

LAND VALUES.

Established June 1894, and published till May 1902, as "The Single Tax."

Published the beginning of each month at 13 Dundas Street, Glasgow; and 376-377 Strand, London, W.C.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

By Post in Great Britain and Ireland, 1/6 per annum; Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, 2/- per annum; Canada, United States, and South America, 50 cents. Payable in advance.

All Communications to be addressed to THE EDITOR, 13 Dundas Street, Glasgow.

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"OUR POLICY."

"We would simply take for the community what belongs to the community—the value that attaches to land by the growth of the community; leave sacred to the individual all that belongs to the individual."—*Henry George.*

THE IRISH LAND PURCHASE SCHEME.

"WHAT seems to be considered the most radical proposition yet made are those for the creation of a 'peasant proprietary'—the State to buy out the Landlords and re-sell to the tenants, for annual payments extending over a term of years, and covering principal and interest. Waiving all practical difficulties, and they are very great, what could thus be accomplished? Nothing real and permanent."—Henry George, on The Irish Land Question, 1881.

That agricultural labourers, traders, artisans, and other town and country dwellers, who together make up by far the majority of the nation, have any concern in the settlement of this fundamental, root, social question, is not recognised or admitted by the landlords and tenant farmers of Ireland, though manifestly their destinies and the destinies of their descendants will be determined by the solution arrived at. Be this as it may, the representatives of these two classes, Landlords and Tenant Farmers, recently met in solemn conference; certain proposals were agreed to, which we presume they will manage to get embodied in the Irish Land Purchase Scheme to be brought before Parliament this session.

Let us see if the proposals endorsed by this Conference can be supported on these grounds. In the first place, in exchange for their legalised claims to control the use of the land of Ireland, and consequently to appropriate to themselves all they can extort from the land-users, the representatives of the Landlords stipulated that they should receive such sums as being invested in 3 or 3½ per cent. Government stock would yield them a clear 90 per cent. of their present gross incomes. Though the present market value of their estates is only eighteen years' purchase, this claim is equivalent to thirty or thirty-five years' purchase: that is to say the representatives of the Landlords, the present tenants of the State, stipulate that they shall receive nearly double as much from the Government, on behalf, of course, of the British taxpayers, as they have any hope of receiving from any other possible buyer.

On the other hand, the representatives of the tenant farmers, graziers, and others, stipulated that their rents are immediately to be reduced 15 to 25 per cent.; that still further deductions are to be made at intervals; and that ultimately they are to become free-holders, or to be regarded as free-holders, and cease to pay any further rent to the State. In other words, they stipulate that ultimately they are to take the place of the present Landlords, and be allowed to control the use of the land of Ireland and to appropriate its annual rental value, whatever this may be, leaving the necessary public revenues to continue to be raised, as at present, by methods which directly tend to reduce the earnings and hamper the industry of the masses of the people. Of course, any difference between what the Irish Tenant Farmers—the would-be Landlords of the future—are to pay and what the present Irish Landlords are to receive, which would probably amount to about Twenty Million Pounds Sterling, would have to be found by that most patient and docile animal, the general British taxpayer, probably out of the general taxation to-day levied on his tea, sugar, bread, etc.

But would such expenditure, would the proposals accepted by this Conference do anything to abolish the evils of Landlordism? Would they in the slightest affect the cause of the social ills which to-day afflict Ireland, as every other country where similar social institutions have been established? Would they do anything to secure true economic freedom—freedom to live, to labour, and to enjoy—to the great masses of the Irish people? Every honest, impartial inquirer will be forced to the conclusion that they would have no such effect; that, in truth, they would do nothing to emancipate the Irish workers from the economic slavery to which prevailing social conditions condemn them. As a recent writer on the question well expresses it—"The evils of Landlordism arise from the private ownership by some persons of that land which God gave to the whole community of the

people." If this be so, as it undoubtedly is, then manifestly these evils cannot be remedied, though they may easily be intensified, by any proposal to dispossess a few thousand Irish Landlords and to create a hundred thousand or five hundred thousand small Landlords to take their place. Any such proposal stands self-condemned, and cannot for a moment be entertained by any who have any consideration for the future well-being of the Irish people, who desire the uplifting of that brilliant and deeply wronged race to a higher plane of individual and social life. The emancipated slave often makes the most brutal and tyrannous slave driver. The small peasant proprietor rack-rents and exploits the landless labourer at least as ruthlessly as the big Landlord. Manifestly, then, the only way to remove the evils of Landlordism is to abolish Landlordism. And this is only possible by such social changes as will make and keep the use of the natural sources and opportunities inherent in the land of a country equally available to all upon equitable terms—that is, upon payment to the community of their annual rental value. We sincerely trust that all our readers will earnestly and energetically protest against a single penny of our public money being wasted, aye, worse than wasted, and against the public credit being pledged to promote any such scheme as has recently found favour in the eyes of those most disinterested persons, the Landlords and Tenant Farmers of Ireland. Such proposals would benefit the former, inasmuch as it would free them from the necessity of collecting their accustomed tribute for themselves. They would benefit some Tenant Farmers, inasmuch as they would be enabled to appropriate such tribute for themselves. But it would in no way advantage the great landless masses of the Irish people, whose earnings would still be diminished, and whose labours would still be exploited by the legalised owners of their country.

As Henry George expressed it—"The use and benefit of the land of Ireland belongs rightfully to the whole people of Ireland, to each one as much as to every other; to no one more than to any other—not to some individuals, to the exclusion of other individuals; not to one class, to the exclusion of other classes; not to landlords, not to tenants, not to cultivators, but to the whole people." And it is only in accordance with this true, fundamental social principle that there can be any permanent and equitable solution of the Irish Land Question.

We appeal to every Liberal, to every right-minded man, be he Liberal or Tory, Imperialist or Democrat, strenuously to oppose any such infamous outrage. Above all, we appeal to the Irish Leaders not to betray the cause they have espoused, not to sell their people, who trust them and look to them for light and guidance, into economic servitude worse even than any they have as yet known. One of them, we

know, has recently been busy translating "Progress and Poverty," so that his people shall be able to master its contents: Will he dare face such of them as may have read this soul-stirring, epoch-making work if he, even by his silence, sanction any such scheme? One of them is Michael Davitt, a name known and respected by the land reformers of the world, a man who once boldly and eloquently proclaimed the truth this book revealed, a man whose voice was once powerful enough to stir the hearts of his people and to make their oppressors to tremble. He must know what such proposals mean, what slavery they involve, how far they are removed from the simple means by which his country might be raised to take a foremost place amongst the nations of the world. Dare he, even by silence, give countenance to such proposals? If so, then we have no faith in the future of the Irish nation; for it will demonstrate that under pressure and for due consideration their most trusted and best loved leaders are ready to betray their cause and to sell them into economic servitude!

For the present, however, we suspend our judgment, we refuse to believe this possible. Even though he stand alone amongst his fellow-members, even though by so doing he may break those party ties that cramp and thwart all honest endeavour, we confidently expect that Michael Davitt, at least, will rise to the occasion, and once more proclaim in clarion tones the gospel he knows so well, the glorious gospel of emancipation summarised in the words—
THE LAND FOR THE PEOPLE!

L. H. B.

FROM THE ABYSS.*

WHENCE shall come the new barbarians? Go through the squalid quarters of great cities, and you may see even now their gathering hordes! How shall learning perish? Men will cease to read, and books will kindle fires, and be turned into cartridges!—HENRY GEORGE.

The above words of Henry George were recalled to our mind by the perusal of this little book, which almost seems as if specially written to demonstrate their truth. For though the author apparently has not yet found the clue to the social labyrinth, the key that alone can unlock the fetters that now enthrall society, yet he portrays in a masterly manner the fruits of our present social system. He has evidently lived amongst the disinherited masses of London, and admirably depicts their state of mind, their attitude toward society, as well as their growing recognition of their needs and of their strength. It is a book, however, likely to meet with scars notice either from those who pander to the ignorance and passions of the many, or to the prejudices of the few. And yet it is a book with which single taxers would do well to equip themselves for circulation amongst such of the comfortable classes as may still venture to deny the existence of any social problem urgently demanding solution. For it contains a warning, as well as a lesson, a warning which may fall upon deaf ears, but which it would be well for the future of our race, for the preservation of our civilisation, if men could be forced to give to it the attention it deserves.

L. H. B.

**From the Abyss.* Price 1/-. R. Brimley Johnson, Adelphi, London, W.C.