

27s. 6d. a foot for certain allotments, and was refused. I told the Court then that I was prepared to sell the land at 10s. per foot, but I was not taken seriously. However, I have now had an opportunity of proving my statement, for to-day I put the whole of those allotments under the hammer. We advertised the sale well, stating that the upset price was 10s., and that the land had been assessed at 30s. Notwithstanding all this, I could not sell a single allotment, and I may add that the assessor who offered the 27s. 6d. was sitting in the room.

"That, I think, is proof enough that land values are coming down. People won't invest in land now, unless they actually want it, and then they will buy as little as possible. There is no doubt the market will be glutted with suburban land within the next 12 months.

"Under the new system of rating people have a taste of single tax business pure and simple, and they know that there is no escape for them; for, even if the land is brought down in value, the council requires a certain revenue, and they immediately raise the rate. In other words, if the council values the land at £1 a foot and charges 6d. in the £ rate and then finds that the Court sets the value at 10s. a foot, the rate must be raised to 1s. in the £1 in order to produce the same revenue. No matter what the capital value is lowered to, the owner of the land still pays increased rates, in most cases four and five times more than he was paying under the old system. This fact will force people to either do something with the land in the way of building or put it into the market for sale. Take it any way you like, the capital value must decrease.

"There is enough suburban land unoccupied to house the population of London, and I dare say that there is enough subdivided at the present time to give every man, woman, and child in Sydney two allotments, so that if everybody wants to sell there must be a serious glut. There is another class who must suffer: that is the people who have bought land on payments extending over a number of years. Their rates under the old system were 5s. for every 15s. or £1 they are now paying. Consequently, these people will not be content to pay out year after year this extra amount, and will rush the land into the market, and help to increase the already glutted condition. I am convinced that land values must come down. I have given you a proof of that in my attempt to sell land to-day."

LAND REFORM IN NORWAY.

At the request of the Norwegian Minister of Finance, Mr. H. E. Berner, Mayor of Christiania, with the help of Messrs. Thomle, Rolsted and Wielgolaski, is busy preparing a Bill to reform local taxation. The Bill is an attempt to combine Land Values Taxation and the taxation of future increased Land Values. In the towns, it proposes to abolish the present taxation of land and buildings, and to substitute a pure tax upon Land Values to the amount of from two to seven per thousand of capital value. But any future increased value of land shall be subject to a special tax of 10 per thousand, i.e., shall be taxed at from 12 to 17 per thousand. In the country districts the ancient "Kataster Grundsteuer," which, according to the Acts of 1818 and 1863, was theoretically a pure Land Values tax, has been abolished. According to the new proposals, existing Land Values shall be taxed at from $\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 per thousand, and any future increase in value shall be subject to a special tax of 10 per thousand. In order that Land Values pure and simple shall be made the subject of assessment, the following conditions are proposed: Similar lands, or lands offering the same advantages for use, or of similar potential use value, shall be assessed at the same price per acre or per square yard, without consideration of

any difference in selling price due to the difference in size of the respective holdings. Moreover, for valuation purposes the Land Values tax (der Grundsteuer) shall be regarded as if it were simply interest on a mortgage belonging to the community; and the capitalised value of the amount shall be added to the selling or market value of the land, which, of course, would be diminished proportionately to the amount of such taxation. But for taxation purposes the value of any improvements shall be deducted from the total selling value of the holding as a whole. When the tax is first established, however, the value of improvements made more than 25 years ago shall not be thus deducted. In the towns it is proposed that gardens which are not more than one and a half times larger than the area covered by the buildings shall be entirely or partly exempted from taxation. In the country districts, where the taxation of land values is not introduced, the Communal authorities have power, in cases where public works increase the value of land, to demand contributions towards the cost of such work up to half the amount of such increase in value.—Abridged from "Bodenreform" (20.4.08). Contributed by S. WIELGOLASKI.

MOVEMENT IN FRANCE.

The income-tax proposals in the French Budget of this year have evoked more than usual interest among all classes, and the keenest opposition of the Liberal and Conservative papers. M. Caillaux, Minister of Finance, was recently interviewed by a representative of the "Westminster Gazette." Speaking of the super-tax on incomes, he said: "I am under the impression that England is gradually approaching a system similar to our own, though, of course, different in social conditions, since the distribution of wealth in the two countries is not at all the same. We in France find many more moderate fortunes than exist in England, and it is on these we must depend for the establishment of our Budget."

Asked if he were occupied with any other reform besides this of the income-tax, "I am now undertaking," he said, "an extremely important reform which interests me enormously—the valuation of landed property and the partial reconstruction of the Register for Landed Property. You know that Napoleon I. made this Register at great expense in 1807, but that it no longer represents the actual condition of landed property to-day. Its reconstruction will be a long and expensive affair. I think I have found a solution of the difficulty. The principle of the existing Register was the identification of small plots of land called 'parcelles.' Instead of taking 'la parcelle' as the unit of land in framing the new Register, a method which renders the work extremely complicated, I am grouping these 'parcelles' together and having them valued, so as to obtain a book of ground valuations, which is indispensable to a Minister attempting to establish an equitable ground-tax."

The same Minister has ordered a test estimate of the value of unbuilt-upon sites to be carried out in the commune of Laroche, near Auxerre, and the results of the experiment are to be embodied in a circular, and sent to all the mayors in France.

ENGLISH LAND VALUATION BILL.—In the House of Commons on July 22nd, Mr. Asquith, answering Mr. Wedgwood, said that the Land Valuation Bill for England would be introduced when the House resumed after the recess.