

THE BRITISH REVOLUTION.

The Revolution in Great Britain is now in progress in dead earnest. The excitement throughout the land is intense and extreme. Truly Lord Rosebery said of the Budget which is the cause of it: "This is not a budget, but a revolution; a social and political revolution of the first magnitude."

When the Budget was first presented to the House of Commons last April the drift of it was not clearly apprehended, and the criticisms in the papers were mild and harmless. But as the landed interests began to appreciate the unexpected significance of the proposals the storm began to gather. It grew as the bill passed on to its second and third reading during the succeeding six months. And now that storm has reached the proportions of a cyclone since the House of Lords has vetoed it. An open conflict over two questions has been precipitated—two burning questions that have been smouldering in the hearts of the people for generations—namely, the land, and the House of Lords. Shall the land belong to the people, or to the few who hold it for their own enrichment? Shall the House of Lords continue to block reforms and defeat the will of the people? These are the tremendous issues before the people. By the middle of January the country will have expressed its opinion.

Land Tenure.

To appreciate the situation it is necessary to say a few words about land tenure in England, the provisions in the Budget taxing land values, and the legislative power of the House of Lords.

The land is the storehouse from which all wealth is drawn. Possession of the land therefore means the control of those living on and from it. In the beginning land in England, as in all other countries at the outset, was held in common by the tribe or tribes dwelling there. It was common property. Gradually as the tribes or groups of people settled down in villages, the land in and around them was held in a similar way. Later the care, and thence the possession, drifted into the hands of a great family in the tribe, and then the various members of that community became dependent upon that family.

This was the condition in which William the Conqueror found England in 1066. The families who then held the land were for the most part forced to surrender their estates to the new king. And then William proceeded to produce the famous Domesday Book, which preserves the record of the position and size of the various estates in

England, and the names of the favored Saxon and Norman barons to whom he made presents of these estates. This was the beginning of the formation of the vast estates in land belonging to the nobility in England. William constituted himself the supreme lord of all the land, and the families held their estates of him as tenants and vassals in return for service.

In turn these nobles or barons granted the use of certain small lots to their retainers and to peasant proprietors or yeomen, in return for military service in case of war. This is what is known as the feudal system or feudal tenure of land, which lasted for some centuries. Gradually, however, as population increased the terms of holding the land were altered. The nobles annexed the small holdings of the yeomen to their own estates, and only permitted occupancy on payment of a specified rent or feu-duty. At the same time the nobles enlarged their estates in other ways.

In Domesday Book many millions of acres were reserved as commons. Squatters settled on these lands and lived on them freely and happily. About the fifteenth century the first of these commons was enclosed. Then for three centuries the process of enclosing went on until in 1867 over eight million acres had been taken from the commoners, and that mostly without any compensation. To whom did they go? The landlords being paramount in the legislature simply appropriated them to themselves. The commons were secretly merged in the possessions of the lords of the manor. Sad to relate, also, many of these "Enclosure Acts" were passed during the period of the Napoleonic wars when a great many of the people interested in them were absent. These lords of the manor at the same time absorbed many of the church lands.

Furthermore, to preserve these estates in their own name and family, they passed the Statute of Entails. Thus by absorption of small holdings, church lands and commons, by intermarriage and by entail, the land of the many gradually and permanently passed into the private ownership of the few. Large estates, the free gift of the Crown, grew larger, and the small ones disappeared, until a few thousand men practically own the whole of Great Britain. The land there is said to be in fewer hands than in any other country. The six hundred peers in the House of Lords own about one-fifth of the country.

This brief sketch of the land shows that the titles to it are not based on justice or equity, but on robbery, extortion, and violence. And this is true of all older countries. Nor are we unfamiliar

even here with the words "land grabbing" and "land frauds."

A further injustice in England, moreover, has been effected in the evasion of taxes by the nobility. At present they only pay on a valuation made centuries ago, when the land bore no ratio whatever to its present value. But how shall this state of things be remedied?

The Budget.

The necessity for raising about eighty million dollars more to pay the running expenses of the country has brought matters to a crisis. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Lloyd George, has proposed to meet the emergency by taxing land values. He desires to tax unearned increment 20 per cent. That is, this tax will be enacted when on sale of the land, on leasing it, on transfer at death, or on revaluation every fifteen years in the case of property held by corporations, it has been found to have increased in value without effort or expense on the part of the landlord. Certain lands are exempted. He would also tax the site value of undeveloped land one half penny in the pound per annum. And he would put a duty of one shilling in the pound on the annual rental value of the right to work minerals and of mineral way-leaves. Previously the lessee of the minerals had to pay the taxes and also pay the lessor for rights to work, and the lessor simply paid a nominal tax to the Crown for the land altogether independent of its new value. The Budget also makes due provision for the revaluation of the whole land, and the method and principles thereof. The most scrupulous care has been taken to separate land values from improvement values, since this tax is intended to fall exclusively on the land and not upon industry.

The Lords and the Budget.

The Lords took little time to consider the bill. It was too revolutionary: Now the question is referred to the people. The government, however, tends to place more emphasis on the question of the House of Lords than on that of taxation of land values. If the referendum is made on the latter issue, then the House of Lords will be left untouched, and its supremacy tacitly admitted. But if the House is "mended or ended" then the lesser question of the land and many other reforms will be readily settled. What then is involved in the question of the House of Lords?

The House of Lords.

The House of Lords is composed of 606 members, of whom 478 are hereditary and 128 non-hereditary peers. It is a house of landlords, representing no one and responsible to no one in

particular. It has the same legislative powers as the House of Commons, except as to finance. The House of Lords has remained almost unchanged since the fourteenth century, when the Commons and Lords formed separate bodies. It is almost entirely composed of Conservatives. Its power of absorption is extraordinary. Though the Liberal party has appointed more Liberal peers in the last 50 years than the Conservatives, yet it has seemed to be the fate of these peers to become in time Conservatives to protect their own interests, and defend their property.

A few of the peers are eminent and learned men, but the majority take no interest in legislation. They absent themselves from the sessions, and some have even never appeared within the walls of the Upper Chamber. The House of Lords seldom gives much time to the consideration of bills submitted to it by the Commons. But the worst feature of the House of Lords is its partiality. During the last thirty years at least it has neither rejected nor mutilated a bill introduced by a Tory government. It can always get laws enacted to serve its own purposes through the Tory government. While, on the other hand, it has rejected or mutilated bill after bill presented by Liberal governments from generation to generation. It is impossible for any Liberal government to institute any reforms so long as the House of Lords exists as at present constituted.

The late Duke of Devonshire said in 1884 that "no Liberal government ever possessed the confidence of the House of Lords." And Mr. Joseph Chamberlain remarked truly: "During the last 100 years the House of Lords has never contributed one iota to popular liberties or popular freedom, or done anything to advance the common weal. It has protected every abuse, and sheltered every privilege. It has denied justice and delayed every reform. It is irresponsible without independence, obstinate without courage, arbitrary without judgment, and arrogant without knowledge. Their claim to dictate the laws which we shall make, the way in which we shall govern ourselves—to spoil, delay, even reject measures demanded by the popular voice, passed after due discussion by the majority of the People's House, is a claim contrary to reason, opposed to justice, and which we will resist to the death."

The present Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, invited the Liberal party "to treat the veto of the House of Lords as the dominating issue in politics—the dominating issue because in the long run it overshadows and absorbs every other." This he said two years ago when the Lords had thrown out

several important measures then passed by the Liberal government. The Liberals, however, were unable to force the issue; the people did not regard the bills then vetoed of sufficient importance. But the opposition to the present constitution of the House of Lords has been growing steadily, and the Liberals may be able to carry the day now, because of the apparent popularity of the present budget.

What Will the Electorate Do?

On the other hand you can never be certain what the people will do. The electorate is undoubtedly recognized in England as the final authority in politics. But the electorate has given the world several great surprises. In 1893 when Gladstone's Home Rule bill was rejected, the existence of the House of Lords was seriously menaced. But the people turned the Liberals out then and saved the Lords, even though they had elected the government on that issue—Home Rule. The people were not ready for the change. The Lords are human; the people are human, too. Their virtues and vices are alike. The Lords are Conservatives; at heart the people are of the same order. The people pride themselves in their aristocracy with all its imperfections and weaknesses. Hence their support of the House of Lords in an extremity, one might almost say, in spite of themselves.

The popular will is in a constant state of flux. And it can never be relied on until based soundly on a sense of justice, justice for one and all alike. When the majority of the British people can rise above traditional prejudices and party politics, and judge the great questions brought before them from a sense of justice, regarding the welfare of the whole people as of infinitely greater importance than that of the few, then we may look for greater steadiness in the expression of the public will that makes for an advance in national achievements that will enable the country to hold its place among the most enlightened and progressive nations in the world. Whatever may be the result of the coming election, there can surely be no doubt that the campaign is an educative power there, and here, too, which will make itself felt sooner or later for the good of mankind. There is an eternal issue of justice involved in the budget which has been rejected by the Lords.

The Commons question the right of the Lords to interfere with the finances of the country. The Lords have never attempted to do so before. Precedent in a matter of practice, however, does not settle the rightness or wrongness of the action. There is no written constitution in Britain. There-

fore, in spite of the recent vote of the Commons declaring the action of the Lords "a breach of the constitution and a usurpation of the privileges of the House of Commons," the Lords can do as they please unless the people determine otherwise. The people have never expressed a definite opinion. They may support the Lords in the coming elections for aught anyone knows.

Why the Lords Fear the Budget.

But why did the Lords risk interference in financial matters? Why play such a high stake? Because the clauses in the Budget taxing land values threaten the existence of the Lords. Their final purpose is to obliterate feudalism, and place all natural resources in the possession of the public to whom they rightfully belong. In other words, the ultimate aim of the Budget is to restore the land to the people. This is revolutionary. The Budget, however, seeks to attain this object by exceedingly slow degrees.

In the first place the provision for a valuation of all the land according to its present value is revolutionary. The land tax on the ancient assessment, which is nominal, would thereby be increased. The peers object. So far they have contributed practically nothing toward the upkeep of government in return for incomes received from the people, which have increased a thousand fold. The revaluation would make their past evasion of taxation too glaring an injustice. They resent the taxation. Is it to be wondered at? Would you expect them to treat with equanimity a bill that proposes to deprive them of special privileges which they have enjoyed for centuries? Naturally they resent interference with their rights. They stigmatise it as confiscation. They forget that they robbed the people for generations, robbed them of the land, robbed them of evaded taxes, robbed them of immense incomes. Well did Mr. George exclaim that a duke cost more than a Dreadnought, and was much more dangerous. The landlords cannot believe that it is they themselves who have been guilty of confiscation. They have been so long accustomed to the enjoyment of their privileges, which the people have not only tolerated but justified by sustaining the House of Lords when assailed, that they recognise no injustice in the situation.

The Need of the Provisions of the Budget.

A few illustrations, however, will demonstrate that the Lords have no just cause for rejecting the Budget. In the town of Harrogate the corporation after arbitration bought some 5 acres of land for \$83,400. That land was rated for taxation at \$125. The same corporation purchased an-

other property of some 52 acres for \$125,000 which was rated at \$150. The burial board in the same city negotiated recently for more ground. The landlord asked \$5,000 an acre. That same land had been assessed at \$1.25 per acre. Think of it! In each of these cases the government received no benefit from the increased value. The landlord got it all, though he had done nothing to create it. The people, who had done everything to make that increased value by their industry and enterprise, got nothing. Nay, worse, the landlord gained an added taxing power over their industry through the possession of this unearned wealth. He will invest it and draw interest on it. That interest comes out of the products of labor. Is it unjust then that on such sales as the above 20 per cent of the increased value of the land should go to the government—to the people? Cases of sale of the above description could be multiplied almost without end. The Lords relieved the people of the burden of taking care of the land. In return for this they lease or rent or sell at the highest possible figure, and pay taxes on a valuation made centuries ago when the land possessed a mere nominal value.

The same injustice is noticeable in the taxation of large estates relative to the small householders in the cities. Clumber, the seat of the Duke of Newcastle, 121 acres in extent, is rated at \$1,675 per annum; Wellbeck Abbey, the seat of the Duke of Portland, rates at \$5.00 an acre; while Thoresby, the seat of the Earl of Manvers, rates at almost \$2.50 an acre per annum. If a single acre or part of an acre of these estates was required by a railroad or a corporation, the value would doubtless be placed at many hundreds of times that at which it is now rated. There are cases where land assessed at \$5 and \$8 an acre, sold for \$4,750 and \$5,000 an acre when wanted by a railroad company.

So in the case of mines and minerals. The value of this kind of property is fabulous, yet the landowners pay tax only on the assessment of the land according to its ancient valuation. The lessees of the mine have to shoulder all the burden of taxation, and all the risk, too.

Then it is the common practice in Britain, as in this country in cities, to hold lots out of use to increase their prospective value, and escape just taxation meanwhile. When forced into use, the lessee needs again to bear the increased taxation. Mr. George's tax on such undeveloped land, of one cent in every \$5 of value, according to the new valuation, will do much to rectify this evil.

Under existing conditions the land is a gold

mine to the landlords. They know it full well, and they will never part with it so long as they can keep the Entail Act in existence. The people improve the land, building cities, railroads and factories, and opening up mines, spending untold millions on these improvements, and the landlords derive the greatest benefit from it all without doing hardly anything in return. The more the people labor to improve the land,—the more they put into it,—the more they are taxed by the landowners for their enterprise.

There is but one result. When a comparatively small body of men who hold the land charge those who live and labor on it the last penny for their right so to live and labor on it, then unemployment, poverty, degradation and vice necessarily follow. When the few take the lion's share of product and give practically no service in return, then the many must suffer. That they do suffer is testified by the fact that there are about one million officially listed paupers in the land. And physicians agree that the race has deteriorated of late. The nation could not get men with the old time physique to serve in the army in the recent Boer War.

Money must be raised in some way to pay the increased and increasing expenses of the Government. The taxation of land values is the method rejected by the Lords. Their purse is affected by this proposal. There is no part of a man that is so sensitive as his pocket. But the Lords have not the slightest compunction in lightening other people's pockets. They do not hesitate to propose as the alternative method of raising the revenue a tariff, a tax on imports, a tax on the poor man's bread. Their proposal means that the laborer shall pay further toll on the necessaries of life; it means that the few shall still further be benefited at the expense of the many; it means the protection of the capitalist, to the increased impoverishment of the consumer.

Why This Is the People's Budget.

On the other hand, the present Budget aims at relieving industry, and placing the increased burdens upon the shoulders of those best able to bear them. It aims at putting a new tax on values which result from monopoly; values which are not the fruit of the monopolists' efforts or enterprise; values which at present are either inadequately taxed or not taxed at all; values which are the creation of social growth and the activity of the State, and therefore rightfully belong to the State. This is therefore "A People's Budget." In the words of the able Chancellor of the Exchequer:

"This is a war budget. It is a budget for waging implacable warfare against poverty."

LOUIS G. HOECK.

NEWS NARRATIVE

To use the reference figures of this Department for obtaining continuous news narratives:

Observe the reference figures in any article; turn back to the page they indicate and find there the next preceding article, on the same subject; observe the reference figures in that article, and turn back as before; continue until you come to the earliest article on the subject; then retrace your course through the indicated pages, reading each article in chronological order, and you will have a continuous news narrative of the subject from its historical beginnings to date.

Week ending Tuesday, January 4, 1910.

The British Parliamentary Campaign.

The elections for the new Parliament will begin on the 14th and end on the 28th. In the short whirlwind campaign before Christmas the Liberals seemed to be carrying everything before them. T. P. O'Connor, writing from London on the 1st to the Chicago Tribune, finds this condition on his arrival from America (vol. xii, p. 1256):

The Liberals are fighting unitedly and enthusiastically everywhere, with all the leaders in the fighting line, except Haldane, who is temporarily ill. The Tories are dispirited. They are divided, with no leaders and no decisive leader. Chamberlain can only issue manifestoes from the sick room. Balfour has just emerged from the bed, and the death of Lord Percy removes a potent young genius. There is a similar weakness in the program. Little attempt is made to justify the rejection of the Budget by the peers, and the experiment of sending peers to the popular platforms to speak for themselves dissolved in a side splitting and universal roar of rough popular laughter. These lordly but unaccustomed orators were pursued by popular and telling questions, to which their inept answers added force. . . . Divided and discouraged on the questions of the lords and the tariff, the Tories fall back on the German navy scare and home rule. The navy scare has risen from the grave with more ghastly folly and panic than even during the Dreadnought agitation. George Wyndham, though an able Tory leader, ventures to ask, "What is the good of trade if the Germans are in possession of English soil?" . . . It is astonishing how home rule has rushed to the front since Asquith's speech.* Everybody, foe and friend, united in regarding Asquith's speech as bringing back the Liberals to Gladstone's policy of full home rule, and several Tory journals even say Asquith's position is more home-rule than Gladstone's. The Irish, on the other hand, interpreting Asquith in the same way, enter this election with more hope, enthusiasm and union than any since 1886. In England they are working everywhere in a cordial alliance with the Liberals, while the Liberals are everywhere speaking out on home rule with a clearness and courage unknown since Gladstone's retirement. In some cases Liberals who had opposed home rule for twen-

ty years and remained outside the Liberal ranks are returning and adopting home rule as the only settlement of the Irish question.

From the cable dispatches we learn that in an address to the Dundee electors Winston Churchill declared on the 28th that, "The forces of reaction are out for a double event. They are gambling with the rights and freedom of the nation, and they are running a tremendous risk to win a tremendous prize. That prize is no less than the complete tying up of the democracy, both through its politics and its industry." In an address in London on the 31st, Lloyd George argued against the protection policy of the Conservatives, asserting that unemployment was more prevalent in protectionist countries than in England, and citing as an example the United States which he described as "the protectionists' paradise, where customs officers line the shores like cherubim, with flaming swords, keeping every foreign made article out of this garden of Eden; but once inside, you find the serpent of hunger, want and unemployment hissing in every grade."

On the other hand, the enfeebled Joseph Chamberlain issued an address to the electors of West Birmingham on the 29th, in which he advocated tariff reform and reciprocity with the colonies, and attacked the Budget as placing a heavy burden of taxation upon the people and increasing the number of the unemployed. The address further asserted that home rule for Ireland, as is promised by the Liberals, would not only injure the friends of England there, whose interests were safeguarded by the present control, but the danger to all would be greater, since Great Britain now was threatened by foreign nations as never before. After alleging that the Liberals desire a single chamber rule, the address concluded with a criticism of the government's lack of preparation for the national defense.

Mail advices are fuller and more picturesque. The Westminster Gazette of the 10th thus reports what it calls "Gems from the Peers":

Lord Willoughby de Broke, at Lincoln last night, mentioned his "qualifications" for appearing on the platform. He was, he said, a peer, a Tory, a landowner and an Englishman. The Budget, he declared, was saturated through and through with the poison of Socialism. Radical and Socialist ideas had been thrown into a common hotchpotch. The two parties were going to fight upon the same platform, and they hoped some day or other to share the same plunder.

At Stamford Hill Viscount Hill deprecated the suggestion that the Peers did not want to pay. It must not be supposed, he said, that the richer men in the country were shirking the payment of their share of taxation. Then he went on to argue that

*See The Public, vol. xii, pp. 1208, 1253.