

EDWARD MELLAND



In the monthly notes of the Manchester League for December last intimation was given of the death of Edward Melland, which took place at his home in Alport, Derbyshire, on 11th November, following on an attack of acute bronchitis. He was an able and consistent advocate of land reform and ever ready to explain the need for progress along this line. He gave of his best to the work both in personal attention and in encouraging those who were together for the good of humanity. As a correspondent who knew him intimately remarked: "Yours is not the only cause that will miss him." He was a special friend of *Land & Liberty*. In one of his last letters to the office he wrote: "This is an important time for the cause, and I must do something. The paper keeps up an excellent standard; good luck to it and you." He was a keen politician and always held to his ground without any trace of feeling. He had a ready wit and rather enjoyed the fun of the debate, the while he kept his eye on the main chance of putting in a word in season for free trade and land value taxation.

But Edward Melland will be remembered by his friends and associates in Lancashire and Cheshire for his illuminating address on "Private Property in Land," delivered first in February, 1915, and published by the author in pamphlet form at the close of that year. His colleagues who persuaded him to publish the address can be congratulated on their prompt recognition of its usefulness. It contains many bright pages of instruction, but we must be content with the under-noted extract:—

The power which land monopoly has indirectly given to capitalists over the workers they employ, is a still more serious calamity in this country. It accounts for the horrors of our cities and our slums. . . . I once saw in a newspaper that "a sufficient answer to those ridiculous people who attack the principle of Private Property in Land is the simple fact that our whole civilization is based on it." Yes, and isn't that enough to damn it?

I was away from Manchester for 30 years, most of which time was spent in a new country where the sort of poverty we know here—the sordid, undeserved and hopeless poverty of our city slums—simply did not exist. When I returned and saw the whole thing, with a stranger's eye, the wickedness of it all struck

my imagination more forcibly than it possibly could in the case of those who have always lived within sight of it. How often have I seen, for instance, on a bitter winter's day in Deansgate, the long queue of miserable wretches, half-starved and less than half-clothed, outside the Wood Street Mission, waiting for a meal—a queue, nevertheless, of our successes, for our failures are hidden away in hospitals and lunatic asylums, in workhouses and prisons and cemeteries.

Not that the physical sufferings are the worst of it, by any means. It is the absence of mental and spiritual nourishment in their long, grey, hopeless lives that is the most tragic. To grow up in any particular environment is, for those who have no leisure to study other countries and other times, to consider it the natural and inevitable setting for social life. That is the real tragedy of our terrible civilization.

In the passing of Edward Melland the movement suffers the loss of an earnest and loyal adherent whose days' work still tells. We desire to convey to Mrs Melland and her family and friends our sincerest sympathy in their sorrow.