

rating upon housing, upon manufacture, and upon agriculture, and he was only inviting all whom his words could reach to consider and ponder this matter, and ask themselves in all seriousness how long it was to go on." A. W. M.

A NEW TOLSTOY LETTER.

The following is a translation of an excerpt from a letter Tolstoy wrote to the Tzar on January 16, 1902. The letter had never been published until it was discovered in the Tzar's private safe after the downfall of the dynasty:

"And those desires which the Russian people would now express, if given the opportunity to do so, in my opinion, would be the following:

"First of all the working class would say that it desires to be freed from those exceptional laws which place it in a position of a vassal who does not enjoy the rights of all other citizens; next it would say that it wants freedom of moving from one place to another, educational freedom, and the liberty to follow that religion which satisfies its spiritual needs; and, what more, the whole one hundred million people will declare in one voice that they want the right to use the land, *i.e.*, the abolition of private ownership of land.

"It is the abolition of private ownership of land that, in my opinion, constitutes that nearest aim, the realization of which must become the principal task of the Russian Government to-day.

"In each period of human existence, corresponding to the time, there is a nearest step for the realization of the better forms of life to which she is always striving. Fifty years ago such a nearest step was the abolition of slavery. In our time such step is expressed in the emancipation of the working masses from the minority which rules over them—that which is called the labour problem.

"In Western Europe it is thought that this aim can be accomplished by turning over the factories and mills to the workers to be used collectively. Whether such solution of the problem is correct or not, and whether or not it is attainable for the Western nations, it is obvious that such solution is inapplicable to Russia in her present condition.

"In Russia, where an enormous part of the population lives on the land and is entirely depending upon the large land-owners, it is obvious that the emancipation of the workers *cannot* be accomplished by public ownership of the mills and factories. Real emancipation can come to the Russian nation only by abolishing private ownership in land and by recognising the land as national property. This has been the hearty wish of the Russian people from time immemorial, and they are still expecting to see the Russian Government realise this need of theirs.

"I personally believe that in our times private land ownership is just as much lamentable and obviously unjust as serfdom was sixty years ago. I think that the abolition of land ownership will put Russia upon a high degree of independence, prosperity and contentment. I also believe that such measure would undoubtedly annul all that socialistic and revolutionary exasperation which is now inflaming the working men and which is pregnant with the gravest dangers for the Government and the people."

We are indebted to the *Public* (New York, May 11) for the foregoing translation. Commenting on the letter the translator says:

The impartial student of the events which took place in Russia during the first eight months of the revolution cannot fail to note two distinct forces. First, after the downfall of the Tzar's régime the 100 million peasants instinctively felt that the land would be taken away from the hated landlords, without compensation, and proclaimed the property of the nation. Confident of such

a solution of the aggravated problem, they immediately started to organise the entire agricultural population for the carrying out of the land programme. On the other hand, one finds that the provisional and coalition governments during the first eight months of the revolution did their utmost to hinder the progress of the village organisations. The Constitutional Democrats demanded compensation for the land which was to be taken away from their owners, but the peasants resented that, claiming that in the final analysis the land-owners owed them incalculable sums for having used the land, which the peasants have always looked upon as the property of the people, for centuries, and also for the inhuman exploitation to which they had been subjected during many generations by land-owning nobility. The November revolution was the result of that resentment.

We may quote also the first two clauses of the land law passed by the Constituent Assembly on the one and only day it met—a law already promulgated by the Soviet Government:

1. The right to private ownership of land within the boundaries of the Russian republic is hereafter and for ever abolished.

2. All lands to be found within the boundaries of the Russian republic, with all their natural resources, with the forests and waters, become public property.

LAND OWNERSHIP A CENTURY AND A HALF AGO.

"A large proportion of America is the property of land holders. They monopolise it without cultivation; they are for the most part at no expense either of money or personal service to defend it, and keeping the price higher by monopoly than otherwise it would be, they impede the settlement and culture of the country. A land tax, therefore, would have the salutary operation of an agrarian law without the iniquity. It would relieve the indigent and aggrandise the state by bringing property (land) into the hands of those who would use it for the benefit of society."—Robert Morris (one of the "fathers of the Constitution"), Report to Congress, 1782.

No man can question the business sense of Robert Morris, the banker who financed the American Revolution. The very fact that he did that very difficult thing shows that his financial and economic wisdom is sound. Therefore, when he comes to the land question we are bound to admit that he knew what he was talking about.

At that time there were scarce three million people in the country. Land was to be had for the taking, almost. Yet he saw where land monopolisation inevitably leads to, and expressed it tersely. As the country has become more and more thickly settled the dire effects of this policy have become more and more evident till to-day, the country over, not more than half the people who till the soil own the land they cultivate. It will continue to be worse and worse till we come to the remedy he proposed. We must inevitably come to a tax on land values or agrarian laws, and the former, as he pointed out, is the better course.—*The Southland Farmer*.

The vision of "confiscatory legislation" haunts some noble pillows, and those who are scared by it seem to think that land will be the first object of the confiscators' attentions. But is this a sound calculation? I very much doubt it. Our Bolshevists are, I should think, quite as likely to tackle capital as land, and, although the seller of land may invest the purchase-money abroad, a confiscatory Chancellor of the Exchequer has an uncanny knack of detecting its whereabouts.—The Right Hon. G. W. E. Russell, in the *Daily Express* (London), September 14.