

relies for his profits upon cheap farming over an extensive area." (p. 39.)

The argument that there would be no agricultural problem to discuss if the indolent farmer would emulate his industrious neighbour; that ploughed land is always more productive than grass land; that even before the war 3,500,000 acres now under grass might have been cultivated, is surely a manifest exposition of the reform that is necessary—not a subsidy to encourage industry but a penalty on idleness by placing taxation everywhere on the market value of the land apart from its improvements. Throughout his book Mr. Hall brings his reader repeatedly to that unflinching conclusion and proves most convincingly that the fundamental cause of waste and depopulation is the power of landowners to hold land out of use; it is clearly not the fall in prices nor the competition of foreign corn that prevents large areas of land being used and men having access to them. Yet he fails to advocate the most obvious remedy.

Instead of that he turns to a policy of devoting public money to the establishment of small holdings and industrial farms and to reclamation, ignoring the fact that such a programme would defeat itself, as similar schemes have been and always will be wrecked, by stiffening the price of land not only against the State itself but against all public and private efforts to gain a foothold on the soil in the district where such experiments are made. In this sense nothing has been more disastrous than the recent activities of county councils in buying or leasing land for small holdings.

Mr. Hall's grand scheme, however, for the salvation of agriculture and for ensuring a greater supply of home-grown food is a bonus of 10s. per acre per annum for each additional acre restored to the plough, and he suggests also a protective tariff. He does not go so far as the Committee on the Settlement of Sailors and Soldiers, which would also have a guaranteed minimum price for wheat but unlike the Committee he points out what would be the effect of such a programme on the rent of land. The Report utterly ignores this self-evident result; Mr. Hall emphasises the fact that the landowners would in time pocket the whole benefit. In fact, it can be calculated his proposals would raise the price of the land laid down to wheat by £75,000,000, not to speak of their effect on the price of all other agricultural land. His way out of the difficulty is that the State should become the universal landowner and so get back any increment in value brought about by its own action. We need not go into all the ramifications of such a scheme, but while we are gratified that Mr. Hall contributes this telling exposure of landlord legislation, we imagine that proposals for Protection and Bounties, with such an anti-toxin as high-priced State land and dear food, are a comical interlude in the discussion of an economic question whose answer lies in the securing of the rights of the people to the land and the removal of all obstacles to production. As to land nationalisation, Mr. Hall should tell us what is wrong with the taxation of land values as a means to intercepting any benefit to landowners due to every cause that maintains and increases the value of land.

A. W. M.

A PLAIN TALK ON TAXATION*

This little pamphlet by the President of the Manhattan Single Tax Club is an excellent example of what a public speech on this question ought to be, and it is well named "A Plain Talk on Taxation." Mr. Brown rivets attention at once by pointing out how our present system of taxation violates every principle on which a sane individual carries

* A PLAIN TALK ON TAXATION. By James R. Brown, President Manhattan Single Tax Club. Published by the Club, 47, West 42nd Street, New York.

on his private affairs. Taxation, he says, is payment for social service, but the tax-payer does not contribute in proportion to the value of the social service he receives. Far from it—he pays in proportion to the size of house he lives in, or the amount of tobacco he consumes, or (delusive phrase) his ability to pay.

Just suppose that a man went into a store with an \$800 sealskin overcoat and asked the girl for a spool of cotton, and the girl put it down on the counter and he asked: "How much?" and she looked him over and said: "Ten dollars, please!" The man would say: "Great heavens, I never paid more than five cents for it." The girl answers: "Well, we have changed our way of doing business; we charge now according to the ability of the people to pay, not according to the value of what they get." Now that is exactly what we do in our tax system.

Not only is the present system unjust in respect of what it does in confiscating privately produced wealth, it is also unjust in preventing wealth from being produced at all. The man that uses his land and improves it is taxed, but the man who holds his land out of use escapes paying taxes though his action causes the greatest injury and suffering to the community. We need not quote Mr. Brown's illustrations; they are such as have hundreds and thousands of parallels in this country.

The tax problem, the whole social problem, is simply this:—

Will you take private property for social use, restrict trade and commerce, check industries, and deny the poor man all opportunity to employ himself on the land if he is not satisfied with the wages offered him? Or will you take public income for public use, and by that very act open the reservoir of land to the use of labour and capital?

To these questions there can be but one answer, "public value for public uses, private property for private enjoyment." As Mr. Brown says: "No honest man will object to that, if he can understand it."

We heartily congratulate our American co-workers on this valuable and brilliant addition to their armoury of single tax literature.

SECOND THOUGHTS OF AN ECONOMIST

This posthumous work by Professor Smart contains little that is not to be found in his other published writings. There are in it some autobiographical remarks that will interest those who, like the reviewer, were among his pupils; and there is a short biographical sketch by one of his assistants which also will appeal to those who were touched by the lovable nature of the man. But, sad to say, there is nothing in this book that will be of value to those who are striving for a radical solution of the social problem. Professor Smart never seemed to be capable of believing in such a thing. He could only hope that in the course of a long and painful evolution employers would become more considerate of their employees, and that the employed would be more reasonable in their attitude to those who employed them. Like Mr. Hartley Withers, he believed that the consumer is under a duty to expend his money in a direction which will give useful employment to others and which will not weight the scales against those who are poorer than himself and who come into the market place with a few shillings to compete with the rich in the purchase of food and the bare necessities of life. Nowhere in Professor Smart's writings is there a hint of the gross injustice and the terrible hardship which land monopoly causes by stopping production at its source. He states quite distinctly that in earlier times "the main deter-

* SECOND THOUGHTS OF AN ECONOMIST. By William Smart, late Professor of Political Economy in the University of Glasgow. Macmillan & Co. 5s. net.