

# LAND & LIBERTY

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Twenty-Eighth Year—No. 332.

JANUARY, 1922.

3d. By post, 4s. per annum.

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**The Conspiracy of Silence.**—Mr. Lloyd George met a deputation on 15th December, headed by Mr. J. R. Clynes, M.P., to discuss unemployment and some suggested remedies. The deputation had come from a Labour Party Emergency Conference held in London on 8th December, which had adopted a long resolution urging, among other things, the stabilization of the exchanges, revision of the indemnity obligations, cancellation of war indebtedness, a new international policy, and recognition of the Russian Government. It was significant that neither the Conference nor the deputation had anything to say about the land question, the relation of land monopoly to unemployment, or the *internal* policy which allows annual tribute to be exacted from British industry far more disastrous to trade and employment and far exceeding in amount the whole German indemnity and all the war debts put together. The Conference had observed the conspiracy of silence on the real cause of unemployment and on the institutions which, within our own shores, rob the producer and hold the natural resources of the country to ransom. The deputation, coming from such a Conference, was well suited to speak to a man who is now concerned to preserve the same silence, and who will gladly have conversations with leaders of the Labour Party or anyone on any subject so long as he is not reminded of his own ruthless exposure of landlordism. The Prime Minister played the game. Like the deputation, he left the British land question out of the picture, and was able to say what is true enough *if land monopoly dare not be questioned or challenged* that "there were certain underlying causes for our unemployment which Governments could not touch either by mending old policies or devising new ones." And in the agreed silence on the privileges of landowners to hold land out of use, the Prime Minister flung the whole force of the Malthusian doctrine in the face of Mr. Clynes and his friends: "Our population was greater than before the war, partly by natural increase, partly because emigration had been stopped altogether." The result of the interview is one more blow at the prestige of the Labour Party and a message of despair to the working people throughout the land.

**The Irish Free State.**—The outstanding event of last month and perhaps the greatest event in all British history has been the Treaty of Peace setting up the Irish Free State. The Treaty was approved by Parliament in a brief session called for the purpose and has been the subject of prolonged debates in Dail Eireann, which has been adjourned over Christmas.

What steps will now be taken to solve the greatest of Irish problems—the land question—remains to be seen. If Ireland has achieved political liberty, economic freedom is still far to seek. As the Scottish Correspondent of the *ULSTER EXAMINER* (3rd December) points out in a most readable article, land reform ideas have always been the bedrock of thought in Irish nationalist movements. The article has much to say about the influence of the patriot and essayist James Fintan Lalor (1807-1849) and the sketch of his teachings contained in Miss Fogarty's recently published book. "To Lalor," Mr. Arthur Griffith writes in a preface to the book, "the restoration of the soil to the peasantry was a greater ideal than the restoration of political liberty to the nation." Later came the formation of the Irish Land League, founded by Michael Davitt. The Scottish Correspondent of the *ULSTER EXAMINER* goes on to say:—

**Fintan Lalor's Influence.**—"John Mitchel was influenced by the ideals of Lalor and came to believe that the Land question could be utilized to help Ireland to political independence, but Lalor was 33 years dead before his views loomed large in Ireland through the initiative of Michael Davitt and Henry George. Miss Fogarty, in her book on the essays of Lalor, says:—

"It was not until after his release from Dartmoor in December, 1877, that Michael Davitt began to make practical use of the dogma expounded by Lalor in 1848. Davitt, in his own words, recognized what was wanted was to link the social question to that of Home Rule, by making ownership of the soil the basis of the fight for self-government.

"The founder of the Land League recognized that tactically it would mean an attack upon the weakest point in the English hold on Ireland in the form of a National crusade against landlordism, while such a movement would win a maximum of auxiliary help from those whom the system had driven out of the country. These points show how Land Reform ideas moulded the thought of Irish Nationalist movements and how Lalor's land philosophy dominated Michael Davitt, while the publication of *PROGRESS AND POVERTY* strengthened his convictions."

**When Theft was Born.**—Mr. E. V. Lucas, the well-known author, in an interesting page in *JOHN O' LONDON'S WEEKLY*, 10th December, writes:—

Adam and Eve, of course, took where they would. Abel and Cain and Seth took where they would, and so for a while did their mysteriously engendered descendants. But then, one day, one of them, taking, as usual and without thought, where he would, was pulled up very short by a commanding voice bidding him drop it.