

"OUR POLICY."
 "We would simply take for the community what belongs to the community—the value that attaches to land by the growth of the community; leave sacred to the individual all that belongs to the individual."—Henry George.

AN INTERNAL CONFLICT.

What is outside of the melting-pot now? The Budget was breaking down the cast-iron land system which binds men and industry in chains, and, as if in sympathy with the fate of this strongest pillar in the temple of privilege all the accessory jewellery and ornaments were in the crucible, or on their way towards it. Everyone, except the timid Liberal, seemed ready to throw in something which he had hitherto defended as admirable and sacred and to take out something new. Landlords on the large scale, so often praised as indispensable bulwarks of the State, were to be melted down into small owners with the help of Unionist land banks and co-operation. The House of Lords, which had so nobly stood between the country and Socialism, was to be recast in another mould—by its own members. In the crisis precipitated by the Budget no institution or policy seemed to escape attack. The result has been a great advance in political interest. The thought that has been awakened has been largely the correct thought which precedes correct action, and correct action in politics quickly affects the lives of the people for good.

Since the election there has been a renewed attempt on the part of Unionists to formulate a land policy, and we devote considerable space in this issue to the reproduction of statements of that policy by the leaders. These statements have been called forth by the demands of their supporters. Tariff Reform, in spite of the pretensions of its advocates, does not satisfy the Unionist electors. The question of trade, whether under a protective tariff or a revenue tax is superficial, and it is well for the country that the common people are compelling the shallow politicians on either side to deal with the deeper problem of production. Let the present system of trade be maintained, it acts on a system which checks and destroys production. Establish Protection, it acts on the same system. The land question, the question of obtaining opportunities to produce, of finding secure tenure, of retaining the fruits of one's toil, is up, and there are men in the country, who, by God's help, will not suffer that question to go down, in spite of evasion and shuffling on either side.

While all this may be a tribute to the success of our work, the present is no time for relaxation of effort. The Unionists are vigilant enough, and are doubtless ready to

apply their Irish land policy to Great Britain, but this is not the quarter from which the gravest danger threatens. The immediate cause for apprehension lies in the internecine war that rages between the two distinct parts of Liberal policy, the two hostile elements which were present in the Budget itself. In the highest places of the Liberal party influences have been working to perpetuate the division of policy, to prevent the consistent application of Liberal principles to the reform of our land system. These influential people are active in belittling and repudiating the Taxation of Land Values. Previous to the election the Liberal Publication Department issued a pamphlet for farmers. The whole effect of this pamphlet is to discredit the Taxation of Land Values in the view of farmers, and to exalt the regulative legislation which is indicated under such headings as *Fertilisers and Feeding Stuffs Act*, *Butter and Margarine Act*, *Destructive Insects and Pests Act*. The first sentence in this pamphlet runs: "It cannot be too strongly and definitely stated that in the Finance Bill agricultural land is not taxed." This is printed in heavy type. Under the heading *Increment Value Duty* the leading sentence is: "No duty is charged in respect of agricultural land," and, worst of all, under the heading *Undeveloped Land Duty* the first statement is: "Similar provisions, carefully safeguarding the interests of agriculture, govern the collection of Undeveloped Land Duty."

This is a sufficient indication of the views which have vitiated the Liberal policy on the land question. Turning to another side of Liberal activity, to the acts and speeches of leaders, the history of the past year offers, perhaps, the most humiliating spectacle that has been witnessed for many years in politics. The introduction of the Budget, the wonderful manner in which it rallied the Liberal party and won support in the country, the searching of hearts and purgation which it worked among politicians, its efficacy in forcing the Lords to an unconstitutional action, the coldness of its treatment by a large number of its nominal sponsors, its utter abandonment in the Prime Minister's Albert Hall speech, his reaching out in preference to Home Rule, his raising of Welsh Disestablishment,—neither of which, as they have been presented to the country, is calculated to win sufficient support—and, most fatal of all, his emphatic yet careless and loose treatment of the constitutional question in all its emptiness, a question which can only be raised and made ripe for treatment by the advance of some proposal as popular as the Taxation of Land Values and as objectionable to the privileged classes, the abandonment of the current Budget in the subsequent campaign, and the return to the defence and explanation of the 1846 Budget with all the tedious repetition of the speeches and articles that have been heard and read for the last seven years—all this mistaking of routes and landmarks and movements, all this blind leading of the blind, all this dragging of reluctant people who saw and knew better into diverse courses,

has taken place. Does anyone wonder that it has ended in humiliation?

Liberal Ministers chose the constitutional question as the fighting issue. It was unripe as an issue, and the choice, weak and mistaken in itself, led inevitably to mistakes in the handling of the subject. Mr. Redmond, as he was bound to do, has taken advantage of these mistakes, and, soon or late, the result will be confusion. There is no one who hoped to see a new era of freedom and prosperity open in Britain who will not feel the keenest disappointment and regret. Let us be candid with ourselves in this crisis. Let us recognise that ignorance of politics and economics and the consequent inertia are widespread and deeply rooted in the Liberal Government, that the Liberal policy in so far as it is determined by what Cobden called the Whig element is all against liberalism and progress.

The insolent and false assumption of the Liberals who are now starting new campaigns in favour of the old Free Trade is that the people of this country do not understand the meaning of Free Trade. They have had experience of it for sixty years. They have been hungry, they have gone with insufficient clothing, they have been poorly housed, they have had little scope in business, and have been obliged to kick their heels in idleness instead of developing their powers. The narrowness of their circumstances has made them bitter and blighted their instincts of love and generosity. This is the school and this is the language in which millions have learned the meaning of the present system, and the message of the Free Trader delivered in the language of statistics and theory is that the present system is good, by implication the best.

This stubborn conservatism which affects the Liberal party must be shaken off. The presence of injustice and the absence of liberty in the matter of using land are intolerable. What does it profit the farmers and labourers to-day that steam mills and binders do the work formerly done by flails and hooks, that fertilisers increase the crops tenfold? Mechanical and chemical progress unaccompanied by justice that moves and adapts itself to new conditions is a progress which tortures and destroys men. So long as the Government and the Liberal Publication Department assume that the Land System as it affects farmers or labourers is satisfactory and just, so long as they display their anxiety to safeguard the interests not of agriculture, not even of the ordinary improving landowner, but to respect and safeguard the prejudices of the worst obstructive landowner who rejects and drives out the men who would develop his land, there is grave danger that the country will accept any alternative to this policy that may be offered. The fall of the Government which stands for this policy is no loss to the country.

J. O.

THE UNIONIST POLICY OF OWNERSHIP.

TWO-THIRDS of the land in Germany used for agricultural purposes is owned by peasants, the other third is in the hands of the great landowners. By far the greater portion of this land is farmed by the owner; only a small portion is let to tenants, and this little is mostly owned by the State or by public institutions which endeavour to leave it as long as possible in the hands of the same tenant or his family. The result of this division of ownership is a great stability; the vocation and the home are one, while love for his birthplace and for his possession acts as a final incentive to the farmer to retain for himself and his family the property he has inherited from his father. This is only possible, however, if great industry is exercised and many of the joys and pleasures of life are foregone. In many

cases it is possible only when the entire family works conjointly, and when the individual sacrifices his existence to serve the whole.—Herr Zelter, a German landowner and farmer, in the MORNING POST, February 18th.

This is one form of the remarkable activity displayed by the Conservatives and Protectionists in the attempt to establish landlordism more firmly and to strengthen it by association with Tariff Reform. There is something that wins our admiration in the frank confession of the advocates of this policy that the small owners of land must set their account for a hard time. Herr Zelter's frank confession that great industry must be exercised and that many of the joys and pleasures of life must be foregone is one that we would commend to the people of this country. It is rather strange that Mr. Balfour, in his preface to Sir Gilbert Parker's pamphlet on small ownership and land banks, takes the same frank line. "The life of a small owner," he says, "although honourable and independent, is rarely an easy one. . . . It is laborious and requires the vigorous co-operation of all the members of the family who are able to help, be they young or old, male or female."

These frank and honest avowals are admirable, and we wish for nothing more on this side than that the advocates of landlordism should go boldly to the country and tell the rural people of Great Britain that the only hope for them, as cultivators of land, is for every member of the family to lead a life of toil, unbroken except by short spells, hardly sufficient for taking food and sleep. We are certain that the British people have had enough of that sort of life. The opportunity of toiling as beasts of toil has been given to them in abundance, and if Free Trade and development of manufactures have done nothing else than render people discontent with this mode of life which is less than half human, they have served a good purpose.

We are surprised at the MORNING POST with its fine hatred of Socialism allowing another part of Herr Zelter's statement to pass. "In many cases," he says, "it (success) is only possible when the entire family works conjointly, and when the individual sacrifices his existence to serve the whole." We have never been able to see how the interest of the whole has been served by the sacrifice of the part, and certainly the landlords have vehemently dissociated themselves from this view since the introduction of the Budget. The landlord policy seems to be that the poor small owner should sacrifice himself to the family, to the State, and that, on the contrary, the State should sacrifice itself to the large owner.

Herr Zelter goes on to praise "Protective legislation as the saviour of German agriculture. . . . A general improvement set in, the price of corn rose to a height which made the intensive method of cultivating it seem profitable, and the value of the land increased." It all seems a strange argument. Agriculture has been saved by the subjection of the agriculturist to the hardest and most unremitting toil. In this country a general improvement has set in since the introduction of Free Trade. If we have only about one million people engaged in agriculture as against seventeen millions in Germany we must have some seventeen millions engaged in other industries, the intensive pursuit of which is profitable, and under which the value of the land has increased. It is quite obvious that we cannot have seventeen million men engaged in agriculture and another seventeen millions in shipbuilding, house-building and manufactures. We are after much more in this country than a childish, autocratic and socialistic system of Protection and landowning, which compels our population to any one form of industry and to slavish labour at that. We are after a valuation system, and have nearly got it, which, when it is perfect, will leave to our industrious people the full interest on their capital and the full reward of their labour.