

## THE SWEATING EVIL IN AUSTRALIA.

*To the Editor of Land Values.*

SIR,—In your issue of June last, in a paragraph commenting upon a lecture delivered by Mr. G. P. Gooch, M.P. for Bath, on "Sweating Questions in Various Countries," you quote him as having said that the establishment of Wages Boards had met and conquered the evil in Australia and New Zealand. With the exception of New Zealand, of which I claim no authority to speak (although I am inclined to believe that conditions there in relation to this matter are similar to those met with elsewhere), I am utterly at a loss from whence he can have derived his information, as so far from the sweating evil having either been met or conquered in Australia, as alleged, by the legislative contrivances referred to, the evil is practically as great and as difficult to cope with as ever it was; and in all the States, save perhaps West Australia, both from Press and Pulpit, it is ever being exposed and denounced. Nor should this fact surprise us when, as stated recently, we are informed there are in Melbourne 5000 person unable to get a job, and 50,000 living just above the poverty line. Besides which, a week or two back, the papers contained graphic accounts of Mr. Tom Mann, who with his unemployed brigade visited the principal churches in that city, in order that the extreme condition of his poor followers might be more effectually brought under the notice of the church-going public. But it may, perhaps, be asked, What have the unemployed to do with the sweating question? Simply this, that no work means no wages, and no wages means poverty, or the existence of conditions which make sweating not only possible but inevitable. It should also be remembered that, while in certain notorious cases the sweater may be some greedy, avaricious wealthy employer, he more frequently is one who, from stress of circumstances, the result of extreme competition, is prevented from paying anything else but a sweated wage. It can, however, be easily recognised that the sweater would not have the least prospect of success if trade were brisk and labour in receipt of high wages. Although my illustrations and inferences have been drawn from Victoria, it must not be thought they could not be supplemented by others from neighbouring States; but because it is there where Protection has obtained the greatest grip of the minds and bodies of the people that sweating in its most forbidding forms is to be met with, and where, also, the machinery for dealing with it has attained its most complete development. In fairness to those who believe that it is possible to prevent sweating by legislative enactment, it might be said that experience, so far, has proved that while Wages Boards and anti-sweating legislation, with their minimum wage provisions, may operate to maintain at a slightly higher limit the wages of those operatives affected by them, it has been found utterly impossible to increase the general earnings of the great mass of the workers who must necessarily be outside the sphere of their influence. For, obviously, while you may by law force an employer to pay the minimum wage to those whom he employs, you cannot compel him to employ those whose labour should not prove sufficiently productive; and, consequently, it has been found that, apart from the fact that wages have declined and that now the minimum wage has become the maximum one, the slow, infirm, or otherwise ineffective worker who was incapable of producing up to the minimum standard promptly got "the sack," the labour of the less productive being now no longer sufficiently profitable. It was soon found, however, that the slow worker, unable to get a job at minimum rates, working on his own account at any wage he could get, threatened to be a greater menace than before, compelling the labour unions in their own interests to obtain the modification of the "minimum" provision, so that the slow or infirm worker might be granted practically a certificate of incompetency, enabling its holder to work for less than the standard rate, provided that the number of "slow"

hands in any one factory should not exceed a fifth of the whole number there employed. But cannot anyone see that in making this concession in favour of the slow worker the whole position for the minimum wage has been surrendered, and, what is more, that even this arrangement can but be regarded as tentative, and subject to still further modifications as time goes on, when the proportion will have to be increased to, say, a fourth, or even a third, as circumstances may demand. Every single-taxer knows that no legislation such as that embodied in Wages Boards provisions can prevent sweating, or even seriously affect it. For people toil and slave under sweated conditions not from choice but from compulsion. Open up natural opportunities to labour and it would be impossible to sweat labour. For under conditions of freedom which the adoption of the Georgian scheme alone would render possible, no one would consent to work for another for less than he would obtain by working for himself. There would then be no necessity to provide for a "minimum" wage, for all workers would obtain the "maximum"—namely, the full results of their labour.—I am, Sir, etc., W. H. POPE.

ADELAIDE, S.A., 31st July, 1906.

## WANTED, A CADASTRAL SURVEY.

*To the Editor of Land Values.*

SIR,—The basis of your crusade must be a cadastral survey of the United Kingdom, by which I mean an accurate valuation of every acre, with references to the existing geometrical survey, and a record of the ownership of every plot. In a word, we want a new edition of the Domesday Book, on which the Conqueror's feudal edifice rested. That system was logical enough while it implied the performance of co-related duties by the feudal tenants-in-chief. In this country, however, privilege and land monopolisation have long outlived the conception of obligations towards the community which justified their existence. We are groaning under the very evils which brought about the French Revolution.

If anything could arouse the dormant national conscience it would be the divulgence of the myriad anomalies and injustices of our landed system. One is reminded of Bishop Butler's famous simile. He compared human society to a flock of pigeons surrounding vast heaps of grain, and looking on patiently while half a dozen of their fellows devoured, wasted, and defiled the common hoard. Any starving outsider who ventured to pick a single grain was ruthlessly done to death by the whole body.

It is a fact, demonstrated by Mr. Arthur Dolling in the *Strand Magazine* for June, that five square miles of the most thickly peopled portion of London are in the hands of nine families, who batten on the brains and sinews of landless millions, without contributing the hundredth part of their ill-gotten gains to the cost of administration. These monopolists are permitted by law and custom to squander their princely revenues on every species of self-indulgence, and to increase their overgrown estates *ad libitum*. Lord Howard de Walden owns 290 acres of bricks and mortar, including recent acquisitions near the Edgeware Road. The Duke of Bedford, not content with 120 acres in Bloomsbury, has just made "important purchases from the Crown, of which Parliament and the public seem to have been kept in ignorance."

Another result of a cadastral survey would be the introduction into England of compulsory land registration. We established a mechanism of the kind in India about forty years ago, and, as a former *ex-officio* Registrar there, I can testify to its admirable working. Scotland, too, has enjoyed land registration for centuries, which, to quote an article in *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*,

"Makes every person aware, for a trifle, not only of the precise title of every proprietorship of real estate in the country, but of the amount of money borrowed upon