

GERMAN POVERTY

(By BOLTON HALL in a Letter to the New York "Nation," 5th December.)

In an admirable article in the *Nation* of 7th November, page 484, Arthur Feiler says: "The German people is crowded into a territory which produces neither adequate foodstuffs for the population nor sufficient raw materials for its industry." Again, on page 476, Ignaz Wrobel, in a keen analysis of the Germany of To-day, makes this definite statement: "the country is over-populated."

Compared with almost any European neighbour, with the possible exception of France, Germany is not by any means over-populated. She still has 185,889 square miles of territory, and only 62,500,000 inhabitants, or about 328 persons to the square mile (say, one family to each eight acres). Belgium has 648 inhabitants to the square mile, Holland 563.3, and Italy 329. None of these countries raises all the foodstuffs for its population, or produces anywhere nearly sufficient raw materials for its industries.

If decreasing population caused national prosperity, then Ireland should be one of the wealthiest countries of Europe to-day, for her population has dropped from 9,000,000 in 1846 to less than 5,000,000 in 1926. If the over-population theory were correct, there would be no poverty and want in Ireland now. But Irish poverty persists. Spain has only 108 inhabitants to the square mile to Holland's 563 (or to Germany's 328); Spain has the better natural resources; but in which country is the wealth more abundant? The degree of wealth of any country is not dependent upon the number of its inhabitants, but upon the freedom of access to resources by its inhabitants. Germany's drawbacks are not due to natural disabilities, or "over-population," but to laws which restrict labour's access to natural opportunities, and also hamper the interchange of labour products with the rest of the world.

Some of these hampering trade laws are of Germany's own making, and some are imposed by other countries. But for the laws which allow land to be held out for use, or only put into use after an exorbitant price has been paid for the privilege, Germany is herself responsible like every other country in the like case.

FORESHORE RIGHTS AND LANDLORD PRIVILEGE

A correspondent at Shoreham-by-Sea, near Brighton, sends us an interesting little story.

Many people are owning or renting plots of land on the edge of the foreshore and obliged to protect their bungalows from sea encroachment. Hitherto protection has been attained by bavins without any interference from the landlord, but lately the efficiency, with ultimate saving in cost, of sea-walls has been recognized as the best policy. During the recent gales, one of the dwellers found that his bavins had been washed out and that his bungalow had been placed in jeopardy. He decided to build a sea-wall, and immediately the owner forced him to sign a 99-years' agreement for a strip of foreshore 66 feet by 20 feet at an annual rent of 30s., i.e., at the rate of £49 10s. per acre! He has been given to understand that the "owner" is within his legal rights, but his policy is obviously detrimental to the occupiers of the whole estate.

The obligation to protect the shore is said to be now in the hands of the Shoreham and Lancing Sea Defence Commission, but they will do nothing to protect the bungalows except in the general policy of groyning done under the direction of an engineer.

The incident recalls the landowner's claim set up

when, in the spring of 1886, Mr Verinder was successfully fighting the cause of some Irish fishermen against a landlord who claimed the ownership of the foreshore, and who was prosecuting the local fishermen for taking seaweed therefrom. He received the following letter from the Board of Trade:—

"In reply to your letter of the 12th inst. (12/4/1886), inquiring whether owners of land bordering on the seashore can claim the seaweed cast by the tide on the shore, and also whether the shore itself would be considered the private property of such owners, I am directed by the Board of Trade to acquaint you that *prima facie* the foreshore of the United Kingdom below high water mark of an average or medium tide are not the property of the owners of the adjoining lands, but are vested in the Crown and have been placed by the Crown Lands Act, 1866, under the management of the Board of Trade.

Strangely in conflict with this official statement of a "*prima facie*" view is the copy of a notice exhibited in the harbour of Beer, South Devon, and sent to Mr Verinder by one of his correspondents a few years ago. It ran as follows:—

"The Shingle, Sand, Rocks, Stone and Seaweed on the Beach and under the Cliffs within the Manor of Beer, are the property of the Trustees of the Rolle Estate. Any person removing the same without permission from the said Trustees or their Agents will be prosecuted."

With respect to Shoreham, it is officially stated in White Paper No 119 of 1913, that in that urban district there are 305 acres of "tidal water and foreshore." How even such property is held to ransom is shown in the action of the "owner" of the narrow strip who places on it an annual value equal to £49 10s. per acre. At 20 years' purchase this would mean very nearly £1,000 per acre. It is a striking illustration of the case for the taxation and rating of land values.

THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON

FROM THE DIARY OF SAMUEL PEPYS.

3rd December, 1667.

He (Sir Richard Ford) tells me, also, speaking of the new street that is to be made from the Guild Hall down to Cheapside, that the ground is already, most of it, bought. And tells me of one particular, of a man that hath a piece of ground lying in the very middle of the street that must be: which, when the street is cut out of it, there will remain ground enough, of each side, to build a house to front the street. He demanded £700, for the ground, and to be excused paying any thing for the melioration of the rest of his ground that he was to keep. The Court consented to give him £700, only not to abate him the consideration: which the man denied: but told them, and so they agreed, that he would excuse the City the £700 that he might have the benefit of the melioration without paying anything for it. So much some will get by having the City burned: Ground, by this means, that was not worth 4d. a foot before, will now, when houses are built, be worth 15s. a foot. But he tells me of the common standard now reckoned on between man and man, in places where there is no alteration of circumstances, but only the houses burnt, there the ground, which, with a house on it, did yield £100 a year, is now reputed worth £33 6s. 3d.: and that this is the common market price between one man and another made upon a good and moderate medium. (*Braybrooke Edition.*)

Mr. W. R. Lester, M.A., is to speak at a meeting of the Individualist Society at the Book Shop, 84, Charing Cross Road, London, on Monday, 4th March, at 5 p.m.