

to give up the land, securing to him the value of his improvements, we violate no craving of his nature; we only take from him what he has ceased to value, the land; and allow him the one thing he continues to value, his money, to invest elsewhere.

Further, it is the nature and not the extent of the occupancy that satisfies the land hunger. A home and land enough to afford employment are all that is wanted for the purpose.

The Irishman's poor cabin is as much his home to him, as the Duke's palace is to him; and an acre or two satisfies the craving to be working for one's-self as thoroughly as 1,000 acres would. Therefore so long as we leave a man land enough to provide him full employment, much more when we leave him enough to employ many hired servants, we may take, at a valuation, the broad acres on which he merely runs his flocks without jarring any legitimate feeling.

CONCLUSION.

Now let us note the results of our plan to each of the parties concerned.

1. In regard to the dispossessed landlord.

So much land is taken from him, so much money of equal value is returned to him. He is certainly no worse off than before. He is really much better off.

Formerly his income ceased every time the land was vacant between one tenancy and another, and disappeared altogether every time a tenant bolted or broke. Now it is guaranteed to him with absolute regularity.

Formerly he was constantly liable to demands from his

tenants for repairs and improvements, to which he was compelled, to some extent at any rate, to attend. Now he is freed from all this, his income comes to him without deductions.

He is better off all round for his dispossession.

2. In regard to the occupier.

He holds at present on (say) a five or seven years' lease. All his operations are bounded by this prospective limit. No improvement or enterprise can he attempt which will not be completely repaid with interest within that ever narrowing period. But such a limit is fatal to the proper development of the resources of the land. The very first condition necessary is security of tenure; not for five or seven years, but for so long as the occupier desires to hold it, with assurance of full compensation for unexhausted improvements should he decide to retire. A hand to mouth system that farms from year to year is but a step in advance of the practice of the savage who supplies his wants from day to day. To get the full results from the land you must improve it. To work the land without being free to improve it is to work it with one hand tied. The most valuable works, those that return the greatest results to a given labour, are those that are most far-reaching, but slowest in yielding their results.

To drain, to plant, to build, for example, are things the occupier must not dream of. Many a thing that he sees the land wants, and that it seems a pity to neglect, must he leave undone; and his interest in the land, little enough at any time, diminishes daily, till in the last year of his lease he is in the position of a yearly tenant, a position proverbially unproductive and unsatisfactory for both landlord and tenant. It is no longer his interest to manure, to keep down weeds, to effect a hand's turn of repairs more than is absolutely and immediately necessary.

As the end of the lease approaches he is further paralysed

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by the uncertainty whether his lease will be renewed or not, on such terms as he can accept. He does not know often whether to fallow or what crop to sow, or what to undertake; and if through the landlord's asking too much or wanting to resume possession, or for any reason he is obliged to leave, he has to sell off everything, no matter whether the times are favourable or not, and be at a loose end for months looking out for another farm, wasting his time and consuming his capital.

Finally he has to take a new untried farm, the peculiarities of which he has to learn by gradual experience, and has hurriedly to get together fresh stock and implements. Never has he any abiding interest in the land; never is it anything more to him than a temporary residence, and an instrument out of which to squeeze as much money as possible within a given time.

Turn to state ownership and all this is reversed. The tenant is now in as secure possession of the land as if he owned it (only subject to a yearly payment) without having to find the capital to buy it.

It is practically his; his as a home to dwell in; his as an instrument to put to fullest use; his as a trust, not as a possession, but as a trust in which he knows he will never be disturbed so long as he fulfils its reasonable conditions—conditions devised for the public good, not for the aggrandisement of an individual.

He holds a portion of the public estate to the exclusion of other people with equal rights, and therefore he must pay from year to year the full value of that privilege. As the land rises in value through the execution of public works and the growing prosperity of the country, he will naturally have to pay so much the more for the use of it, but nothing the more for the improvements he may have made on it. If from any cause it falls in value, he will have to pay less. Whatever

its value from time to time, as ascertained by periodical valuations, he will have to pay it.

What could be more reasonable?

Moreover, the more he improves the smaller will become the proportion which his rent bears to the total value or productive power of the property, and therefore the easier will it be to meet it, and the more remote the chance of his ever being disturbed in his possession.

Formerly his hands were tied by the shortness and uncertainty of his tenure and the absence of any claim for improvements. Now his hands are free; the land is practically his, though nominally the State's. It will be less in extent, no doubt; that is, he can no longer hold large areas to the exclusion of other people, except, temporarily, in remote parts where the land is not yet wanted for more productive use.

He can no longer hold more than he can personally use for the mere purpose of preventing other people from using it except for his profit; but he can hold as much as is his fair share, and whereon his home stands in perpetuity, and as much more as is not wanted by other people until it is wanted; and as the State is not likely to want it so long as it is being put to full productive use, and will have to pay him the full value of his improvements if it does, the more he improves it the less likely will he be ever to be disturbed.

Secure in his tenure and in the fruits of his labour, the occupier will acquire a permanent interest in his land, and a pride in and affection for it such as he has no chance of acquiring now, and will have every inducement man can have to put it to the fullest use, and draw the greatest enjoyment from it.

“But as he has still to pay rent, it seems—rent to the full value—how is he better off, after all? What difference can it make to him whether he pays his rent to the State or to a private landlord?”

Just the difference between paying money into the bank to your own account and paying it in to another's. For by so much the more as the State receives in rent the less it requires in taxation.

In paying rent to a private landlord the tenant pays it away to a stranger for the stranger's enjoyment or enrichment, and the payer sees it no more. But in paying it to the State he gets back with one hand what he gives with the other; what he gives goes to the great public trustee to be turned into public benefits, of which he has the full use and enjoyment in common with other people.

His payment to the State, in short, is not a payment away at all, but an investment, and, generally speaking, the best investment he makes. After making every allowance for Government mismanagement, jobbery, and extravagance, there is yet no outlay from which we receive so many and so great returns. It secures for the payer benefits which he could not by his own resource, labour, or outlay secure at all, and without which he could secure nothing else.

What sort of a living could any man make if, in addition to his ordinary business, he had to be his own policeman, road-maker, schoolmaster, etc.?

What we pay to the State in taxation we get back in full measure, running over.

But the returns from State rents are far greater than the returns from taxation; for taxation gives you those public benefits only in return for your money, while for State rents you get the use of a piece of land, in itself worth the money, and you have all the public benefits thrown in; or, to put it differently, for taxation you get your money back once only, for the State rent you get it twice over.

At the commencement of the system there may be no immediate gain as far as mere money payment goes; for great part of what the tenant pays to the State in rent, the State

will have to transfer to the dispossessed landlord as compensation.

It is only as the land increases in value, which it will quickly begin to do, and the unearned increment begins to accrue, that the State revenue will begin to expand and to go to the reduction of taxation and multiplication of public benefits ; but, from the moment it begins to accrue, it begins to increase, and increases at accelerating speed.

3. In regard to the labourer.

As for the labourer's full rights, which it is the ultimate aim of our policy to secure, that is a subject on which I may have something to say on another occasion ; but for the present all I am concerned about is to show how the particular initiative measures which our society proposes will affect him.

Rent, as we have seen, devours wages ; and what enables it chiefly to do so is the power the land-owner or land-occupier has of restricting the field of employment ; of keeping back the greater part of the national resources from full productive use, and compelling the labourers to compete for the privilege of employment on the small portion which he permits to be used.

We have but to notice how the opening up or enlargement of one particular department of employment affects the labour market to form some idea of the effect that would be produced by throwing open the whole field.

The undertaking of a single line of railway sends wages up at once perceptibly along the whole line and for some distance on each side. The discovery of mineral deposits on Crown land, where the labourer requires nothing but a pick and shovel and a miner's right to find employment for himself at once, sends them up with a rush.

Throw open all the land for cultivation and all the minerals for development, and, whether the labourer or the capitalist takes possession, work is wanted in all directions ; the

labourer either finds work for his own hand or somebody calling out for him, and can ask any wages he likes up to the limit of the productiveness of his labour.

If the land is thrown open to the labourer himself, as in the case of minerals discovered on Crown land, or of allotments for cultivation on unused land, he will not work for an employer for less than he can make for himself; nor even for as much, for independence is sweet, and he will rather work for himself than for another for the same money.

To get labour, the employer will have to offer him even more than he can make for himself.

Some people are quite shocked at the idea of such a state of things. They think high wages are ruin to the whole country, not seeing that the very fact that wages are so high is a sign that labour is highly productive and industry prospering; not seeing either that it is impossible for wages ever to rise so high as to check the progress of enterprise; for no employer, no matter under what pressure, will continue to give such high wages as will leave him without sufficient profit to maintain himself and carry on his business. If, therefore, he continues to give high wages, no matter how high, it can only be because his business is so profitable that he finds it pays him better to give those high wages rather than to throw up or contract his business, and so business goes on.

And if any employer can *not* pay the high wages going, then if wages do not at once, of themselves, so to speak, come down to his requirements, it is clear either that his business is less productive than those other businesses that can and do give the wages that he cannot, or that he is an incapable manager; in which case, since the labourer cannot be in two places at once, it is better, both for himself and for the country, that he should go to the business or manager where he can do best, best in every sense; and thus High Wages, like Free Trade, are a potent factor in the work of natural selection,

weeding out the weak enterprises and incapable managers and concentrating labour where it is most effective.

But high wages are not only a sign of progress, they are also a factor of progress in many ways; for high wages stimulate the invention and adoption of labour-saving contrivances, which add to the productiveness of labour. Where wages are low, employers do not much trouble themselves to seek for such contrivances or even to adopt them when placed before them.

In making the Suez Canal, the earth was excavated with common hoes and carried out in baskets on women's heads, though steam dredges and lifts were in full use elsewhere, and this simply because labour was so cheap that it was scarce worth while to buy machinery to save it.

So in England where wages are higher than on the Continent, improved appliances are in fuller use: and in Australia and America, where wages are higher still, improved appliances (such at any rate as are suited to their circumstances) are in fuller use still. In Tasmania the scythe and the sickle may be said to be obsolete instruments, all harvest work being done with horse-mowers and reapers and binders; but nearly all the hay I saw lately cut in England was cut with the scythe.

People are so used to seeing the labourer toiling for a mere subsistence, and never rising above his condition, while the employer and the landlord share the produce of his toil between them, that they have come to look upon this as the order of nature; they seem to think that those who have money have a *right* to the labour of those who have none; that the whole purpose of industry is to provide rent for landlords, interest for capital, and profits for employers, and that the wages of the labourer are an unfortunate necessity of the position, to be minimised as much as possible; in short that Providence has evidently designed and ordained that the

fruits of labour shall go not to him who produces them, but to somebody else who permits or employs him to produce them. The idea (which you will hear expressed any day in all directions) that wages should be kept down or the labourer forbidden to have access to the land because employers in such case could not make sufficient profit, means (put in plain terms) that A, who has little, should get less, in order that B, who has much, should get more; a proposition too absurd to be discussed, but which seems to be a fundamental article of belief with almost the whole class of employers.

If the labourer will not work for an employer for wages that will yield the employer a profit, it is clearly because he can put his labour to better use himself, and if so, it is but just to himself and good for society that he should so employ himself. Indeed it is much better for society that in such case he should work for himself rather than for an employer, for it sets the employer's capital free to make his own labour more effective, or his life more comfortable.

If I have 1,000 acres and £1,000 capital, and have hitherto employed 10 labourers on my land to produce £500 of produce, and the land being now thrown open for selection, the labourers can make the £500 for themselves on half the land, this simply sets free the other half of my land, and all my capital, for other use.

But even if the vast resources which we propose to throw open are not thrown open to the labourer personally, but are at once taken up by capitalist employers, still it will require a greatly increased number of employers and amount of capital to take them up and put them to use, and this means a proportionate increase in the demand for labour and consequent rise in wages.

4. In regard to society.

The throwing open of the resources of the land means the great increase of both production and population,

The more farm produce there is raised, and mineral wealth extracted, the more commerce, manufactures, and secondary industries of all sorts will there be; for the greater the produce extracted from the land, the greater the number of people must there be required to work up, shift about, and distribute that produce.

Again, the greater number of people in the country, and the greater the number to the square mile, the greater will be the variety of their wants, and the greater the number of trades to satisfy those wants.

Also, the more the labourers within the given area, the greater the opportunity for the division of labour, for the acquirement of skill, and for the economy of production.

The greater the number of people and the more they produce, the greater will be the amount of rates that can be levied (if more rates should be wanted) and the better the roads, the better and more numerous the schools, libraries, hospitals, and public conveniences of all sorts, and the greater the number of people who will benefit by them.

In short, the advantages to society are endless.

5. In regard to Revenue.

The greater the number of people settled on the land, and the greater the productiveness of their labour, the greater will be the value of the land, and the higher the rent, and the rent will be State rent, *i.e.*, revenue.

And though this increase of rent will be checked at first, and even thrown back by the rise of wages (for as rent formerly devoured wages, so wages will now devour rent) still this increase of wages will soon reach its limit, while the increase in population and in the productiveness of labour will be practically without limit.

The condition of both employer and labourer will be continuously improving, though neither profits nor wages will increase (after the limit spoken of is reached). Increasing rent

will swallow up increasing profits and wages ; but increasing rent will mean increasing revenue, and increasing revenue will mean increasing public benefits, benefiting all.

Employers and labourers will continue to gain, only not as employers and labourers, but as citizens of the State.

Tax after tax will be knocked off as increasing State rent swells State revenue, till no taxes are left, and still the increase will accumulate.

The farmer will have his roads put and kept in first-rate order without paying any rates ; the parent will be able to get the best education for his children without paying any school fees ; the traveller, for a sixpenny or shilling railway ticket, will be able to go from one end of the island to the other, and his letter will go from one end of the island to the other for a penny stamp.

Scholarships and rewards of one kind or another will, by a sort of natural selection, pick out all the special talent of our youth, and develop it to its utmost pitch, to the advantage of society and the enrichment of its possessor.

Railways and telegraphs can be made in all directions, libraries established in every township, the best medical attendance obtained at numerous hospitals and dispensaries at nominal charges. But the prospect is boundless. The further we go the wider it opens out.

Advantages now confined to the wealthy will be available to the humblest, and yet no one will be pauperised, because the help that pauperises is that which takes unjustly from one to give to another, or assumes the form of degrading charity.

But this steady and continuous multiplication of public benefits will no more pauperise, because it is free to all, than the rain and the sun pauperise because they are free to all ; for it represents neither robbery nor charity. It will be the product of the natural growth of wealth from sources to which all have an equal and just claim. It will all spring from State

rent, and represent the price paid by each appropriator of natural advantages for the privilege of using those advantages—advantages to which, being the free gift of nature, all have an equal right, and for the use of which it can therefore injure no one's self respect to receive payment.

All that increase of wealth, in short, which now goes as blackmail to privileged monopolists, will go to public benefits, and the amount of that increase will at the same time be swelled to proportions yet undreamt of.