

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NEW SYSTEM.

THE establishment of the new system in Australia was watched with earnest attention by the whole civilised world, but most intently by those of our own kindred whose attention had already been drawn to the Single Tax, but none had courage or confidence enough to try it until they saw how splendidly it was working in Australia. In England it was at first pronounced by high authorities to be but "a visionary Utopian scheme, flimsy and hollow as a soap-bubble, very beautiful to contemplate in a favourable light, but certain to burst immediately on coming in contact with the hard realities of national life, and utterly impossible as the settled policy of a great nation." The Irish and Scotch, and more emphatically the Welsh, admired the system exceedingly, declaring it to be identical with that which prevailed amongst them in the days before either the Roman or the Sassenach appeared in the land of the Briton. They are still its enthusiastic admirers, and would have it at once if it were possible, but the oracles had spoken and condemned it, and so was lost the favourable opportunity that might have saved the Empire much loss and many a bitter struggle. The troubles, domestic and foreign, the strikes, mutinies, and revolts which

have of late destroyed his peace and happiness, have hitherto prevented John Bull from even considering the matter. Since, however, "the stern logic of Time" has completely reversed the judgment of the "high authorities" on which the new system was rejected in the first instance, there is every hope that Great Britain will shortly adopt it.

Other European nations having pronounced against the New System, and rejected it with scorn when first introduced to their notice, and now perhaps feeling compelled to prove themselves right in spite of fate, or bound too firmly in the chains of their military organisations, maintain an obstinate hostility to it. They have lost the small share of the world's carrying trade they once enjoyed, and are compelled largely to subsidise the few vessels they still maintain upon the seas. They have also, to their own great injury, imposed heavy taxes upon Australian ships visiting their ports, and upon goods imported from Australia, of which, although cheaper and better than their own, they thus deprive their people.

Denmark, Sweden, and Norway have adopted the Single Tax, but reject "free carriage," and must consequently depend upon Australian vessels for their foreign trade.

Our Canadian brethren had closely noted our proceedings, and almost before its success became assured in New South Wales, their Government brought in a measure for the adoption of the New

System. This was opposed with such vehemence by the Tariff party that it was postponed for a considerable time, but was, on "appeal to the country," finally carried by a large majority. It was thus forced upon the notice of the United States Government, who at once perceived that it would enable Canada to cut them out of all their foreign trade, and that it would be more prejudicial to them the longer they stood out against it. They, therefore, immediately declared in favour of the New System and set to work with the greatest vigour and determination to carry their resolution into effect. Their action was at once endorsed with the warmest approval of the people, which blazed up into almost delirious enthusiasm when it was discovered that an attempt was being made to defeat reform by the distribution of enormous bribes. Then, indeed, the people arose in their strength, and heaped scorn and contempt upon the base traffickers in the nation's liberties. Before their righteous wrath, the opposition, after a few short-lived but fierce and furious sputterings, disappeared like thorns in the devouring flames of a mighty conflagration. Rings, pools, corners, and monopolies of all kinds were swept away, the chains which fettered industry, and made Labour the bond-slave of Monopoly, were burst asunder, and Liberty once more walked with free unshackled limbs through the land of Freedom. The whole country went wild with joy, the immensity of the people's relief and gladness breaking forth in

songs of triumph and delight Processions, miles in length, of labourers with their wives and children paraded the streets with music, flags, banners and devices with shouts of triumphant joy, showing how deeply their hearts were stirred "to welcome Freedom home again" as their voices re-echoed to the thrilling strains of their musicians. On the next Sabbath, the churches were decorated for "services of thanksgiving for the mighty deliverance of our country from the bonds of industrial slavery," which were held in almost every town and city throughout the country.

The excitement culminated in, if possible, a still wilder outburst of popular rejoicing when "a measure for the resumption of the railways for the free service of the people of this country" was carried without a single dissentient voice, although it pledged the Government to a liability of nearly four thousand millions of dollars, and an annual working expenditure of about five hundred millions of dollars. Some were a little staggered by the magnitude of these figures, but the President soon allayed their fears by reminding them that it "does not matter whether the cost is four cents. or four hundred thousand million dollars, so long as we get value for our money," and proceeded to demonstrate that the amount would be more than covered ten times over, by the increased value of land in the Western States alone. He was well supported by an enterprising and speculative Senator, who offered to take the whole liability on

his own shoulders in exchange for the fee simple, free of tax, of 100,000 square miles of land in a barren and desert waste in the far west. When it was explained, however, that free railways would raise the value of that particular territory by about fifty thousand million dollars, the advantages of the New System became clear to the most sceptical, and no further objection was raised even to the purchase of all the steamers owned in the United States, also "for the free service of the people."

The working of the system has more than justified their most sanguine expectations, daily developing unexpected features of a most beneficial nature. The setting free of the enormous capital, which had been locked up in railways, provided ample funds for the establishment of new and flourishing industries, perhaps the most expansive of which is the building of steel steamers, the States being now the principal rivals of Australia in that essential branch of national development, almost strangled by the vicious exclusive policy so long maintained by the dominant party in the United States.

Nowhere has experience of the New System disclosed the slightest tendency toward the production of any of those evils, of which the Old was so prolific. On the contrary, it has given abundant proofs of its power to work out the national and moral regeneration of any people by whom its fundamental principles are embraced. To them it becomes a fountain of blessing,

and a perennial source of refreshment and felicity, and proving that man may raise himself above the reach of evil, if he will but avail himself of the means provided by Divine wisdom.
