

no adequate investigation was made by that body, and the verdict totally ignores the subject.

John H. Hamline is now quoted as stating that the tentative traction ordinance proposed by a committee of the Chicago council (p. 648) is disingenuous. He seems to be right. When first published this ordinance looked at best like a crude makeshift. It now begins to look like an unmistakable fraud. The indications are numerous that it was from the beginning in no sense tentative, but was instead (as to everything but amount of royalty) a hard and fast agreement, secretly made, between the sub-committee of the council and a group of more or less scrupulous local capitalists.

The annual report of the New York Tax Reform association,—the efficient and tireless secretary of which is Lawson Purdy, who has been the leader in securing the change regarding tax assessments in New York which has disclosed the remarkable facts noted last week (p. 659) and emphasized in Stephen Bell's editorial correspondence in our present issue—has just been published. It is a model report of marvelously good work marvelously well done. Of the assessment reform the report modestly says:

The passage of this amendment to the charter was the result of many years' work. We believe it gives the city of New York the best law for the assessment of real estate in the United States. The assessment roll will be published for the first time next October.

United with the Tax Reform association in its work are the committee on city affairs of the Reform Club, and the Brooklyn Revenue Reform Club, both of which join in the report. Their great accomplishment, referred to above, is supplemented by an encouraging report of progress on the next step in this sane movement for sound fiscal methods. Leading civic and business organizations in 13 counties of New York are named as having within the year

joined those already so recorded, in approving the apportionment and local option bills of the Tax Reform association. The apportionment bill would do away with apportionment boards and would apportion State taxation to the different localities on the basis, mathematically, of the expenditure of the localities respectively for local purposes; while the local option bill would allow localities to levy their taxes ad valorem upon land, improvements, personal property, or all three, at their own discretion. These bills have been endorsed within the year also by the Association of the Bar of the city of New York.

How American sympathy went out to the evicted Irish some years ago, when as many as 3,000 families were turned out of their houses for nonpayment of rent! But 60,463 families were evicted in the city of New York, Manhattan borough alone, during the year 1903, without exciting special wonder. Yet where is the difference? Apparently the only difference is in the fact that New York evictions last year were about 20 times as many as in the worst year of Irish evictions. In proportion to population the disparity is much greater. Whereas the Irish evictions of the heaviest year numbered about 1 to every 1,300 of population, those of New York numbered about 1 to every 35 of population.

#### PROGRESS IN ENGLAND.

Some weeks ago The Public called attention in its notices of periodicals (p. 256) to a remarkable leading article in the Westminster Review in which the importance of the land question and its inevitable entrance into English politics were set forth with great force and clearness. Now comes the Contemporary Review for January, with an article more political than economic, which in a different way bears similar testimony. It is entitled "The Need of a Radical Party," and, after giving some of the history of the Liberals, shows that the signs now point to the new issue.

"There remains," says the writer, "the condition of a great question which will fire men's imaginations with the feeling of a distinct and vital need. Can there be any doubt that the land question answers to this description? 'Man is a land animal,' says Henry George, and in England man and the land are parted. It is not surprising, therefore, that not one but a thousand currents of thought flow into this channel. What, for example, is the one solid feature of the national economy which gives force to the revival of Protection? The decline of agriculture, the fact that a yearly decreasing body of Englishmen live and work on the soil, and a yearly decreasing proportion of food is raised on English land. From 1851 to 1891 the number of agricultural laborers has declined 36 per cent.; during the ensuing ten years a further decline of 25 per cent. has taken place, while in fatal testimony to the tendency to make land the sporting ground of the rich rather than the patrimony of the entire people, the number of gamekeepers has increased 25 per cent. in the same period. Is it possible to state a fact of greater social significance?"

The writer goes on to describe further the desertion of English fields and the degradation of the landless laborers, and asks, "What are the remedies?"

"Not the discredited device of protection, which the laborers will not have at any price," he answers, "but the reform of our land system. For that system furnishes the most effective bar to the application of the wonderful discovery that the old Malthusian specter of the pressure of population on the means of subsistence is laid forever, and that, as Kropotkin shows, the land of England could sustain out of its own resources, not merely the foreign-fled multitudes of to-day, but double and treble that number."

As a second division of the question the Contemporary writer turns to the allied subjects of urban land and taxation, and speaks of the remarkable development of public opinion on this matter.

"This is not surprising," he says, "for it is on the towns that

the afflicting flight from our deserted fields mainly settles down. Municipalities — distracted with the growing burden of improvements, the increasing difficulties of traction and urban extension, the appalling evils of overcrowding—are rapidly coming to Mr. Booth's conclusion that the taxation of ground values lies at the root of the housing problem."

The article then shows the reasonableness of this method of taxation, and violently attacks Mr. Chamberlain's proposals, calling them a "monstrous piece of economic atavism"—an attempt to shift more and more of the burdens of the state upon industry and wages.

The conclusion of the author is that "the land question is ripe for action."

Whether English voters are yet ready to see their deliverance and the path to freedom, or whether they must suffer yet awhile, enduring even the heavier bonds which Chamberlain is trying to fasten upon them, remains to be seen. It may be that the world needs to see a grand finale of the comedy of Protection before it will learn who it is that gets the protection.

But surely such an article as this, in a review of such standing as the Contemporary, is doubly significant. Its very appearance at the present stage of English politics is an indication that many faces are turning toward the light, and that the policy of silent disregard is wearing out. Steadily, without much heralding in high places, the numbers of those who see and speak have been increasing.

Still further evidence of this appears from an editorial in the London Speaker for January 9. As the Speaker is the leading Liberal weekly, its declarations are not without some of the flavor of party authority. "We have to attack not merely the false remedies the Protectionists are offering us," the Speaker begins, "but the real abuses and injustices they are defending."

Then it proceeds: "For this reason we are delighted to notice the emphasis laid by the Independent Review on the necessity of land reform, a subject which occupies

two articles in the January number of that periodical. The first article, presumably from the pen of the editor, destroys in a terse and luminous retrospect the historical defenses for land monopoly; the second, written by Mr. Charles Trevelyan, sets out some of the arguments for the taxation of land values. Our own strong opinions in favor of treating this question as one of immediate urgency have been expressed often enough in these columns. Mr. Trevelyan quotes very aptly from Mr. Charles Booth's strong appeal for the site-value taxation in the closing volume of his great work on London: 'When, for the advantage of the consumer, and in the interest of the towns and of trade, the food of the people was relieved of a large part of the taxation it had borne, it seems to have been overlooked, or not fully foreseen, that the houses the people lived in were, or would come to be, even more heavily taxed than their food had ever been, and that free internal development would be hindered by the peculiar incidence of this burden.'

The Speaker does not stop with these citations. It adjures the Liberal party, of which it is so able a journalistic representative, to grapple fearlessly with the land problem. "The case for action in this particular," it urges, "is unusually strong, and when Liberals come to address themselves to this question they can claim the authority of a Tory ex-cabinet minister. Nobody can affect to regard a project as visionary or impracticable or outrageously revolutionary which has received the sanction of such men as Lord Balfour of Burleigh, Sir Edward Hamilton, and Sir George Murray. A minister in a Conservative cabinet and two of the most important and experienced of the permanent officials declared in the summer of 1901, after reviewing all the evidence given before the Commission on Local Taxation, that site values were a fit subject for direct taxation. They argued that the present arrangement discouraged building. 'Anything,' they wrote, 'which aggravates the appalling evils of overcrowding does not need to be condemned, and it seems clear to us that the present heavy rates on buildings do tend to aggravate those evils, and that the rating of site values

would help to mitigate them.' The same point was made by Mr. Fletcher Moulton when he said a 'tax on buildings proportionate to their value necessitates that the rent of buildings should represent a high rate per cent. on their cost; in other words, it drove people to take (and drove builders to build) poorer houses. Taxation on land has no such effect.' Mr. Chamberlain proposes to increase the price of food without relieving at all the pressure of rent, and if the Liberal party cannot offer the country some real measure of reform its place in the scheme of progress is forfeited. We hope, then, that there will be no hesitation in the Liberal party about grappling with this problem in its various aspects. For the land question is just as important in the country as in the town. The value of the editorial article in the Independent Review is that it shows quite clearly that our existing land system was a part of a system of government, and that, as a survival under a totally different system of government which has relieved the landlords of their responsibilities, it is what Voltaire said the French land system was a century and a half ago—"the rubbish of a Gothic building fallen to ruins."

He must indeed be ignorant of history and forgetful of the briefness of the interval since the work began, who dares to feel either elation or discouragement at the slow progress of the single tax movement. It has been but 22 short years since Henry George's first visit to England, since the sixpenny edition of "Progress and Poverty" began to circulate there, since, with the faith that moves mountains, he wrote home: "We are in the way of doing something—the big stone is really moving."

J. H. DILLARD.

#### EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE.

New York, Jan. 19.—New York city's separate assessment of land and buildings is completed, and in the course of a few months will be published in detail in the City Record, where every property owner and voter in the city can see for himself how he and his neighbors are taxed.

The land of the city is worth three and one-half times as much as the city built on it. The mass of stone, brick,