

The first and more important plank in the German land reform programme, is the regulating of farm mortgages, in a manner that allows no such mortgage to be taken up by a private party. The community alone shall be the holder of farm mortgages, which is a necessary condition before the other suggestions of the reform can be carried out. This perpetual interest, or land tax, would be found quite sufficient for communal needs; and the capital freed from land mortgages would naturally pour into industry, if the latter were freed from all taxation.

Three interesting chapters give an historical retrospect of land reform questions in Israel, in ancient Greece, and in Rome; one chapter is devoted to a sympathetic narrative of the life, character and work of Henry George; and the last chapter, "The Hohenzollerns and Land Reform," gives some interesting notes on the new German colony of Kiao-Chao, where the single tax is the accepted fiscal system, and works admirably.

The league is at present interesting the Kaiser in their theories anew, by their propositions to aid him in the carrying out of his pet project of the great Midland canal, uniting the Rhine and the Elbe, right through the heart of the manufacturing district. The Agrarian party are blocking the project in parliament, not because they have any objection to it, but because they want to make their acquiescence conditional on tariff laws which will benefit them, and which the industrial party and the general public are fighting tooth and nail. The Land Reform league proves to the Kaiser that by legislative action which will give to the government the increase in value of the lands along the proposed route, where enormous speculation is already going on, he will find this increase sufficient for the entire expense of building the canal without the aid of appropriations from Parliament.

In an earlier work, "Municipal Problems," written two years ago, Damaschke was even then able to give some reliable statistics as to the speculation in this land, which is gambling, pure and simple, as the canal has not yet been announced as

an assured fact. Entire corporations have been formed simply to exploit the increased value of the land, and the Land Reform league is bending all its energies to the prevention of this speculation and the establishment of a precedent which will be of incalculable value to the single tax movement everywhere.

GRACE ISABEL COLBRON.

## NEWS

There is another turn in the Venezuelan situation (p. 649), which may or may not produce important results. Two actual battles have been fought between blockading vessels and a Venezuelan fort.

The first blockading vessel concerned was a German cruiser, the Panther. She endeavored to force an entrance into the Lake of Maracaibo, a fresh water lake extending over a hundred miles into the interior. It is fed by mountain streams and is connected with the Gulf of Venezuela by a narrow strait. This strait is guarded by a Venezuelan fort, Fort San Carlos, upon which the German cruiser opened fire at 12:30 in the afternoon of the 17th. According to the official report of Gen. Bello, the Commandant at Fort San Carlos, she attacked and shelled the fort without any provocation and without the delivery of an ultimatum or previous notice of any kind. To her surprise, apparently, the fort replied, and after a fight of an hour she retired. Later reports are to the effect that the Panther resumed her position in the blockade 20 miles from the fort, and on the 21st it was officially announced from Berlin that the German cruiser Vineta had been ordered to Maracaibo. This implied that the passage was to be forced, for Maracaibo lies on the Lake of Maracaibo, over 20 miles from Fort San Carlos; and the implication was verified at 10 o'clock on the morning of the 21st, when the Vineta, the Panther and the Falke opened a furious bombardment on Fort San Carlos. The fort returned the fire, and the ensuing battle was raging at latest reports, four hours after it began.

The reason given in Berlin for these new tactics on the part of the European allies is that President Castro is defeating the object of the blockade by opening channels of for-

eign trade from the neighboring republic of Colombia by way of rivers flowing from that country into the Lake of Maracaibo. The blockade purpose, therefore, to extend their blockade into the Lake of Maracaibo so as to suppress commerce along the shores of that lake.

Mr. Bowen, the American minister to Venezuela, who returns to perfect arrangements in behalf of Venezuela for arbitrating the questions involved in this European-Venezuelan war (p. 649), arrived at Charleston on the 19th. He took a train there on the same day for Washington, where he arrived on the 20th.

In the German reichstag on the 20th the subject of the Venezuelan war was briefly considered. The chancellor explained the diplomatic negotiations, saying that President Castro had "recognized in principle the justice" of the European demands, and had "agreed to the preliminary conditions for transferring the controversy to The Hague arbitration court." In this connection he assured the reichstag that "the blockade will be raised as soon as the diplomatic negotiations at Washington have reached a satisfactory conclusion." During the discussion of this subject one of the Socialist members demanded full information on all phases of the matter, particularly demanding to know why the Venezuelan ships had been sunk and why the Venezuelan forts had been bombarded. The information has not been given.

The same Socialist member endeavored at the same session to discuss the emperor's speeches regarding charges that have been brought against the late Herr Krupp, but was ruled out of order on the ground that those speeches related not to the emperor's official but to his personal life. Vigorous protests against this ruling were made by the Socialist members, who called attention to the fact that the speeches had been printed in the official record of the reichstag and asserted that the ruling violated constitutional rights.

The French chamber of deputies, which reassembled last week after the holiday recess, passed an overwhelming vote of confidence in the ministry on the 16th. It was the culmination of a debate over the official suppression of the Breton lan-