

Mr. Joseph Arch, the agricultural labourer's champion, died on February 12th at the age of 92. When nine years of age he got a job at crow-scaring at 4d. a day and later was promoted to ploughboy at 6d. a day. He spent his evenings in hard study. Already at the age of 21 he was making his mark as a Methodist preacher, and he threw himself heart and soul into the cause of the agricultural labourer. In 1872 the Labourers' Union was formed. In 1885 Mr. Arch was returned for N.W. Norfolk as the first working-man Member of the House of Commons, defeating Lord Henry Bentinck at the election. He did good work in the House, but the Union itself did not prosper, and in the early nineties it seemed to be moribund. Mr. Arch retired from Parliament in 1900.

The Apple-Tree and the Apples.

In the case of *Mills v. Brooker*, decided on February 17th, the judges held that if a person picks apples from the branches of his neighbour's tree which overhang his land and appropriates them, he is liable for damages in respect of their value. For the taker of the apples it was argued that, since he had the right to lop the overhanging branches as being a nuisance—as had been decided by the Court of Appeal in 1895 in the case of *Lemmon v. Webb*—he had also the right to take the apples. For the owner of the tree it was contended that, whatever might be the lopping-rights, and though the severance from the tree made the apples personal instead of real property, they still remained his property; and the Court took this view. Strangely enough, the point does not seem to have come up for decision in any previous case. It is interesting to observe that, though picked apples are personal property, apples growing on a tree are real property, because they are part and parcel of the tree, and the tree is part and parcel of the land. What would have been the rights of the parties if the apples had come to the neighbour's land as windfalls is not quite clear. Perhaps this point may be raised in some future case.

DEAR LAND AND CHEAP LABOUR

By E. J. CRAIGIE, Adelaide

Single-taxers are often accused of being folk of one idea: a simple idea that given free land men will be free, and not wage slaves. An old official report in the Adelaide Public Library, made by the first South Australia Commissioners to the Secretary of State on June 24th, 1836, shows that these pioneer colonists, who wanted cheap labour, saw that this idea is fundamentally true.

When South Australia was founded the land was sold in eighty-acre sections at £20 per acre, each buyer of eighty acres of country land was given the right of selecting one acre of land in the city of Adelaide free of charge. The money received from the sale of land was used as a fund to bring immigrants to South Australia. Adults of each sex, not over 30 years of age, were brought to the colony in equal numbers.*

"It is essential," the report says, "to the prosperity of a new colony in which there are neither slaves nor convicts that there should be a constant supply of free labourers willing to be employed for wages. If there be not a constant supply of labour for hire, no extensive farms can be cultivated, no large or continuous work can be carried on, and the capital imported must perish for want of hands to render it reproductive."

Clearly the commissioners had the prosperity of the employer class in mind, rather than the freedom and development of the immigrant, for they proceed to say:—

"Now in order to secure that constant supply of labour for hire, two things are necessary: it is necessary that the requisite number of labourers shall be conveyed to the colony, and it is necessary, when so conveyed, they should continue as hired labourers until the arrival of other emigrants to supply their places in the labour market."

To keep the immigrant a wage worker, the report recommends the increase in the price of land:—

"Hence in determining the proper price of public lands in the new colony two points have to be considered: first, the price necessary to convey to the colony the number of labourers required to cultivate the land in the most profitable manner; and second, the price necessary to prevent the labourers so conveyed from acquiring property in land before they had worked for wages for a sufficient period. In order to accomplish the latter object, it is not improbable that, at an early period after the arrival of the Governor, it may be desirable to raise the price of public lands over one pound per acre. We, therefore, venture to hope that your Lordship will approve of our having authorised the Colonial Commissioner to advance the price of public land, should the labourers conveyed to the colony by the Emigration Fund begin to cultivate small farms on their own account before the arrival of other labourers to work for hire in their stead."

Nothing wrong with that argument! If the price of land was not increased, the men would be tempted to stop working for wages, and, to use the words of the report, "capital would waste and perish for want of means to use it."

But, even if the Governor did act on the Commissioners' recommendation "to advance the price of public land," a sub-heading in the report, "Difficulties Encountered and Obstacles to be Removed," shows that it was appreciated that other conditions may cause a labour shortage. For instance, if a neighbouring colony retained the old price for its public land, the immigrants would have a tendency to go there. On this, the report says rather clumsily:

"Were the price of land in any district raised sufficiently high to take out the proper supply of labour, while in some adjacent district land should be sold at a lower price, or be granted gratuitously, those who obtained their land at a lower price, or for nothing, would be in a condition to offer higher wages to the emigrant labourers than those who had expended a portion of their capital in contributing to the Emigrant Fund, by paying a higher price for land. The emigrant labourer would be attracted by the higher price of labour and the lower price of land, and thus the capitalists who contributed to the Emigration Fund would be deprived of the supply of labour for which they had paid."

That the chief concern was not so much to make a country of happy homes, but to get cheap labour, is made clear by the following paragraph which sums up the thought that runs through this remarkable report:—

"Without either slaves or convicts, capitalists of every description will obtain, without cost, as many labourers as they wish to employ; and engagements which labourers may make for a term of service will be maintained. The means of securing all this is a *proper price for land*."

So, by artificially increasing the price of land in the early days of South Australia, the workers were kept from access to the land, and were thus compelled to sell their services to those in possession. If our politicians now knew as much about the relation of the land question to the labour question as did these Commissioners, and had they the courage and honesty to do what is right, the social problem would soon be solved. They would make monopoly of land impossible by taking the full rental value into the public treasury—which, in addition to making land easily accessible, would enable them to abolish all the taxes now levied on industry.