

News—Foreign.

ENGLAND.

**THE MOVEMENT STEADILY ADVANCING—
THE PRIME MINISTER ASSURES US THERE
WILL BE NO TURNING BACK—THE WORK
OF TWENTY YEARS ON THE EVE OF ITS
GREAT TRIUMPH.**

When writing you three months ago I was hoping to be able to report by this time that the valuation bills for England and Scotland would have been passed through the House of Commons at least. This has not been accomplished as yet, but there is no reason why Single Taxers should despair. For, although the legislative machine fails to work as some of us would like to see it we have the assurance of the Prime Minister that the Scottish bill will be put through all its stages this season, and that there will be no going back on the part of Government with regard to the English valuation bill. There are difficulties in England with regard to valuation which do not exist in Scotland. The system of valuation in Scotland is very plain and simple, but in England it is done by the overseers under local committees who are by no means expert. Under these circumstances it is found to be necessary to reform the present rating machinery as well as to make provision for the separate valuation of land.

The fact is becoming every day more patent that public opinion is growing at such a rate and apparently such a volume of strength that it will become more and more impossible for government to delay this reform or for obstructionists to resist it. It is public opinion which finally decides all such issues. History will show that the year 1907 marked an epoch in the history of the land law reform movement in Great Britain. During the past few months events of great significance have taken place. On March 28d a meeting of representative Single Taxers was held at the home of Mr. Crompton Llewelyn Davies, 14 Boston street, Westminster, where following some considerable discussion it was decided to form a United Committee of the various Leagues for the Taxation of Land Values with Messrs. Crompton Llewelyn Davies and John Paul as secretaries and W. R. Lester as treasurer.

This committee is to watch over the interests of the movement in the House of Commons and throughout the whole country. Its representative character, together with the fact that it has Messrs. Davies and Paul as its secretaries, may be taken as a guarantee that it will command the confidence and support of all concerned, and that effective work will be accomplished.

April 20th was a red letter day for those of us who stand for the recognition of the law of equal freedom as the touchstone and test of what is right and wrong in legislation. This day was the date of a great national demonstration in London in favor of land law reform. At 1 o'clock a luncheon was served at the Holburn Restaurant with Sir John Brunner, M. P., in the chair, and the Prime Minister as the principal speaker. Among those present were 150 members of Parliament and several hundred well known land reformers from all parts of the country.

Those of us who had the pleasure of listening to the Prime Minister's speech are not likely to soon forget the impression he made on all present. It was surprising and significant, and clearly represented the convictions of a great statesman who only needed the necessary support of public opinion to enable him to carry the reform we seek to promote. On rising to address the meeting the Prime Minister was received with the utmost enthusiasm.

Thanking those present for the warm reception he had received, he assured them that they were not nearly so glad to see him as he was to find himself in the company of so many keen land reformers. He was cheered again and again when he declared that "in taking up the land question and having put our hands to the plough we are not going to turn back." Many different brands of land reform were represented by the delegates present, but it was quite clear that the separate valuation and taxation of land values held the field against all others. When the Prime Minister stated in so many words that the separate valuation of land was the indispensable preliminary to land reform, he was stopped for quite a time by loud and continued cheering. When quietness reigned and he resumed his address, he looked across at the Single Tax table and remarked: "Valuation is a rather unexciting term, though it seems to have a mesmeric effect on you." But as a matter of fact the whole meeting joined in the applause. It is coming more and more to be realized that the question of allotments, small holdings, garden cities, housing schemes by local rating bodies, are like so much shop window goods, of very little use for any practical purpose until the separate valuation of land and the rating of land values are inaugurated.

At the subsequent demonstration in the afternoon, in Drury Lane Theatre, Mr. Winston Churchill, M. P., under secretary for the colonies, backed up the Prime Minister's radical statement declaring for a separate valuation of land, with a view to shifting the burden of taxation from industry to the monopoly of the land.

The following resolution was unanimously carried:

"That this meeting cordially welcomes the intention of the government to intro-

duce drastic measures for dealing with the land and housing problems, and urges the importance of providing for the separate valuation and rating of land values, apart from improvements; for the compulsory purchase of land by public authorities, for any public purpose, at a price based on this valuation; for the regulation and planning of urban areas; and for increased powers to a central authority to promote housing and small holdings."

A good business-like beginning. As Mr. Churchill said: "We were ringing up the curtain on a piece that was going to have a long run." Well, we shall see. Anyway, we can only regard the day's proceedings as a great triumph for our ideas. It is now beyond recall that a Liberal Prime Minister is at one with us in the policy we have promoted in the political field during the last twenty years or more. In the meantime, other undercurrents in the Cabinet, if not in the House of Commons, seem to have prevailed, and the land bills now before the house are not for valuation, but for the planting of people on small holdings in England and Scotland. These bills have one redeeming principle which we must recognize as something to be grateful for. They do not propose to create peasant proprietors, as the last bill did for Ireland. They propose to establish the small holders as tenants of the State. Meanwhile, the bill for the separate valuation of land applying to Scotland has been introduced, and the Prime Minister has promised to see it passed during the present session.

The valuation bill for England is a little more difficult owing to the chaotic condition of the present system of assessment. We are publicly assured however by the Prime Minister that the English valuation will be brought forward next session and Dr. Macnamara, M. P., (Parliamentary Secretary of local Government Board) stated on Saturday, 22nd of June, at Manchester, at a public demonstration organized by our United Committee of the Manchester branch of the English League that "the Local Government Board would earnestly bend their energies to the work of preparing the bill this autumn." This demonstration at Manchester on the 22nd of June was a signal success. It was our first big meeting here. As the *Manchester Guardian* points out the traditions of the town, as the home and inspiration of the free trade movement, mark it out for such a similar propaganda. It is said that what Manchester and Lancashire think to-day England will think to-morrow. Well, it is admitted all round that we have a good beginning in this direction of starting this volume of thought and we mean to maintain the fight.

F. SKIRROW.

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THE SINGLE TAX MOVEMENT IN SWEDEN.

The Henry George movement in Sweden is not new. For more than twenty years ago the teachings of Henry George had attracted the attention of Swedish social reformers. His first books, "Progress and Poverty," "Social Problems" and "Protection or Free Trade" were translated into Swedish as early as the middle eighties. But this attention was only very superficial and partial. Many years before the publication of "Progress and Poverty" the struggle of the Swedish farmers to rid themselves of the old land tax had dominated the whole political life of the nation. Also the few social reformers whom we had working at this time were influenced by the farmers' movement in the direction of making the land free of all taxation. It was natural in such conditions that George's idea could not be easily understood. Of course, in reality there was a great difference between our old very unequal land tax and the proposal made by Henry George. But the people in general failed to make a just distinction, and so his theory was met with opposition from ignorance when it was not opposed by vested interests.

Now, this struggle was ended several years ago. The land tax is abolished. The social condition is not improved, but people have begun to reflect and question whether the settlement is satisfactory that relieves land of taxation. For this reason the teachings of Henry George are now beginning to be understood. In recent years the propaganda for the taxation of land values has made real progress. In our neighboring country, Denmark, it is the class of small farmers who especially favor George's proposal; in our country it is the large and well organized temperance party which is most attracted by it. Prohibition is becoming more and more possible, but the high taxes on intoxicants which would then be lost to the government hinders further legislation in that direction. For two years past the proposition has been made that the government should resort to a tax on land values, and so make it easy for the nation to adopt prohibition. Yet this proposition is not made entirely from financial considerations, but also for social reasons. It has become more and more clear to temperance reformers that bad social conditions are largely the cause of intemperance. Consequently, the improved social conditions which would be the result of taxation of land values would also work beneficially in favor of temperance.

Recently small societies have been formed in some parts of the country chiefly for the purpose of spreading the idea of land value taxation. Much of the press also is beginning to advocate the wisdom of our pro-