

Foreign News.

When news came of the drastic reforms in the land system of New Zealand several of our leading papers indulged in dismal prophecies regarding the future of that country. It is a curious commentary upon their political wisdom, that since New Zealand went in for land taxation it has been the most prosperous of the Australian Colonies.

A Bill has lately been introduced in the New York Assembly by the Hon. D. E. Ainsworth, and in the Senate by the Hon. David Bradley, known as "The Ainsworth Bill." The Bill provides that the members of the county and city governments shall have power to levy taxes for local purposes upon—(a) personal property alone; (b) land and improvements alone; (c) the assessed value of land alone, exclusive of improvements and personal property, or (d) personal property, land, and improvements. The Bill has been endorsed by nearly all the Labour organisations and many local granges and agricultural associations.

The Victoria (British Columbia) City Council has just lowered the assessment of improvements for the year 1894 from 50 to 25 per cent. of their real value, while land is to be assessed at its full value.

Little Tasmania is outdistancing Victoria in the progress towards real democracy. The struggle between property taxation and that of the unimproved value of land, has been decided in favour of the latter after a severe and protracted fight. The new Ministry is pledged to inaugurate the latter system, and Sir Edward Braddon and Mr. Fysh may be proud of the victory which they have won.

Mr. Edward Marshall reports in the "North American Review" that three-fourths of New York population live in tenements, and one-half in overcrowded tenements. Six wards form "the most crowded spot on earth," the average for the whole district being 252,834 to the square mile. The "tenth ward" has 357,888 to the square mile, affording less than a square yard to each person.

The causes of the recent outbreak in Sicily are attributed by R. Corniani, in an article in the January number of "La Rassegna Nazionale," to absentee landlordism, similar to that prevailing in Ireland, and land monopoly.

£273,708 7s. 2d. is the total amount received for the land on which the City of Melbourne now stands.

It is calculated that during the last ten years the people of the United States have paid £3,000,000,000 in rent to the land owners. Not on houses and land, not on improved land, but simply in ground rent alone. This robbery of the people amounts to £5 per head per annum. The commercial value of land in the United States is close on £100 for every man, woman and child. The interest on this is not less than 5 per cent., and this is what is paid by labour to landlordism. Had the Single Tax been in force, all this £3,000,000,000 would have gone into the public treasury, tariffs and other abominable robberies would have been dispensed with, and the present depression, which is bringing its thousands in sorrow to the grave, would have been unknown.

"The land question means hunger, thirst, nakedness, notice to quit, labour spent in vain, the toil of years seized upon, the breaking up of houses, the misery, sicknesses, deaths of parents, children, wives, the despair and wildness which spring up in the hearts of the poor, when legal force, like a sharp harrow, goes over the most sensitive and vital rights of mankind. All this is contained in the land question."—*Cardinal Manning.*

"Often enough a cause is lost because there are so many, or several, leaders, each or all of whom are jealous of the other's power and fame; and so come schisms treachery and disruption."—*Nunquam.*

COUNT TOLSTOI ON HENRY GEORGE.

Mr. Bernard Eulenstein, the leader of the Single Tax Party in Berlin, who recently spent a couple of pleasant evenings with the Glasgow Single Taxmen has received a letter from Count Tolstoi, the well-known Russian Social Reformer, on the subject of the Single Tax, from which we quote the following:—

"At the present time the evolution of man's knowledge in reference to the use of land goes on, and, as it would appear to me, the process of putting this thought into action must soon commence.

"In these processes, which from a social point of view form the chief lessons of our time, Henry George was and is the pioneer and leader of the movement. Herein his paramount importance rests. He has, by his excellent works, materially contributed both to the improving of people's ideas on this question as well as to their direction on a practical basis. It is curious that in regard to the question of the abolition of the clearly unnatural monopoly of land, we have an exact repetition of what, in our opinion, happened when slavery was abolished both in Russia and America. The Government and the leading classes, recognising in their inner consciousness that in the question of land was contained the solution of all social questions, with the settlement of which all their privileges would, at the same time, break down, and that this question now stands within the region of practical politics; make believe as if they had a great care for the salvation of the people; but while they erect savings banks, labour inspections, Income Tax, and even Eight Hours' Day Labour, carefully ignore the question of land, and with the help of their subservient political economy, which proves all they please, maintain that the abolition of private ownership of land is useless, injurious, and even impossible. Just the same is going on now as happened with slavery. People had felt for ever so long that this condition could not last any longer; that slavery was a dreadful, soul-insulting anachronism, but the quasi religion asserted, notwithstanding, that slavery was necessary, or that it was too soon to abolish it. At present the same is happening in regard to the land question, only with this difference, that religion is replaced by political economy.

"One would have thought that it must be as clear as day to any educated man of our time, that the possession of land by people who do not cultivate it themselves, but prevent hundreds, nay thousands, of starving families from access to the same, must be a state of things as immoral as the possession of slaves; but, none the less, we see educated, refined English, Austrian, Russian, and Prussian aristocrats enjoying this cruel, base privilege;—based on the ready sophisms which political economy affords them—and they are not only ashamed, but pride themselves in it. The merit of Henry George now lies in this, that he has dissipated into thin nothingness all these sophisms which are brought forward for the defence of property in land; so that the defenders of this already dare not discuss the question, but cautiously avoid it and pass it over in silence. But Henry George has also shaken this evasive policy, and herein lies his great merit; he has not rested satisfied with bringing this question to the highest degree of clearness, so that it is only the people with closed eyes who cannot perceive the immorality of private property in land, he was also the first to demonstrate the possibility of a solution of the question; he was the first to give a clear and straight answer to the usual objections which are used by the enemies of all reforms, which culminate in the point that the demands of progress are declared to be vain, impracticable, Utopian ideas which can be passed over in silence. The proposals of Henry George controvert these objections, as he puts the question in such a way that already committees could be formed to-morrow for the examination and discussion of the proposal and the carrying of it into law."

"The land shall not be sold for ever for the land is mine."—*Lev. xxv., 23.*

ECONOMIC VAGARIES.

There are some people who doubt "Nunquams" ability as an economist, but the brilliancy and originality, not to mention the childlike simplicity, of the following, should convince the most sceptical:—"Why is matchmaking labour so poorly paid? Because matches are cheap.—Why are matches so cheap? Because match-making labour is poorly paid."—*Merrie England*

KARL MARX defines a commodity as— "(1), An external object; (2), satisfies human wants; (3), has human labour embodied in it; (4), is not consumed by the producer, but by some other person." In the following passage, labour-power is a commodity:—"A commodity has, therefore, to be found, whose use-value has the property of being a source of value, whose consumption creates value. The commodity is labour-power." But labour-power is not an external object, having human labour embodied in it, &c. Again, in the following, the labourer himself is a commodity:—"The free labourer must be (1), personally free to sell his labour-power for a definite time only, and not for ever and a day; (2), free from any other commodity, i.e., without any of the means of subsistence, or the means of production." Now, a labourer certainly is an external object, with human labour embodied in it, if you like, but how about satisfying human wants, and being consumed by some person other than the producer?

"Men have equal rights to the use of this world, and equity does not permit private property in land," said HERBERT SPENCER in "Social Statics." But when attacked by conservatism, he explained that he never intended his words to have any bearing upon practical questions. His own words are—"The work referred to—'Social Statics'—was intended to be a system of political ethics—absolute political ethics, or that which ought to be, as distinguished from relative political ethics, or that which is the nearest approach to it." In reply, HENRY GEORGE remarked that "If there be any sort of ethics that has no relation to conduct here and now, the best term for such is 'Pickwickian' ethics."

A Glasgow contemporary remarked some time ago that "Ireland ought to be a prosperous country because she had a rich soil and cheap labour." Query—Who was meant by the term Ireland, since cheap labour means poor people?

Adam Smith held that the food of the people could not be included under the term Capital. M'Culloch disagreed with him and argued as follows:—Since Capital is wealth consumed in production, and the food consumed by such as Watt or Arkwright was much more productive than that consumed by ordinary people, food must be considered as Capital; therefore, food is Capital. Those who agree with M'Culloch might supply an answer to the following:—If a pound of steak in the stomach of a dock labourer is worth One Shilling, how much would the same pound of steak be worth in the stomach of, say, Professor Huxley or Herbert Spencer?

The Electoral Committee for the Taxation of Ground Rents are publishing a very useful pamphlet, "Tracks for the Times." It is valuable at this moment, when so many thousands of minds are exercised on the subject of Parish Councils. The first article deals with "Lords, Land, and Parish Councils" in a lucid manner, showing what the Act is and the power it confers on the labourer, and gives very useful advice concerning the elections in November next.

"There can be no doubt that to abolish the present system of taxation would be, both in a moral and politico-economical sense, one of the greatest reforms the world could witness. I suppose that, because the boon would be so universal and so great, mankind will be slow to adopt it; for the greatest truths seem to struggle longest for recognition even when they are the most obvious to those who will examine them."—*Richard Cobden.*