cutting, and we have the principle on the one hand that taxes must be proportioned to the public needs, and on the other, apportioned equitably among the people who are to pay. These principles are reasonable, of universal acceptance, and of immemorial usage. No free people will for a moment consent that their agency, the government, may assess and collect taxes *ad libitum* and without regard to the purposes and duties of government. Nor will a wise people, by imposing the burdens of the state on any one class, lay the foundation for a claim by that class to rule the state. Exactions of money, goods, or services not proportioned to public uses, and not apportioned to private ability and interest, are not, in any just sense of the word, taxes. The proposed single tax is but a piece of remedial social policy. Its advocates hold that under existing conditions human progress is and must continue to be accompanied by poverty—deepening, widening, irremediable poverty. They refuse to admit that such means as better government, better education, better habits, coöperation, and so on, can have the least effect in counteracting this tendency, whose cause they find in the private ownership of land. Private property in land they declare to be a "bold, bare, enormous wrong, like chattel slavery"; for this alleged wrong they see but one remedy—the utter abolition of private property in land.

Mr. George is of opinion that it would be socially just and economically advantageous to abolish all private titles by a single stroke of legislation, but thinks it better to "accomplish the same thing in a simpler,

easier, and quieter way" In "Progress and Poverty," on page 364, he says, "It is not necessary to confiscate land; it is only necessary to confiscate rent." Here we have the core and essence of the single-tax philosophy — confiscation, frankly and for the moment boldly, confiscation: confiscation of rent, because that will lead to virtual confiscation of land. Thus without jar or shock land would "be really common property." How genial the suggestion of doing things in a simple, easy, and quiet way, instead of resorting to the honest but rough-and-ready plan of universal eviction!

Mr. George is indeed so mild-mannered a mutineer that he will not scare his fellow citizens with a naughty word. He hastens to replace that malodorous term with another which may hold up its head in any respectable circle. These comfortable words may be read on the page just quoted: "What I therefore propose as the simple yet sovereign remedy which will

raise wages,
increase the earnings of capital,
extirpate pauperism,
abolish poverty,
give remunerative employment to whoever wishes it,
afford free scope to human powers,
lessen crime,
elevate morals, and taste, and intelligence,
purify government, and
carry civilization to yet nobler heights, is

to appropriate rent by taxation."

Is this honest? Is it candid to say "appropriate rent by taxation" when confiscation of land is meant? Confiscation and taxation are not synonymous and interchangeable terms. They are diverse and irreconcilable terms. Taxation implies apportionment to public needs and private ability. Confiscation means seizure to the public treasury in an arbitrary way. In this case it is specifically insisted that the collection of rental value is not to be gauged by the regular and usual demands of the state. The whole or "nearly" the whole rental is to be extorted; for if not, the object in view, which is not revenue, but virtual confiscation of land, will not be effected. If more than a scintilla of rent remains in the hands of the landlords, they will have the advantage of society. It is admitted that the rental value of land "in well-developed countries" is now more than enough to support the government, and will increase with the progress of society. Confiscation, however, is to go on, and the swelling surplus is to be disposed of by the establishment of "public baths, libraries, gardens, lecture-rooms, music and dancing-halls, theaters, universities, technical schools, shooting-galleries, playgrounds, gymnasiums, etc." The end of the socialist is to be reached without alarm or violence. In a matter involving a revolution in government, the reconstruction of society, and the abandonment of immemorial institutions, the idea of effecting the object by indirect means and the use of smooth words is amusing, not to say nauseous. No one will be deceived. The four millions of farmers in the United States, before they cast their ballots for "appropriating rent by taxation," will understand just as well as the most ardent apostle of the single tax that "this simple device of placing all taxes on the value of land" will "be in effect putting up the land at auction to whoever" will "pay the highest rent to the state." The object of this paper being simply to expose the true nature and original purpose of the so-called single tax, it is not necessary

to enter upon any defense of the institution of property in land, nor to apologize either for defects in our existing land laws or for acknowledged evils in our present system of taxation for revenue.

William W. Folwell.

A British Consul's Confidence in the Union Cause.

THE following despatch (for a copy of which, made from the original in the British Foreign Office, THE CENTURY is indebted to Lady Archibald) was written by Sir Edward Archibald, Consul-General at New York, to Lord John Russell, "Her Majesty's principal Secretary of State," eleven days after the fall of Fort Sumter and three months before the first battle of Bull Run. It is remarkable for its estimate of the temper and resources of the North, for its prediction of the ultimate failure of secession, and for its advice to the British Government that from motives both of humanity and policy it should ally its influence and sympathies with the Union cause.

BRITISH CONSULATE, NEW YORK, April 24, 1861.

MY LORD: I have the honour to report to Your Lordship that there has been no communication by mail or telegraph to or from Washington since Friday afternoon. During the last two days we have had rumours that the authorities of the State of Maryland had undertaken to restore the railroad communication through Baltimore, and reestablish telegraphic communication with the national Capital; but thus far nothing appears to have been done in this respect, and as, in the sadly disturbed state of the country, the special messenger with Lord Lyons's despatches for this packet may possibly fail to arrive before her departure, it may perhaps be needful that I should give Your Lordship a brief review of the startling events of the past few days, and a report of the existing condition of public affairs in this country.

Your Lordship will have learnt from Lord Lyons of the bombardment of Fort Sumter by the forces of the Confederate States, and of its evacuation on Sunday the 14th instant. A full knowledge of the whole of this affair leaves no shadow of doubt that Major Anderson, and the very slim garrison under his command, displayed great courage and gallantry, and succumbed only when deprived of the capability of further resistance. Why the naval expedition sent from this port for the reinforcement of the Fort did not coöperate with its defenders or send them assistance has not yet been satisfactorily explained.

On Monday the 15th President Lincoln issued his proclamation calling out a militia force of 75,000 men to aid in executing the laws, and ordering the combinations of lawless men in the seceded States to disperse within twenty days, and at the same time summoning Congress to meet on the 4th July next in special session.

The ambiguity of the President's inaugural address, the subsequent vacillating and apparently objectless policy of his Government, and the useless efforts of the Peace Conference at Washington and of the Virginian Convention to establish a satisfactory basis of reconstruction of the Union, had combined to produce a state of apathy and indifference in the public mind, which seemed almost introductory to a recognition of the Southern Confederacy as the readiest solution of the complicated condition of public affairs.

But the attack upon and capture of Fort Sumter, followed by the President's proclamation, caused a sudden and complete transformation of public sentiment. The ulterior revolutionary designs of the Confederate leaders, and the sedulous preparation they had made to accomplish them, were now fully comprehended; and the stinging insult which had been inflicted on the national flag by the merciless bombardment of Fort Sumter and its starving garrison roused such a feeling of intense indignation throughout the entire North and West that the President's proclamation was responded to with an enthusiasm for which he himself could not have been prepared, and which it is hardly possible adequately to describe.