

A LEADER IN THE MOVEMENT.

Where did the Budget come from? This question has been asked and will be asked again. The Budget is the result of men's faith in, and work for, a great and simple idea, just like the fruit of gardens and fields. No one interested in such matters is surprised if a lily, whose roots are loosened or torn from the soil, withers or grows weak and distorted. No such person has any doubt as to how this weakness may be prevented or repaired. There are people who hold exactly similar views with regard to the connection of human beings with the soil. They see no matter for amazement in the imperfections which mark the bodies, minds and characters of men and women, whose connection with land is not according to their needs. They see no way of removing the imperfections except by allowing these men and women to strike their roots again into the element from which their life is drawn. Given this freedom they see nothing to prevent them from becoming strong and beautiful in every part of their nature.

Joseph Fels is one of the people who hold this faith. Nations of men have been wrenched from their hold on land by national systems of land tenure—if systems, which daily become more perfect instruments for separating men from land, can be called systems of "tenure." Whole nations decay and die under these systems, and as a great and universal alternative to all these, the taxation of land values, has been advanced. To the promotion of this alternative Joseph Fels has set himself with remarkable devotion and energy. "The taxation of land values," he said a few weeks ago at a meeting held in one of the Committee Rooms of the British House of Commons, "the taxation of land values in this world is the way to heaven in the next." These are the words of an enthusiast who sees in this reform the means of regenerating men in the highest moral and spiritual sense.

Joseph Fels was born in a country village called Halifax Court House, Virginia, on December 16th, 1854. When very young his father moved to Yanceyville in North Carolina, and from there he was sent to school in Richmond, Virginia, an old town, as American towns go. In 1867 the family removed to Baltimore, but here business reverses overtook the father and Joseph was obliged to leave school in 1870, and in the next year, at the age of seventeen, started as traveller for a firm of toilet soap manufacturers in Baltimore. In 1872 he changed his position and, along with his father, represented and travelled for a Philadelphia firm in Baltimore. In a year or two they both became partners, their services and connection being their capital. A little later, after paying off obligations incurred by the business, they purchased it and removed to Philadelphia. The firm became Fels & Co. with father and sons as partners. In 1894 a special process of soap-making was invented, and from that time the firm devoted itself solely to the manufacture of the well-known soap—Fels-Naptha, a business which has had a great success.

Having visited England for almost twenty years on business, Mr. Fels decided to open a selling branch in this country in 1901. Since that time Mrs. Fels and he have lived part of every year in England. Shortly after this he began to take an interest in social questions, and particularly in the land question. Fairhope Single Tax Colony which had been founded on Mobile Bay, Alabama, appealed to him. The land was held on Single Tax principles, and as far it was possible for a small community embraced in a larger community, not governed by these principles, it was hoped that it might furnish an object-lesson. Mr. Fels has generously supported the experiment. In 1905 he purchased

some 1300 acres at Hollesley Bay, England, to form a labour colony for the unemployed. This experiment has since been taken over by the Government. He also purchased 600 acres at Maylands, Essex, a large part of which is under French gardening and intensive cultivation by small holders.

While these schemes were undertaken from a desire to see men, who had been broken in the pitiless industrial struggle, immediately restored to a natural independence, his mind is too active, and his vision and sympathies too wide to be confined in them. He is statesman and philosopher enough to see that national, and even world-wide institutions must be swept away before any class of people can avail themselves of the natural and indispensable opportunities of living.

In 1907 he became interested in the British movement for the taxation of land values. The work being done by the United Committee and by the different Leagues gained his approval,

and from that time he has given his money liberally to enable them to extend their activities through the press, by meetings and demonstrations, by the publication of literature and by any other means which the political situation should demand. It is owing to this magnificent and generous support, more perhaps than to anything else, that the movement has made such great progress in Great Britain and in the world during the past year. The Budget was brought in on the wave of opinion made in its favour throughout the country; it was carried to the Lords on opinion made by such demonstrations as that in Hyde Park and it will be carried in spite of the Lords by opinion made in similar ways.

By much the greater part of the means for carrying on this work was furnished by Mr. Fels. To the United Committee he has offered £10,000 a year, provided an equal amount is subscribed by others. At present he is spending about £20,000 in the movement throughout the world.

In whatever country Mr. Fels finds a movement for this reform he supports it; in America, in Australia, in New Zealand and on the Continent. He has wealth and his wealth gives him power in these days when a man, with well-directed effort, may overthrow not merely a dynasty, but a system on which twenty tyrannies rest. While these are not yet the days of democracy, they are the days

when democracy is strenuously and successfully struggling to be born. Behind all the political movements and crises there has been the agitation for the clear and definite principle of justice in industrial relations; behind the politicians there has been a body of men who refer every question to justice, not to political or legal precedents and customs which are one thing to-day and another to-morrow. Joseph Fels is in this class. He is singular among wealthy men. It is common now for beneficiaries of privilege to endow universities, to pay privileged teachers to teach privileged students, who are then given a motive to maintain privilege. With his wealth, he gives truth feet to run through the open streets, into the markets and workshops, to escape from the schools and churches, where its feet are tied. He has no fear of justice; he does not believe that its universal and speedy establishment would injure a single interest that is worthy of protection, or hurt a single human feeling that deserves consideration or tender treatment. He knows that beautiful traits of human character are now repressed by social injustice, and that ugly and repulsive traits are developed. He strikes hard and fearlessly at this injustice.

Mr. Fels owes much of his success as a business man, and his



JOSEPH FELS.

more singular success as a reformer, to certain simple qualities of mind and character. He keeps himself peculiarly open and receptive to suggestions and schemes for the advancement of any cause in which he is interested. He listens to all who approach him; he makes a wide search for movements which are seriously calculated to alter social conditions, and when he finds them, he supports them with intense energy and devotion. Inviting frank communications and suggestions he is himself exceedingly frank and straightforward. Besides being an American, he is a Jew, and the combination in his case has produced a man in whose being there are no exclusive barriers, and no mysterious recesses. His love of mankind, his wide, practical sympathy, his utter disregard for nationalities and other divisive marks, his perfect frankness, sometimes embarrass estimable people whose experience and outlook have been narrower, but his influence in this respect is always salutary. Mr. Fels is still very young as a reformer, but he has grown quickly. Encouraged by a wife whose sympathies, intelligence, and fearlessness are great and strong, he has given himself with his whole heart to the land reform movement throughout the world. Perhaps no man has done such effective and far-reaching work in such a short time. His arrival in the field of British politics could not have been more opportune. His liberal contributions to the movement for the taxation of land values, his close interest in the manner of spending the money, his energy in undertaking and carrying through tasks which are only possible to an independent and wealthy man, have advanced this movement to an incredible extent. Since Henry George proclaimed his idea to the world, its progress in public thought has been rapid and steady. If we may use the expression, that idea or truth has been happy in the men it has found to serve it in different countries and in different ways, and Joseph Fels is one of the greatest and one of the humblest of these servants.

J. O.

HERE AND THERE.

Northern Farmer (on his way to the poll, after conversation with candidate). "Well, that settles't. Danged if ah votes for a feller as talks about a hoss's *left front leg*."—From PUNCH.

Lord Hugh Cecil speaking at Salford on January 11th, said:—"If the people showed that they would have the Budget the Lords would agree. If carried, the Budget would have been unpopular. There would have been an inquisition into—(a voice—"Land.")"

The YORKSHIRE DAILY OBSERVER of January 4th says that the Budget is immensely popular, and nothing has contributed to make it so, more than the taxes on land values. On this question the electors are singularly well informed—the result of steady, long-continued propaganda work.

This is a tribute to the work of our Yorkshire friends.

The rateable value of watering places is much higher than the rateable value of manufacturing towns of the same size. The annual report of the Preston Borough treasurer contains some interesting figures. Brighton, with a population of 130,000 is assessed at £894,000. Blackburn, with 136,000 people, is assessed at £545,000. Eastbourne, with just under 50,000 people, has a rateable value of £427,000. Carlisle, with the same population is assessed at £226,000.

Mr. H. H. Martin, attempted to obtain a hearing but there was great uproar. In reply to cries of "Take down that banner," Mr. Kensit said "I will not." (Voices: "We want that banner down," and more uproar.) The chorus of the "Land Song" was sung, and after a great deal of noise, Mr. Kensit said, "I declare this meeting closed." It was thus that the "Land Song" made its appearance at a Protestant meeting organised in opposition to Mr. Masterman.

There was a large body of Liberals at the back of the hall, and they started singing election choruses in opposition to patriotic songs started by some women in the gallery. There was a great amount of disorder. Each faction tried to drown the

singing of the other, "Rule Britannia" and the "Land Song" being sung at the same time. Sir W. Johnson presided.

From the TIMES report of a Tory meeting in Hackney Town Hall.

Speaking at Tywardreath, Cornwall on December 24th, Mr. Quiller Couch, the novelist, said:—

And now the last bogey. The great mind of Sir Reginald Pole Carew, the Unionist candidate, had been searching for a definition of Socialism. It reminded him of nothing so much as the story of the blind man in a dark room searching for a black hat that wasn't there.

Though not a great patron of art or letters, he (King Leopold) paid both some attention; and, besides building numerous palaces for himself, he did much to secure parks, museums, street improvements, etc., for the Belgian cities. In this, however, he acted largely as a great landowner, often giving sites with an apparent liberality, which was repaid by the appreciation in value of the estates which he retained.—GLASGOW HERALD.

The States of Jersey (Channel Islands) on January 11th, adopted Bills imposing an additional tax of 4d. a lb. on leaf tobacco without stalk, 6d. a lb. on cigars, and 10d. a lb. on cigarettes; and an additional tax of 4½d. per half-gallon on wines, with 6d. additional on the half-gallon on bottled wines, 3s. 6d. on the half-gallon on spirits of 50deg. strength and above, and 1s. 9d. on the half-gallon of spirits below 40 deg. It is estimated this will provide £9,000. As the deficit is £12,000, the extra amount will be met by fresh taxation.

Mr. Balfour, speaking at Hanley on January 4th, said:—"The idea that any man of education and character outside this country should have the audacity to say that Great Britain is not to settle its own taxation according to its own ideas makes my blood boil."

Did Mr. Balfour's blood boil when Lord Lansdowne claimed this privilege for the Lords?

Clumber Park, Worksop, residence of the Duke of Newcastle, consisting of a palatial house and grounds, courtyard, stable, offices, outbuildings, workshops, two belts of plantations, pleasure grounds and gas works, covering in all about 120 acres of land, is rated at £426. The flour mills of Messrs. Smith Brothers, at Worksop, covering between two and three acres, are rated at £500 net.

In a house in Central Finsbury, planted in a small window-box filled with earth, is a small notice-board bearing the words "PRIVATE LAND"

Beneath this hangs a second notice, reading,

"What! Tax MY Land!"

This Finsbury "estate" is apparently quite willing to bear its proper share of taxation, for in the window above it is the notice, "Vote for the Budget."

On the eve of an election it should be remembered that we want to employ as much labour on the land as possible.

The MORNING POST makes this memorandum for us, but we are a little puzzled to know why this admirable aim should have special attention on the eve of an election. Would it not be good business to keep it in view at all times? If any occasion is more opportune than another, we should now think it is the eve of a Budget which might carry a substantial tax on land values.

This is a tale from Scotland and not Yankeeland.

Colonel Shanks, in moving a vote of thanks to Lord Midleton, who was the principal speaker in the Town Hall on December 30th, said that he could not understand the people of Johnstone. They would not even attempt to try Tariff Reform. After speaking of tariffs as high as 75 per cent. imposed on machinery sent by his firm to Russia, he said that work had to be undertaken without profit for the purpose of keeping orders in this country. (Laughter.) It was a fact that "orders have to be taken to keep you employed in Johnstone at not a cent. of profit."