

SIR GEORGE GREEN, J.P.



Chairman of the Scottish Liberal Council, 1906 to 1913.

Sir George Green, who retires this year from the office of Chairman of the Scottish Liberal Association, is well known in Glasgow as a keen supporter of the Taxation of Land Values. He is a Vice-President of the Scottish League and has been a constant reader of our monthly journal since its first appearance in June, 1894. He believes in the missionary work of LAND VALUES. In the days when there were few to help with money he took a deep and abiding interest in the work of the League, and kept a sympathetic eye on the business side of its ventures. Away back in the early days of the movement he astonished the members of the League by a praiseworthy endeavour to raise a fund of £500 to promote its aim and object. In the midst of a busy life his interest in the affairs of the League has never flagged, and he has watched with interest its growth and power. When it was decided to hold the National Conference of 1911 at Glasgow, Sir George was one of its most enthusiastic supporters. He entertained the speakers, the United Committee, the Executive of the Scottish League and friends to lunch on the opening day of the proceedings.

Sir George has been actively connected with the Scottish Liberal Association for the past twenty years, and has done much to place the taxation of land values in the forefront of Scottish Liberalism. At the meeting of the Scottish Liberal Association held at Peebles in 1906, over which he presided for the first time as Chairman of the Council, a resolution in the following terms was adopted:—

That the Scottish Liberal Association, recognising the strong support accorded at the General Election to the demand for the taxation of land values, records with satisfaction the subsequent emphatic affirmation of the principle in the House of Commons on 23rd March last; expresses the hope that the principle be applied to rural as well as urban land; urges the Government to include a national tax on land values in the provisions of the next Budget; and declares that all feu duties and ground annuals should be made the subject of a tax.

From the very first day he settled down in Glasgow he busied himself with municipal affairs. In 1892 he was elected a member of the Lanarkshire County Council. Here in this, the wealthiest and most important local public governing body in Scotland, he found, in eighteen years' continuous service, ample scope for his gifts as a practical administrator. His work told, and his influence with his fellow-Councillors reached high-water mark: he became vice-convenor of the Council, and was convenor at the time of his resignation, three years ago.

Sir George was born at Stockport in 1843. The eldest of a large family, he began life in the "hungry forties" in a house the rental of which was not more than a shilling a week. His father was a power-loom weaver whose wages would not average more than twenty shillings a week. These early experiences have had no little to do with his taking sides with the poor and oppressed, and impelling him, notwithstanding his great success as a business man, to stand firm and true in the people's cause. In politics he is a democrat who wants to help people to help themselves. When he came to Glasgow twenty years ago he took naturally to the radical sentiment of the city and plunged boldly into its public and political life. His sympathy, courage, and devotion to ideal causes carried him at once into religious, temperance, and radical circles. He has given much money to the progressive movements to which he attached himself, but had he never given a penny his labours and his enthusiasm would have marked him out as a popular leader.

His work in religious circles and in the temperance movement is another story. Those more concerned with these movements know how to do justice to Sir George Green's services. For us he will always hold a unique place in the history of the Scottish League. When he first settled down to political work in Glasgow he quickly made himself master of the policy we advocate, and on the two occasions on which he stood as a Liberal candidate, for the Partick Division of Lanarkshire and for his native town of Stockport, he boldly proclaimed the gospel of the land for the people. Unsuccessful in these attempts to enter Parliament, he threw himself all the more keenly into the work that lies at every man's door. He carried into his political life all the shrewdness, tact, and sympathy which has made his success as a business man. In his dealings with the Scottish League he trusted the men who he knew were doing the work, helped them with advice, with money, and with moral support, the while devoting himself to the cultivation of the broader field of radical endeavour. He retires from the responsible position he has held in the Scottish Liberal Association with the good wishes of his associates; he has earned his retirement, and we cordially join with hosts of friends on both sides of the Border in wishing him very many years yet of active political life.

"The old age pension" is, so far as it goes, a confession of failure of democracy. Except as a measure of emergency, its real purpose in England, it has no justification in the public welfare. The old age pension is part of the dark shadow cast over Europe by the growth of the gigantic delusion of "National Defence." Clean up the social atmosphere, restore to the people what is rightfully theirs, and they will care, rare accidents excepted, for their own old age.—Prof. David Starr Jordan in the STAR, San Francisco, March 15th.

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There is a natural and divine law anterior and superior to all human and civil law, by which every people has a right to live off the fruits of the soil on which they are born and in which they are buried.—CARDINAL MANNING.