

## THE SOLDIER AND THE LAND

By R. L. Outhwaite, M.P.

(A letter to the DAILY NEWS, February 9th.)

SIR,—The departure of Sir H. Rider Haggard to Australia for the purpose of organising the transportation of British ex-soldiers after the war raises an issue to the solution of which democratic attention should be directed. Lord Curzon at the farewell luncheon at the Royal Colonial Institute stated that :—

Possibly between 1,000,000 and 2,000,000 men would come back to a country where it was almost certain that the labour market would be congested, where wages must fall, where the majority of the people would be much poorer than they were in the artificial conditions of the moment—in short, to a world of competition. . . . It was the business of the Government to provide an outlet for the legitimate ambitions of such men.

When the war is over the workers will be confronted with the old task of provisioning themselves and providing the cost of governance, which stood at about £200,000,000 a year. In addition, they will have to provide an equivalent amount as a result of war. It is clear that to avoid abysmal poverty all that the workers create will have to go to meet the individual and communal need. No longer will it be possible to permit a monopolist class to levy tribute upon the wealth producers and so render impossible of performance the gigantic task that war has laid upon them. The power to levy that tribute resides in the private ownership of land, and the value of the privilege is the capital value of the land. By taking this value by taxation the wealth producers will be able to meet the cost of the war without having a further inroad made upon their means of subsistence. This overwhelming fiscal necessity is calculated to render unnecessary the expatriation of the workers who have been for awhile in the trenches. For, once a heavy tax is laid upon land value and the holder compelled to fully utilise his land and produce the maximum of wealth from it, a demand for labour will be set up that will call millions back to the standard of industry.

Not all as tillers of the soil. Many labour leaders underestimate the land question as affecting the industrial workers, for they think it means setting the skilled mechanic to the growing of turnips. But that narrow concept will have to be abandoned to meet the aftermath of war. By then millions of the best customers of the artisan will have been slaughtered, tens of millions reduced to poverty, the international trade that so largely affected British employment will have been disrupted. To whom then must the Yorkshire weaver, the Northampton boot operative look to keep the looms and the machines running and him employed? What new market can his employer find when old ones have been closed by war? They must look to the potential market at their doors, to the production of the maximum of wealth from the fertile acres of Britain and to its producers for their customers. The Duke of Marlborough recently told the House of Lords that the agricultural labourer produced £250 of wealth a year. After making all deductions for the new estimation of the tiller of the soil in face of the recruiter's demand, the fact remains that it is to the man with the hoe that the industrial workers must look to keep them in employment.

Therefore when it is now proposed to ship overseas by millions the men who have faced death, as they have been told for their country, all national interests demand that not they but the land monopolists must go. No one knows better than Sir H. Rider Haggard the possibilities of the soil of Britain; but he, like every other land reformer, has failed who has striven to make a garden under the Upas tree of monopoly.

And he is going to Australia because there the axe of land value taxation has been laid at the root of the evil. Vain

but for this would be his mission. Federal land value tax, State land value tax, municipal land value rate, have had the cumulative effect of relaxing the monopolists' hold. He will find the same in New Zealand and in Canada. But in the colonies efforts to promote national well-being by way of the land have been retarded by protection, which enables the manufacturer to rob the primary producer. Here in Britain, with Free Trade maintained or re-established, can the great reform through taxation be best accomplished, and here should the first offer be made to the men who will pour back from the trenches and out of the war factories.

The enterprise of Sir H. Rider Haggard and the benediction of Lord Curzon should be regarded in the light of the decision in the Lindean case just delivered by the House of Lords. The Land Court empowered the Board of Agriculture for Scotland to constitute twelve small holdings on the Lindean Estate. The arbiter awarded the sum of £3,850 for depreciation in the value of the remainder of the estate consequent on the small-holdings affecting its "amenities." Against this decision the Board appealed. The appeal was dismissed, and with it the Scottish Small-holders Act to the "land reform" scrap heap. Small holdings prejudicially affect the "amenities" of the state; they are an offensive basis in the rural desert.

And when the Scotsman returns from the trenches which he sought obedient to the appeal of the poster depicting a Highlander looking down on a rural scene, and inscribed: "Is not this worth fighting for?" When he returns, away with him to Australia lest he offend the amenity of some estate! But if a land tax be imposed, amenity will give way to necessity, and he will be urged to remain.

## THE COST OF THE WAR

The House of Commons on February 21st assented to two votes of credit. The first of £120,000,000 was a supplementary vote for the remainder of the present financial year. It brings the total votes of credit for 1915-16 up to £1,420,000,000, and since the commencement of the war to £1,728,000,000. The second vote of credit was for £300,000,000 and is on account of the coming financial year.

According to the Prime Minister's statement the daily expenditure on the war has risen during the present year from £2,800,000 to £4,350,000, and is likely in the future to remain about this figure and less than £5,000,000 a day.

Mr. McKenna stated in reply to a question in the House of Commons on February 16th that the National Debt of the United Kingdom was £708,000,000 on March 31st, 1914, and that according to the best estimate that could be made it would be £2,200,000,000 at the end of this financial year.

The estimated revenue from taxation for the present year is £305,000,000. The amount received up to February 19th was £261,800,000, and it is calculated that the remainder will be realised by March 31st.

I went to Illawarra where my brother's got a farm;  
He has to ask his landlord's leave before he lifts his arm;  
The landlord owns the country-side—man, woman, dog,  
and cat,  
They haven't the cheek to dare to speak without they touch  
their hat.

It was shift, boys, shift, for there wasn't the slightest doubt  
Their little landlord god and I would soon have fallen out;  
Was I to touch my hat to him?—was I his bloomin' dog?  
So I makes for up the country at the old jig-jog.

A. B. PATERSON ("A Bushman's Song").