

various chapels. It is election time, the Liberal candidate is being opposed, for the first time in fifteen years, and the electoral fever is already high. . . . Everything, of course, is in Welsh, and an Englishman could sit the meeting out without hearing a word of English from beginning to end.

The speeches are numerous, and some of them vary considerably, but all of them sound the same note—loyalty to the flag Wales has upheld so long, and deadly enmity to the House of Lords. At last the chairman calls a name which is received with loud cheers, and an old farmer stands up by the reading desk. He has often stood there before, to open a prayer meeting or a "seiat" with prayer, but he is quite at home, too, when it comes to making a speech. His clothes are rough and worn; he is white-haired, and his face is wrinkled and weather-beaten. There is a twinkle in his eye as he looks from under bushy eyebrows at the expectant audience. And then, in a deep, penetrating voice, he starts. It is not easy to convey all the quaintness and effect of that speech in English. It is quite impossible to transmit the various turns of phrase, but this was the gist of what he said:

"You mustn't expect me to be short, Mr. Chairman," he said with a glance at the chairman, and another look at the clock. "I am going to talk about these Lords. They tell me there are six hundred of them, but I don't like their name. (Laughter.) I have another name for them—I call them blackthorn bushes. (Loud laughter.) Now, boys, can you tell me what grows on blackthorn bushes?"

The audience shouts the Welsh name for sloes, which literally rendered means "choking plums."

"Yes," continued the orator, "that is the fruit. Now what are the fruits of these Lords? What did they do with the Education Bill?"

"Choked it!" shouts the audience, roaring with laughter.

"What did they do with the Licensing Bill?"

"Choked it!" came the reply again, from every throat in the room.

"And what have they done with the Budget, if you happen to know?"

"Choked it!"

"Ah, there you make your mistake!" said the speaker, with a gleam of laughter in his eyes. "You know the blackthorn looks very fine, and white, and soft in the spring. It is in full blossom then, and you would think you could sit down on it comfortably. But if you did—if you did, you would soon feel the thorns. (Laughter.) The Lords have thrown the Budget to the country, and they are trying to delude you and me, but the thorns are there under the flowers, you may be very certain." (Loud applause.)

Then the speaker's voice deepened, and all at once the meeting seemed to become more serious.

"I am going to tell you a little of my own history," he said: "I remember when bread was taxed in this country. We were a large family—father, mother, and eight children—there was no work to be had, and there was no food for any of us. And one day my father had had a job at nine-pence a day. He got up very early to go to his work, and mother put a big pot on the fire to boil him some potatoes before starting. That was all we had to give him—potatoes, and a bit of onion, and some salt. I remember it as well as if it was yesterday—and afterwards mother put some potatoes in his little box for him to eat during the day.

"When he had gone, mother started out to try and get two shillings' worth of flour. She walked all day—there wasn't a bit of bread, or a piece of meat, or a dust of flour in the house—but she got no flour. I remember her coming home and sitting down in the chair and crying, and we hungry children gathered round her and cried too."

The old farmer's voice was deep and penetrating. There was complete silence as he went on with his speech, but when he paused, another old man broke out, the tears rolling down his face, saying, "Yes, yes, Morris bach, it's quite true. That's how it used to be—it's quite true!"

The speaker went on. "If mother had had flour, do you know, boys, how much she would have had for two shillings? I'll tell you. You could only get two pounds of flour for a shilling then. And so when my father came back in the evening potatoes and salt was all we had for him. I never had any schooling. I was working on the fields at a penny a day as soon as I was big enough. That is how things were then." . . .

Thus ended a typical Welsh speech and a typical Welsh meeting. It was at such meetings and with such speakers that the Chancellor of the Exchequer started his career.

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## "OUR FATHERS HAVE TOLD US."

From the London Nation of January 15, 1910.

We have forgotten, else it would be impossible they should try to befool us. We have forgotten the terrible years when England lay cold and starving under the clutch of the landlords and their taxes on food. Terror is soon forgotten, for otherwise life could not endure. Not seventy years have gone since that clutch was loosened, but the iron which entered into the souls of our fathers is no more remembered. How many old laborers, old operatives, or miners are now left to recall the wretchedness of that toiling and starving childhood before the corn-tax was removed? Few are remaining now, and they speak little and will soon be gone. The horror of it is scattered like the night, and we think no more of it, nor imagine its reality. It seems very long ago, like Waterloo or

the coach to York—so long ago that we can almost hope it was not true.

And yet our fathers have told us of it. They and their fathers lived through it at its worst. Only six years have passed since Mrs. Cobden Unwin collected the evidence of aged laborers up and down the country, and issued their piteous memories in the book called "The Hungry Forties." Ill-spelt, full of mistakes, the letters are stronger documents than the historian's eloquence. In almost every detail of misery, one agrees with the other. In one after another we read of the quartern loaf ranging from 7d. to 11½d., and heavy, sticky, stringy bread at that; or we read of the bean porridge or grated potato that was their chief food; or, if they were rather better off, they told of oatmeal and a dash of red herring—one red herring among three people was thought a luxury. And then there was the tea—sixpence an ounce, and one ounce to last a family for a week, eked out with the scrapings of burnt crusts to give the water a color. One man told how his parents went to eat raw snails in the fields. Another said the look of a butcher's shop was all the meat they ever got. "A ungrly belly makes a man desprit," wrote one, but for poaching a pheasant the hungry man was imprisoned fourteen years. Seven shillings to nine shillings a week was the farm laborer's wage, and it took twenty-six shillings then to buy the food that seven would buy now. What a vivid and heart-rending picture of cottage life under the landlord's tax is given in one old man's memory of his childish hunger and his mother's pitiful self-denial! "We was not allowed free speech," he writes, "so I would just pull mother's face when at meals, and then she would say, 'Boy, I can't eat this crust,' and O! the joy it would bring my little heart."

We have forgotten it. Wretched as is the daily life of a large part of our working people—the only people who really count in a country's prosperity—we can no longer realize what it was when wages were so low and food so dear that the struggle with starvation never ceased.

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### RAKING UP OLD HISTORY.

From the London Chronicle of January 7, 1910.

The Royal Commission on the Housing of the Poor, which sat as long ago as 1885, made the following recommendations in favor of taxing vacant land, which are forty times more drastic than the proposals in the Budget. And these revolutionary proposals were recommended by the King (then prince of Wales), Earl Brownlow, Cardinal Manning, Bishop Walsham How, Mr. Jesse Collings, and other Commissioners, Liberal and Conservative.

The recommendations were as follows:

At present, land available for building in the

neighborhood of our populous centres, though its capital value is very great, is probably producing a small yearly return until it is let for building. The owners of this land are not rated in relation to real value but to actual annual income. They can thus afford to keep their land out of the market, and to part with only small quantities so as to raise the price beyond the natural monopoly price which the land would command by its advantages of position.

Meantime, the general expenditure of the town on improvements is increasing the value of their property. If this land were rated at, say, 4 per cent on its selling value, the owners would have a more direct incentive to part with it to those who are desirous of building, and a two-fold advantage would result to the community. First, all the valuable property would contribute to the rates, and thus the burden on the occupiers would be diminished by the increase in the ratable property.

Secondly, the owners of the building land would be forced to offer their land for sale, and thus their competition with one another would bring down the price of building land, and so diminish the tax in the shape of ground rent, or price paid for land which is now levied on urban enterprise by the adjacent land owners, a tax, be it remembered, which is no recompense for any industry or expenditure on their part, but is the natural result of the industry and activity of the townspeople themselves.

Your Majesty's Commissioners would recommend that these matters should be included in legislation when the law of rating comes to be dealt with by Parliament.

These recommendations have never been carried out when the law of rating was before Parliament. And now, when Mr. Lloyd George proposes a tax of one halfpenny in the pound on undeveloped land—instead of 4 per cent, or 10d., as recommended by the King, Cardinal Manning, Earl Brownlow and others, including such practical men connected with land as Lord Carrington, the late W. T. Torrens, who gave his name to Housing Acts, the late George Godwin, architect, and Sir George Harrison—the Conservative party raise the cry of "Revolution!"

What would they have said if the Chancellor had embodied in his Budget the recommendations which we have quoted?

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### THE MONEY TRUST.

John Moody in Moody's Magazine for January.

The steady and increasing concentration of wealth in all lines of activity is becoming more and more a matter of discussion in all walks of life. Figures are being produced showing that the control of great corporate and other activities is passing more and more into the hands of a powerful group of capitalists whose headquarters are in Wall street, and whose methods are being scrutinized more closely by the press and by legislative enactments from year to year. The recent developments in New York city in the direc-