

asset which was going to increase the value of the land. (Cheers.) Amongst these improvements were electric tramways and new streets, which were held out as certain to enhance the value of the property. In this bill they did not propose to touch agricultural land at all; they confined themselves to the land in London in the urban districts. They said that that land must be assessed under the scheme set out in the bill, whether occupied or not. Having assessed the land, they gave to the local authorities power, which they might exercise if they thought fit, to levy a land value rate throughout their areas of not more than 1d. in the pound in any financial year. Then came the question—Who was to pay the rate? They declined to interfere with existing contracts; and they said, therefore, for the moment that the new rate must be paid by the occupying tenants. There were other details as to this which he should not go into. This was, broadly, their scheme. He was lost in wonder at the moderation of the bill (hear, hear), which was based on the minority report of the royal commission on local taxation, which was signed by eminent authorities. The honorable member quoted extracts from the report to show that in practice the alleged difficulties in the way of valuation were not serious and had already been overcome elsewhere. Then it was objected that they did not propose to break existing contracts and go direct to the ground landlords. The minority report stated that this was neither workable nor equitable. It was said that they were imposing a new rate upon overburdened tenants. His answer to that was that the rate on unoccupied land would bring such a sum of money into the local purse that it would have a rebating influence, and, taking the two rates together, the tenant would pay not more and probably would pay less, than he paid now. In any case, the people about whom he was concerned, the working class, and middle class people, usually had short tenancies; and, if they did not get the benefit of the rebating influence, the system of rent deductions would come into operation before the new burden, if there was one, fell upon them. The next objection was that the landowner would increase the rents. No doubt he would take all he could get; but the rate upon unoccupied land would have such an effect upon building operations that it was not likely that he would get as much as he did at the present time, as a large amount of land was kept out

of the market in order that its value might be enhanced. At the general election of 1895 the Unionist party looked upon this proposal with a friendly eye, and in 1896 the government appointed a royal commission. The honorable member representing the local government board, speaking against the bill of last year, said that if the question was to be touched it ought to be touched by the government, and the government would deal with it. He was not at liberty to say how the government would deal with it. That was a year ago. He asked the House to decline to wait to see how the government would deal with it. While governments procrastinated the rate-payers starved. (Hear, hear.) As it was, we were decades behind most of the continental countries and most of our colonies in regard to this matter.

He had sent this bill to a great many municipalities and, in return, had received a large number of resolutions in favor of the principle it embodied. The only letter of opposition to the scheme he had received came from the borough council of Stoke Newington. He would end his plea on behalf of this moderate proposal with a quotation from one of the earlier speeches of the Secretary of State for the Colonies: "I would ask again, why should the owners of the ground rents escape all contribution to the expenditure of their locality? These ground rents have all grown out of the prosperity and industry of the community. The property of the owner has been improved by local expenditure. Why should not the owners contribute towards that local expenditure?" He begged to move. (Cheers.)

#### SPEECH OF THE LIBERAL LEADER.

After Mr. Boscawen, of Kent; Mr. Ridley, of Stalybridge; Mr. Cripps, of Lancashire; Mr. Gibbs, of Herts, and Mr. Bond, of Nottingham, had spoken against the bill, and Mr. Soares, of Devon; Mr. Shaw, of Hawick, and Mr. Trevelyan, of York, in its favor,

Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman said that this subject was one which excited the greatest interest in many parts of the country, and yet, during the whole of the discussion, the parliamentary secretary to the local government board had been practically the sole occupant of the treasury bench. (Cheers.) The government appeared not to have realized the fact that this was no mere whim or notion of his honorable friend the member for Camberwell. This was not a question of coquetting in an amiable sort of way with some strange doctrines. The

object of the bill was one which attracted the warmest appreciation and approval throughout the country. (Cheers.) The honorable and learned member for Stretford had asked what was the real principle of the bill. He would say what he considered to be the principle and main object of the bill. It was the recognition of the distinction between site value and structural value. (Hear, hear.) It was the recognition of the fact that they had separate values; that they advanced or receded on altogether different scales and sometimes in opposition to each other. He thought that once they recognized that fact, they were led directly to the purpose of the bill—that it should be incumbent on the local authorities to ascertain and record those separate values. The further action which should be taken was left to the local authorities themselves, except that the bill excluded existing contracts. This extreme moderation on the part of his honorable friend had been seized on by honorable gentlemen opposite as a fault in the bill. He believed the opinion of the country would have supported his honorable friend if he had dealt a little more valiantly with existing contracts. (Hear, hear.) That might have been done without creating any terrifying precedents. Sir Robert Peel dealt in a more manful way with existing contracts when he introduced the income tax in 1842; but his honorable friend, coming upon somewhat degenerate days, had yielded to what he believed to be the general sentiment, and had omitted existing contracts altogether. The advantages of this recognition of site values as apart from the general value of the hereditament were clearly set out in the report of the minority commissioners. They pointed, first of all, to the fact that the benefit of municipal and other improvements attached to the site, and, therefore, if a tax were necessary at all, it ought to be in proportion to the site value. It was not the house, but the site, that was increased in value. Here was a case of the value that had been given to land within quite recent years by a great public improvement. The Manchester ship canal, which was largely made with the money that was found by the city of Manchester, had the effect of raising the value of land on the Trafford park estate from £327 an acre to £4,840 an acre, within the years of its construction. (Hear, hear.) That was a proof, surely, that there was a case for saying that land so artificially increased in value should contribute to the very expensive processes

by which that new value was given. The minority commissioners further pointed out that if more of the burden of rates was thrown on the site, the proportion left to be borne by the buildings would be diminished, and this would weigh with builders. Then there was the question of overcrowding, which, of course, was part of the same matter, and which was greatly aggravated by the present system. The rating of sites, in the opinion of the commissioners, would help to mitigate this evil; and, if it was objected that it ran in any way counter to established principles, they pointed out that a structure was, after all, perishable property, but that the site was permanent property, which rather increased than diminished in value. These were the sort of arguments, of which they had not heard much in that debate, by which the minority commissioners supported this proposal. The most urgent matter of all seemed to be to break down the ring fence which was in some places established round a rising and prosperous community by the owner or owners who withheld their land from building in order to gain the benefit in the increased value. (Cheers.) Public energy or private enterprise increased the value of the property, and why should it not be assessed? They wished to prevent the occupiers from actually suffering in their health, comfort and convenience, by the action of such owners, for suffering was caused and an insanitary condition of things was created by the circumscription of a community. Anything which tended to distribute the burden more equably, and to prevent such evils, deserved the favorable consideration of parliament. This bill represented a desirable reform in the interests, not only of urban communities but of the whole people, and he gave it his heartiest support. (Hear, hear.)

After a speech in opposition to the bill by Mr. Grant Lawson, of Yorkshire, the House came to a vote at 5:30 in the morning, with the following result:

For second reading.....170  
Against second reading.....183

Conservative majority ..... 13  
The result, so near to a complete victory for the Liberals in a strong Conservative House, was received with loud Liberal cheers.

Sidney—Then you believe in a coat-of-arms?

Rodney—Yes. Almost any newly-rich American can be benefited by adopting a good Latin motto to live up to.—Puck.

# A PARABLE.

For The Public.

I.

On Klondike, where mosquitoes  
Perpetually swarm,  
That is, when the weather  
Is anything like warm;  
And where the life-blood freezes  
In veins of young or old,  
That is, when the weather  
Is anything like cold;  
Up there a heathen Chinese  
Had happened for to squat  
Upon the richest gold field,  
Right on the richest spot.

Then all the "Christian" squatters,  
Dutch, Yankees and Canucks,  
Rose up and swore in concert  
By all the Klondike spooks,  
That all those boundless riches  
Should never, never go,  
With all their power for uplift,  
To the heathen, Yu Li So;  
That Christendom would shudder  
If all that wealth should fall  
To old Li So, the pagan—  
It must not be at all.

So they held a pious council,  
And sampled "Christian" rum,  
And planned to squelch Li So,  
The slave of opium,  
And thereof in pursuance,  
Upon a cloudy night,  
They killed Li So, the heathen,  
And chucked him out of sight;  
Then over his possessions,  
With many a bloody brawl,  
They kept up hot contention  
Till the strongest got them all.

II.

Now, this is rawest fiction—  
A parabolic lie;  
For hardy Klondike miners  
Would sooner starve and die  
Than outrage right and justice  
In any such a way;  
Though rough in speech and manner,  
They like to see fair play;  
But these supposed transactions  
In figure represent  
How pious "Christian nations"  
Cause heathen to repent.

B. J. RADFORD.

"What we want," said the spokesman for the delegation, "is more pay for less work."

"Well," answered the multimillionaire, "I can thoroughly sympathize with you. That's what I am after myself."—Washington Star.

The Mother—Now, Elsie, did I teach you to throw your clothes on the floor in that disreputable way?

Elsie—No, mamma; I learned myself.—Puck.

Two little girls, aged, respectively, six and eight years, were discussing religious matters. The older one said to her sister: "Which would you rather do, live, or die and go to heaven?"

"Why," the young one said, "I would rather live." Whereupon the elder one burst out with the emphatic question:

"Sarah B., what does your religion amount to?"—The Christian Register.

## BOOKS

### FRANK NORRIS'S LAST BOOK—"THE PIT."

It is sad to think that this is his last book. It is a pity that he could not have lived to complete the third book of his wheat series. It is more a pity that he could not live to do work beyond this, with more fully developed powers. He was working along right lines, and it seems sure that in time he would have rid himself from the few falsities of method that these first books show.

In "The Pit" (Doubleday, Page & Co., New York) there are some exaggerated situations, where one sees too plainly the artificial manipulations of the stage manager. Take, for example, the scene with Jadwin, Scannel, and old Hargus, in which the successful speculator makes the man he has cornered make amends to the old fellow whom he had, in his day, previously ruined. It is too much like the closing scene of a second-rate melodrama, in which the actors line up, with joyful justice dealt out all around and loudly applauded by the gallery.

But there is not much of this, and this last book, the second volume of the contemplated Epic of the Wheat, is one of the modern novels which one does not waste time in reading. It is interesting throughout, both in its larger social side and in its narrower society side. Those who may be more interested in the dealings on the Chicago exchange will also be interested in the pictures of private life, and those who are more interested in the latter will also be interested in following the same character on the Board of Trade. The highest interest is really the interplay of influences and effects between the two sides of life so cleverly portrayed. It would be hard to find in modern fiction a truer tragedy than the strain in Laura Jadwin's heart caused by her husband's absorption in speculation. "It is changing you," she says to him. "You are so nervous sometimes, and sometimes you don't listen to me when I talk to you. I can just see what is in your mind. It is wheat, wheat, all the time."

Three lessons are powerfully enforced in the book. One is that which has just been alluded to—the folly and crime of a man's subtracting himself from his home. A second is the terrible grip of the fever for speculation. Curtis Jadwin had all that money could buy, and money enough to buy it all a second time. He had sworn to himself and promised his wife not to speculate; but the temptation was too great and the taste too strong. A third lesson is the old one of the utter failure of money to bring happiness. Laura bought right and left—