

ship of land, in abstract justice. These are propositions Spencer "proved," although proved is the wrong word. The propositions don't need proving. All one has to do to see the truth is to think of land in a newly discovered country. Who owned it before it was discovered? No one. By what authority does anyone take it absolutely after discovery? By no authority. Land is valuable only because people's use of it makes it so, and the community makes it so, not the individual.

There is no escape from this doctrine—absolutely none.

Count Tolstoy goes into the argument of Henry George at some length, but his main contention is that only by giving the land to the uses of the people can salvation come to Russia, the point being enforced by the fact that Russia is chiefly an agricultural country. The people are impoverished because they are cut off from the land from which they should live. Tolstoy believes the people of the whole world are beginning to see the injustice of private appropriation of the land, and that when they do see it and believe it, the remedy will be applied. The influence of the George doctrine is plainly seen in the movement for a greater taxation of land values and of franchises in which the land is granted for quasi-public use. It has made the Irish tenant practically the arbiter of land values, and given him the advantage in dealing with the landlord in purchasing land. Plainly the George theory is forcing the land back into the common possession of the people by taxing it for the benefit of the people.

"The Great Iniquity," which is the title of Count Tolstoy's letter, has been published in full in the Chicago Public of August 19th, and it should be read carefully by every thinking man who knows and feels the injustice of the world as it is organized to-day. The one thought that comes to the philosophic student of the George theory, even after admitting its almost axiomatic nature, is that when the evil of private ownership shall be abolished, the ingenuity of man will probably contrive that the same advantage shall accrue to the shrewd and able and selfish and unscrupulous few that now accrues in what is known as "the unearned increment." Count Tolstoy seems to scent this, for the nubbin of his argument is that the people who refuse to see the truth have no religion. For the bringing about of the better day of

the land owned by the people, he argues, a change of heart is needed. Will such a change of heart come over us? It has come as to other injustices of organized life, and secured their abolition. It may come to make possible the destruction of the evil of a landed few and a landless many. At least we can hope so.

RUSSIA PROGRESSING TOWARDS ECONOMIC FREEDOM.

For The Public.

Count Tolstoy's ringing letter on the "Great Iniquity"* confirms me in the belief which I often expressed during the revolutionary crisis of last winter in Russia, namely, that the land question presents itself much more clearly in Russia than here, on account of the agricultural pursuits of the vast majority of the people; and that it is quite likely that their revolution, when it succeeds, will carry them, not to the point at which we have arrived of parliamentary representation, but far beyond us to actual economic freedom. The Russian sees all wealth coming out of the ground, and he craves land as the source of wealth. Hence any plan for securing the value of the land for the people would appeal to him. The American workman has lost mental hold of the connecting link between land and wealth, and instead of longing for land, he longs for an opening in the city for exercising in some shape or other the attractive profession of graft.

That Count Tolstoy's ideal civilization, a world of industrious and happy Russian peasants, may not be exactly ours, does not in the least diminish the force of his argument. It is true that the possibility of annexing other people's earnings is the great magnet which entices people into our cities to-day, and that when, under just conditions, that pastime becomes impossible, cities will fall back to the natural size of mere markets, entrepôts and ports, such as were the European cities of a century or two ago. The proportion of country-dwellers would vastly increase, and the production of wealth in rural districts would become the prevailing occupation. And so Tolstoy is not altogether wrong in placing so much emphasis upon rural land. But he fails to note how perfectly Henry George's system adapts itself to the urban problem too. In America the crying evil of land-monopoly—the absorption by

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private parties of the unearned increment—shows itself most conspicuously in the cities. There is our greatest leak, and the leakage can be stopped there by the simple scheme of the single tax, with the same mathematical perfection as on the fertile steppes of Russia.

And Tolstoy is right in urging the land question as the first question upon Russian reformers. Its settlement should precede a constitution if possible. It is easier to make great changes under the autocracy than under a representative government. The Russians freed their serfs by a stroke of the pen, while we spent four years of blood and anguish in accomplishing a similar task. It is easy to see that it will be more difficult to put a single tax bill through a national assembly made up largely of land-owners, than to obtain the assent of the Tsar. And even if the parliament were composed of peasants, which is impossible, is it likely that they will be more intelligent than our farmers, and see how perfectly the plan of Henry George meets their needs? It is very much to be hoped that those who guide the new movement in Russia will listen to Tolstoy's words. If they do, it will transform the losses of this war into the greatest of all blessings, and place Russia, in spite of her present weakness, in the van of the great nations of the earth—just as Japan's marvelous success may degrade her for centuries to the thralldom of low and material ideals.

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HOW THE RUSSIANS CONDUCT A CONGRESS.

The preparedness of the Russians for parliamentary government is a question upon which we have all been speculating. The following account of the late Zemstvo Congress at Moscow (pp. 276, 308), written at Moscow by Victor E. Marsden, appeared in the London Speaker of August 12.

Russia has held her first Parliament, a Parliament in every sense of the word. The members of this assembly, which met for a brief session of three days at Moscow, the heart of Russia, were the duly elected representatives of those who sent them from all quarters of the Empire of All the Russias, excepting only those parts which are not, and never will be, anywhere but on paper, Russian in more than name. And they have fulfilled admirably the first duty of a Parliament; they have talked and discussed, parleyed and played