

## THE COMING REVOLUTION.

## THE FRUITS OF LAND MONOPOLY.\*

BY LEO TOLSTOY.

It is generally thought that the cruellest slavery is personal slavery: when one man can do anything he likes with another—torture, mutilate, kill him—while that which we do not even call slavery—the prevention of the possibilities of using the land—is thought merely a certain somewhat unjust economical institution.

But this view is quite false.

What Joseph did with the Egyptians, what all conquerors have done with the vanquished, what is now being done by men to men in the prevention of the possibility of using the land, is the most dreadful and cruel slavery. The personal slave is the slave of one, but the man deprived of the right to use the land is the slave of all. Even this is not the principal calamity of the land slave. However cruel might have been the owner of the personal slave, in view of his own advantage and that he might not lose the slave, he did not force him to work incessantly, did not torture him, did not starve him, whereas the man deprived of the land is always obliged to work beyond his strength, to suffer, to starve, and can never for one minute be completely provided for—i.e., set free from the arbitrary will of men, and especially from the arbitrariness of evil and avaricious men. Yet even this is not the chief calamity of the land slave. His chief calamity is that he cannot live a moral life. Not living by labour on the land, not struggling with nature, he is inevitably obliged to struggle with men, to endeavour to take from them by force or cunning that which they have acquired from the land and from the labour of others.

Land slavery is not, as is thought even by those who recognise deprivation of land as slavery, one of the remaining forms of slavery, but it is the radical and fundamental slavery from which has grown and grows every form of slavery, and which is incomparably more painful than personal slavery. Personal slavery is but one of the particular cases of exploitation by land slavery, so that the emancipation of men from personal slavery without their emancipation from land slavery is not emancipation, but merely the cessation of one form of exploitation by slavery, and in many cases, as it was in Russia (when the serfs were emancipated with but a small portion of land), is a deceit which can only for a time conceal from the slaves their true position.

The Russian people always understood this during serfdom, saying:—"We are yours but the land is ours," and during the emancipation they unceasingly and unanimously demanded and expected the emancipation of the land. During the emancipation from serfdom, the people were cajoled by a little land being given them, and for a time subsided, but with increase of population the question of the insufficiency of land again arose before them, and that in the clearest and most definite form.

While the people were serfs they used the land as much as was necessary for their existence. The Government and the landowners had the care of distributing the increased population of the land, and so the people did not see the essential injustice of the seizure of the land by private individuals. But as soon as serfdom was abolished the care of the Government and landowners concerning the people's economic agricultural—I shall not say welfare, but—possibility of existence was also abolished. The quantity of land which the peasants might possess was once for all determined without the possibility of increasing it, whilst the population increased, and the people saw more and more clearly that it was impossible to live thus. They waited for the Government to rescind the laws which deprived them of the land. They waited ten, twenty, thirty, forty years, but the land has

been seized more and more by private landowners, and before the people was placed the choice: of starving, ceasing to multiply, or altogether abandoning rural life, and forming generations of navvies, weavers and locksmiths. Half-a-century passed, their position kept becoming worse and worse, and reached such a state that the order of life which they regarded as necessary for Christian life began to fall to pieces, and the Government not only did not give them land, but gave it to its minions, and, securing it for the latter, intimated to the people that they need never hope for the emancipation of the land, † while on the European model it organised for them an industrial life—with labour inspection—which the people regarded as bad and sinful.

The withholding from the people of their legitimate right to the use of land is the principal cause of the calamitous position of the Russian people. The same cause lies at the basis of the misery and discontent with their position of the working people of Europe and America, the difference is only this: that as the seizure of the land from the European people by the recognition of the lawfulness of landed property took place long ago; so many new relations have covered up this injustice that the men of Europe and America do not see the true cause of their position, but search for it everywhere: in the absence of markets, in tariffs, in unfair taxation, in capitalism, in everything, save in the withholding from the people of their right to the land.

To the Russian people the radical injustice—not having yet been completely perpetrated upon them—is clearly seen. The Russian people living on the land clearly see what people wish to do with them, and they cannot reconcile themselves to it.

† This stage in the development of the enslavement and exploitation of the Russian people corresponds economically to that of the period of the Enclosure Acts in Great Britain.

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