

MR FREDERICK VERINDER'S NEW BOOK

With this remarkable work* Mr Verinder crowns a lifetime of outstanding service to a great cause. It can be said at once that of all his writings this latest in important respects is his best. In its 200 pages the author discusses the multiform social injury which grows and spreads before us all as a plainly-traceable result of the displacement of taxation by governments from its natural basis, while the proper revenue of the nation (the rent of land) is allowed to pass into private possession.

At this time of day no *apologia* is needed for the doctrine of land-value taxation in substitution for the wholly unjust fiscal levies by which governments rob producers, restrict and prevent trade, and aggravate poverty. The teachings of Henry George have implanted deep in the common mind of men an apprehension, more or less clear, of the unrighteousness of the institution of private landownership. But from the tremendous possibilities for human well-being implicit in the simple reform advocated by the great American, so plain and certain to clear thinkers, the thought of men in general is apt to be diverted by the immediacy of "all the thousand nothings of the hour." This book may well awaken in such a new realization of the duties and opportunities open to them in the choice of their political representatives.

In the first chapter, "The Mother of all things," the author, in definition of the economic term "land," lays with a few swift strokes the planetary scene wherein man must pass from the cradle to the grave, and which constitutes his sufficient storehouse, replete with all the concrete satisfactions requisite for his sustenance and content, needing only that he exert his labour in co-operation with his fellows to draw forth and fashion these things in easy abundance. The succeeding chapters deal with the amazing increases in land values in recent times, particularly in London, and show that almost all great monopolies are, in one form or another, based on monopoly in land, though to many this fact is obscured by the large masses of capital involved. That the so-called "capitalist exploitation of the workers" is rendered possible only through land monopoly is supported by a number of very interesting and little-known passages from the later writings of Karl Marx, which

* "Land and Freedom," by Frederick Verinder. (Hogarth Press.) 2s. 6d.

present-day Socialists would do well to ponder. Mr Verinder goes on from this point to consider State taxation and local rating, and shows how their negative effect is largely to prevent production by maintaining the restrictive monopoly of natural resources, and its positive effect to take from producers thus restricted a large part of the results of their labour. The method of reversing the action of the fiscal weapon, and therein reversing the present evil effects, both by destroying the power of monopoly on the one hand, and on the other by restoring to every man full freedom and opportunity to engage his labour as he will and to retain its fruits in entirety, is also clearly shown, while the proposal to "nationalize" the land, including, as the proposal does, the "compensation" of the dispossessed ground landlords to the tune of at least £10,000,000,000, is examined and rejected as unjust and impracticable,—as is that whereby agricultural land, as distinct from urban, would be similarly acquired by the State (a proposal now on the programmes of both progressive parties).

The penultimate chapter on "A New Doomsday Book," which deals with past and prospective measures for land valuation, and also the valuable Appendix from the pen of Mr A. W. Madsen, affording a complete and up-to-date survey of the extent to which the reform has been applied in other countries, are of especial interest.

The book throughout is never dull. It has a literary style which is particularly clear and readable, engaging the interest from cover to cover, while the binding, paper and print of the volume, and its convenient size, make it pleasant to read and handle. Mr Verinder's sensitive and selective memory for good things has provided a compactum of legal and historical information and of modern exemplifications of the most telling kind, which, with his grim delineations of some of the facts of poverty, make this a book which should be read by everyone. To all students of social problems, as to political public speakers, parliamentarians and those busied in the affairs of local government, it should prove indispensable.

J. H. E.

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