

INDEPENDENT SECTION.

[Under the above title a limited portion of THE WESTMINSTER REVIEW is occasionally set apart for the reception of able Articles, which, though harmonising with the general spirit and aims of the Review, may contain opinions at variance with the particular ideas or measures it advocates. The object of the Editors in introducing this department is to facilitate the expression of opinion by writers of high mental power and culture, who, while they are zealous friends of freedom and progress, yet differ widely, on special points of great practical concern, both from the Editors and from each other.]

THE NEW ROUND TABLE :

LAND NATIONALISATION.

Communications from

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The Instability of Peasant-Proprietorship— The Necessity of Rent.

POLITICIANS of to-day, no longer able to withstand the ever-growing public opinion in favour of the radical reform of our land system, profess themselves willing to favour in every possible way the creation of peasant-proprietors ; and even the present Tory Government has introduced a Bill, which, if carried, must logically be extended so as to transfer the fee-simple of the entire agricultural land of Ireland to existing occupiers. And the principle of this measure is accepted by both parties, the only difference of opinion being as to *how*, and *when*, and by *whom* it ought to be carried into effect. But not a single voice has yet been raised, in Parliament or out, to proclaim the utter futility of such a proceeding on account of the absence of the equalising agency of rent, an absence which must certainly lead to the failure of some of these new landowners and the aggrandisement of others, till, in a comparatively short period, we shall again have a body of wealthy landlords and rack-rented tenants all over the country.

In order more clearly to see how this result must be produced,

let us suppose we have arrived at the period, about half a century hence, when all the land of Ireland has become the property of the tenants and nobody pays any rent. We shall then have a compact body of peasant proprietors holding small farms of very different values, some holding land worth but five or ten shillings an acre, while that of others is worth three or four pounds. Now, it is quite clear that the man with good land and no rent to pay can afford to sell his produce lower than the man who has poor land equally rent-free, and wherever there is competition between them he will do so. When seasons are bad or prices low, the latter will be ruined by this competition, will have to borrow money on his land from his richer neighbour, and will inevitably, sooner or later, have to sell his land, which will be added to the richer land adjoining and be worked together with it. It is to avoid this inevitable result that, almost everywhere on the Continent, the land has been divided up into small detached plots so that each holding consists of a similar proportion of all the different qualities of land in the parish or commune—heavy or light soil, pasture meadow or coppice—a farm of ten or fifteen acres often consisting of twenty or thirty separate patches, all completely isolated and unfenced, and often scattered over a square mile of ground. This, of course, is a dreadfully inconvenient and wasteful mode of cultivation, but it serves rudely to equalise the different holdings; and it is this equalisation which has caused it to be upheld so tenaciously by the peasant proprietors of many different countries.

To understand how peasant-proprietorship would work with us, we may suppose that one half of the cotton manufacturers of England used the old-fashioned machines of thirty or forty years ago, whilst the other half used the very newest and most improved machinery. Is it not absolutely certain that the former would soon be undersold by the latter and would become bankrupt, unless all were taxed exactly in proportion to the benefit derived by the various qualities of the machinery employed? But the land itself is to the cultivator what machinery is to the manufacturer, and it is permanently and necessarily as different in value as would be the machinery of various periods during the last hundred years if brought into competition to-day. In order to equalise this difference in land value there are the two methods in use—the wasteful and imperfect continental method of each cultivator having small detached plots of the different qualities of land, and the far more economical and complete method of *Rent*, by which the advantages of various soils and situations are equalised, and every occupier is able to compete on fair terms with all other occupiers.

Rent, then, is a necessary factor in successful agriculture by small farmers, the only question being as to who shall receive the rent and what shall be the conditions of the occupation. The present method of

private landlords and rack-rents we nationalisers hold to be the very worst method possible. That of permanent and secure occupation under the State, with the payment of an economic rent, revisable at long intervals and only on changes of value produced by general causes—that is, by the growth or advancement of the whole community—with perfect freedom of action by the cultivator who will be the owner of all improvements of whatsoever kind, to be the very best.

It may indeed be urged that, if by ownership of the land food can be produced and sold cheaper than by tenancy, it must be better for the whole community who are the consumers of food. But this cheapness would be only temporary, because so soon as the land became again the property of the few, owing to the failure of the owners of the poorer lands, it would be let out in farms as now, rent would be paid to equalise the various values of the land, and we should return again to the existent system of landlord and tenant. Under State ownership, however, the rent paid would ultimately take the place of all other taxes, and thus the whole community would benefit far more than by a temporary cheapness of food accompanied by the ruin of a considerable portion of the poorer cultivators.

Rent, therefore, is essential to the stability of any system of the occupation of land. Rent paid to the community, through State or municipal authorities, is the only system which is beneficial to the whole community.

ALFRED R. WALLACE.

“*May Nationalisation of the Land lead to State Jobbery?*”

“Surely it *may*. Who can deny it who knows the history of our Crown estates, even without European experience? Further, what tale does America attest, so long as the English Crown disposed of its land? What also has happened in Australia? Whenever the central executive, even if nominally responsible to a central parliament, has control over large areas of land, it never uses that control wisely, indeed hardly honestly. Thus, not only State jobbery *may* ensue, but probably *will*, if the central executive is allowed such control.

But that from *MAY* we ought not to infer *MUST*, is simply deduced from the American Union, from Canada, from Australasia. The land jobbing by the English executive received a sharp check from the date of the American Declaration of Independence. When the local authority assumed power over the land, each separate State claimed and received its separate portion. No justice to natives

was pretended, but no community of whites could complain of wrong. The vastly wider extent of land which fell to the Republic after the purchase of Louisiana, was in the Federal grasp, but not liable to the despotism of a central executive. If, in zeal to promote railways, Congress has given away land too freely, some unwisdom may be imputed. Central power easily misjudges, but State jobbery is here far too harsh an accusation.

And when did the management of Canadian land improve? From the day that our Colonial Office yielded its power to local bodies.

Much the same reply may be given concerning the land in Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand. The new Parliaments inherited many mischiefs from previous errors of the English executive, but it will probably be admitted, that things have mended, and are likely to mend, ever since local bodies have displaced central power.

Our first inference is, that nationalisation must not imply centralisation, and that the Queen's Ministry must have no control. Our next may be, to decline advice in the matter from those whose policy is, not to remove present wrongs, but to uphold, as nearly as may be, whatever exists and is of long standing.

If nationalisation of the land become the law of the three kingdoms, we are warned by more than one recent law how flagrantly it may be made a dead letter by existing Cabinets.

It may be better to withdraw a Bill than to accept one spoiled by "amendments." But, at the worst, if by connivance of a Cabinet and cunning use of Parliamentary routine, the new law were spoiled, and favouritism and other abuse followed, there would be nothing to discourage us. It is certain that the country would feel profound indignation, and in a very few years would arm land reform with a vast increase of strength, and by an irresistible wave sweep away inveterate tricksters. The nation will not consent to lose its own rights at the bidding of those who rule by the routine of the past.

F. W. NEWMAN.

The Land as a Trusteeship-in-Common.

The economic awakening provoked by the Land Nationalisation controversy has probably done more in this country towards a due comprehension of the poverty problem, and for the ultimate advancement of well-being, than any other political agitation of recent times. In respect to this discussion I am among those who, in the abstract, maintain that the land cannot be held as property nor be made amenable to proprietary treatment; either by individuals or by the State—the representative expression of the people. Econo-

mically regarded, the world is first the parent of all its inhabitants and next the only source of their well-being. So viewed the world is, and may yet more become, a continuous promise to men of physical, mental, and moral sustenance, according to their several and varied needs. The world—or as more generally stated the land—thus belongs to all the generations of mankind, present and coming; not as absolute property, but simply as a life-successorship, devolving with its improvements upon humanity, by and through the equal title of birthright. Briefly, the land naturally is an heritage in common, from which none can be rightfully alienated; and as it is the only source of sustenance men, both by right and duty, are bound to safeguard for themselves their life-interest in it. But in what does a true safeguard consist? Upon this point it is the well-grounded belief of many land nationalisers that an all-powerful, an abiding, and *natural* guarantee of well-being is contained in the holding of the land by the people for the people, to the exclusion of every form of private, or rather freehold, possession. The true relation of men to each other in reference to the land, these reformers assert, is that of tenants-in-common, endowed with a life-trusteeship in common, operating through democratic representation over a strictly indivisible estate—an estate to which birth is a sufficient, an indefeasible, and indeed the only recognisable title. Would men preserve to themselves and their ever-arriving successors the fullest possibilities of welfare; if they would protect their liberties unimpaired and make secure their opportunities of progress; then they must *in common* administer this valuable trust, must *jointly* exercise a wise control over their inheritance, and *collectively* guard their life-interests from every form of depreciation or surrender. Any deviations from this severely associative control, it is urged, are shown by experience to be fraught with danger, and can only be regarded as breaches of trust; as infringements of that inherent birthright endowment which ties every one in common to the land and to each other by wholesome co-partnership interests, of which no one can safely divest himself, nor legitimately deprive another.

For illustration of this position, both the landlords and landless can be brought into evidence; for nearly all the phenomena concerning their cases are in proof of the fact that a permanent assurance of well-being, either for the people or individuals, is impossible apart from sharing in the mastership over the land. Landlordism, on the one hand, is made trebly secure in its well-being through its land monopolies, but, on the other, it is a stupendous breach of trust against mankind. Naturally it was entitled to no more interest in the soil than was common to all men, and the advantages gained to itself, through its arrogation of an almost exclusive interest, have operated most prejudicially to the masses. The people having been

made landless, having thus been stripped of their birthright, and dispossessed of their administrative control over the common inheritance, suffered deprivation of the most extreme kind. They became a prey to want; they were stultified by ignorance; and in consequence gradually lost every liberty worth the name. Made voiceless in the councils of the State, their part in the land trusteeship was denied, and henceforth they lived but a hand-to-mouth life, and even that only through the sufferance or at the caprice of their landlord enslavers. Landlordism, however, does not stand condemned merely through the cruel disabilities it inflicts upon those who, by force, fraud, or economic ignorance, it has made landless, and who thus no longer share in the commonweal, except by favour or patronage. Its history is largely one of a welfare abused; of a superabundance tending too frequently to a mocking voluptuousness; of a power exerted only to make secure by every tyrannous device continued misappropriations of the trusteeship assets.

The principle of State-Trusteeship, however, although for ages infringed, constantly reasserts itself; and is endorsed, though often unconsciously, far more widely than is generally recognised. In this fact there is further evidence that trusteeship-in-common of the land as a guarantee of well-being is a law which must be regarded as natural. Not even to the State, much less to individuals, has a lasting sanction to the freeholding of land ever been accorded. Modern land legislation—vast in amount, complicated in character, and burdensome in expense—is a proof of the public sensitiveness upon land questions, and of the jealous opposition extended to any treatment of the land on a proprietary basis. The people instinctively revert at every opportunity to their true position as life-trustees, and so far as a landlord governance permits them, they seek to enforce arrangements which only tenants-in-common can rightfully dictate. And for further proof of this lack of sanction mention may fairly be made of the fond delusion, recently much advertised, that the land-owning classes will by-and-by voluntarily administer their enormous gains as trustees for the good of the people at large. Apart from the fact that mere patronage may never palm itself off as justice, no tendency of this kind (individual cases excepted) is revealed in the annals of landlordism; an institution which has self-aggrandisement for its object, and has always used tyranny for the safeguarding of its oft-times degrading luxuriousness. But this delusion is not without its value. Is it not a tacit admission from a most interested quarter that trusteeship, rather than freehold, is the natural and safest form of land tenure? What more cogent justification for their propaganda can land nationalists require than the welcome fact that landlordism, if not conscience-stricken, is sitting but nervously on its usurped throne; and after retreating from one line of defence to another it is now almost ready to capitulate; that if not yet asking

terms of surrender, it is at least offering bribes to some of those it has oppressed?

If landlordism be, as many contend, the confiscation of rights belonging to all for the preferential advantage of the few, and if the substitution of a State-trusteeship over the land will broaden the pathway of progress and enlarge the general welfare, then it is incumbent upon Radicals not only to resist most strenuously all landlord-creating measures, but to continue without ceasing their inquiry after the true modes of replacing landlord-holding by a nationalised system of land tenure, in order that the application of such methods may become a question for settlement too burning to be longer delayed.

WILLIAM VOLCKMAN.

A Scheme for the Abolition of Landlordism.

Inasmuch as both Conservative and Liberal Governments have by their proposals now admitted the practicability and expediency of purchasing a portion of the land for the benefit of a portion of the people, I trust the time has now arrived when those who advocated the acquisition of the whole of the land for the benefit of the whole of the people may be considered by orthodox politicians as a little better than visionary monomaniacs.

There are, I am aware, many powerful and influential advocates of confiscation pure and simple; and the method of doing this by means of a gradually increasing land tax is advocated by no less a man than Henry George.

I cannot help thinking, however, that bearing in mind the temper of the English public, and the methods they have adopted for carrying out their greatest reforms so far, that there is nothing more certain than that, if we are to regain the land by constitutional methods, the landowners will be compensated.

In case of a violent revolution no doubt the land might be confiscated, but in a country like ours, with its constitutional means for the redress of grievances, and with its destinies in its own hands, this would not only be a disgrace, but a sure sign of a wide-spread demoralisation, which would bode ill for the future.

As an active politician and an earnest believer in Land Nationalisation, I think it of great importance that schemes should be brought forward which should be not only workable, but also follow the line of least resistance and as far as possible gather into focus the various friendly forces which it is so necessary to unite.

Here is one which I venture to think fairly conforms to these conditions.

I. Reimpose the 4s. in the pound land tax as a part of a comprehensive scheme for land nationalisation. This would depreciate land values 20 per cent.

II. Use the money thus obtained in purchasing land, and not in relieving rates and taxes, the benefit of which would, according to many able thinkers, ultimately filter back to the landowners in the form of increased rents.

III. The rent accruing from the land purchased to be used, at first at any rate, for the purchase of more land.

IV. To avoid the enormous expenses of valuation by arbitration and the excessive values so often given, the landowners should be obliged to assess their own land in detail. Thus, if the assessment were too low, they would be bought out at their own valuations; if too high, their taxes would be proportionately heavy. They would be in the position of the boy who is allowed to divide the apple, but obliged to give his playfellows the first choice. They would be obliged to assess fairly.

It may be urged, as an objection to the perfect working of this plan, that although at twenty years' purchase there would only be $\frac{1}{20}$ part of the land bought every year at first; nevertheless, the landlords might be aware that certain land was more particularly required, and would, therefore, be willing to pay the extra tax on a high valuation for the prospect of sale. This objection is quite valid, but could be fairly met by some such provisions as the following:

I. The purchase value should be calculated from the last five years' assessment.

II. The purchasing authority should have the power of appeal against any assessment to a commission.

III. As the State gradually resumed ownership, and confidence in this new system became thoroughly established, the whole process might be summarily cut short by purchasing all the remaining land at one stroke by means of State bonds redeemable at par.

CHARLES WICKSTEED.

Free Land.

It is urged by some people that the existing monopoly of land is mainly due to the complexity of our system of tenure. The remedy, we are told, is to make a clean sweep of this system, and treat land, in respect both of sale and inheritance, like merchandise. As a consequence, land will become easily accessible for use to those who need it.

Now, they who urge this view seem to overlook the fact that Lord Cairn's Settled Estates Act has already given landlords nearly every facility for disposing of land short of making them absolute owners. Then, since landlords so rarely avail themselves of this Act, one of two conclusions seems inevitable: either that simpler laws affecting land have *per se* no tendency whatever to restrict monopoly: or, that until landlords are made *absolute owners* they will not sell. If we may judge by the experience of America, and of our Australasian Colonies, the former conclusion appears the correct one. For free trade in land prevails over those wide regions of the world. So does land monopoly.

But let us blot these awkward facts out of memory for a moment, and assume that the second conclusion is right; that existing land monopolists need the stimulus of absolute ownership to induce them to destroy themselves *qua* monopolists. Then it follows that, with the ultimate object of establishing "free land," a comparative fraction of the community, who are at present chiefly life tenants of the huge estates under their control, are to be given a new and valuable property in these estates! Not to speak of the confiscation of collateral or subsidiary interests involved in such a vast and, one may truly say, unconstitutional change—the *national* interest in the soil is clearly weakened rather than strengthened by it. What have existing landlords done that they should be so handsomely endowed? The mildest of land reformers will admit as one reason for attempting reform that landowners have abused their present privileges. Yet the advocates of free trade in land seek to make *addition to these privileges* as a preliminary step to benefitting the whole community. How ingenious!

Now, under a system of Land Nationalisation it is possible to obtain free land without the trouble of altering the land laws to any material degree. The State has already the right of re-entry to all the land in the three kingdoms. It has merely to exercise this right *locally*, as occasion may arise, to make the land free for popular use. The amount of compensation (for disturbance) that landlords should receive is a point that I do not propose to discuss. In any case, however, compensation from the State could take the form of an assignment of Consols, or land bonds. And this security, with title-deeds, or proof of mortgages, &c., attached, could be placed in judicial custody—say in the charge of the County Court—instead of being handed over to the immediate holder of the land taken by the State. He, this immediate holder, would then receive interest in lieu of rent, but so long as the capital sum was judicially safeguarded, due respect might be paid to all claims other than his own that were previously associated with the land.

But an even simpler method of at once compensating dispossessed landholders, and avoiding serious alteration in real property law suggests itself. Whenever any land area was taken over, a document could be issued by the State bearing some such title as "Land Value

Annuity." The person who had received rent from that land might be described as the "registered annuitant." If he wished to capitalise this annuity, he need only take the trouble to replace his own name as registered annuitant by the name of the party to whom he sold it. But *assuming that all existing laws relating to land were made applicable to these annuities*—the latter of course being duly identified with the land for which they were substituted—then nobody would buy them without being satisfied about the title of the registered annuitant. If the land represented by an annuity had been entailed, so would be the annuity. If it were mortgaged, mortgagees could, if necessary, foreclose on the annuity, just as if it were land. Supposing there were settlements in connection with the land, these could attach to the land value annuities. Supposing an annuitant died intestate, the annuity would go to the same person who would have inherited land. An encumbered estate would involve an encumbered annuity. Finally (and this surely will please the lawyers), all legal issues whatever affecting land could be fought out upon these annuities. For their payment could be stopped by a court of law, pending investigation, just as easily as payment of a cheque can be stopped by a private individual. Of course it would be to the interest of holders of these annuities to make them as negotiable as possible. Mr. Arthur Arnold and his friends might be induced to assist in this business, and by simplifying the laws relating to land value annuities, ultimately bring about "free trade" in them. But Land Nationalisers would not feel greatly interested in this matter. For, the moment any given landlord became a registered annuitant, the land he had previously controlled would, in the true sense of the term, be Free land, accessible for *use* to those members of the community who needed it.

WILLIAM JAMESON.

State Sovereignty.

In the fiction that persists up to the present hour in treatises on the English law of real property we have the fossil-remains of the feudality which ascribed to the monarch all ownership of land. The land-holders were each and all *tenants*, direct or indirect, of the Crown, holding by specific payments and services—to be rendered or performed in the public interest—nominally to the king but practically to the commonwealth placed in his charge. The direct tenants were Royal-Prefects holding land but as administrators and office as our judges hold theirs—viz., during good behaviour. Any act indicative of disloyalty to the king and the commonwealth was ground for removal and substitution of a more trustworthy official. The estate of the disloyal chief-tenant fell, by escheat, to the royal

grantor and the untrustworthy steward, if his treason were conspicuously dangerous to the State, might expect the personal doom of an intolerable traitor.

Only a strong-willed and respectable Sovereign could be expected to exercise constant and effective control over his strong men. A cowardly monarch—*i.e.*, one of feeble and narrow mind—could not reckon on the needful support to suppress treasonous conduct like his own in his great deputies. Inheritance failed (as usual) to transmit royal qualities, and the result was that the great Lawwards (Lords) aspired to independent authority over the lands they held only in trust, and civil wars arose which ended in an effectual extermination of the competitive would-be kings. In the accession of the Tudor family the English kingship was reconstituted. The Seventh and Eighth Henrys were real kings, in power if not in wisdom or virtue. The lesson of the past centuries however was lost on them, and especially on the last one when, instead of organising a State or local control of the land by the people and for the people, he granted away the lands, not his, to parasites and flatterers. These last, under the feeble Stuarts, brought about another collapse of the English Monarchy in the "blessed martyrdom" of the first Charles, and its *finale* in the infamy of the second saint of that name.

The installation of the Dutch-William and his Stuart-Mary was no rehabilitation of the English monarchy. The ignobility of English parasitism, squirearchy, and landlordism in general had ousted the Stuart monarchs and was itself in power. That power they contrived to establish thenceforth in *their* "constitutional" fashion. That is, they constituted a kingship which was and is a pure fudge. One that, nominally enacting our laws, could enact nothing but what landlordism bade it. Up to 1832 all our legislation was purely landlordial. Since that date the public is being, in very gingerly fashion, admitted into the legislative partnership. The present epoch is that of Democracy, whose advancing strides no power can stay in England or elsewhere. Our Constitutionalism will presently be *anti-* instead of *pro-*landlordial. In the establishment of Justice and of the Christianity of the Nazarene Jesus, Landlordism is fated to fall, as our English Kingship fell before it and became the empty fiction it is.

We may fairly hope that our rising republic—not founded, as that plutocratic one of our French neighbours is, in blood and peasant-proprietorship, but on the principle that "the earth is the Lord's," and this English portion of it is *lent* by Him to all His English-Children, in this as in all generations, for their necessary use and sustenance—will be the prelude to the "kingdom of heaven at our hand."

H. HUTCHINSON.

Practical Land Nationalisation.

Assuming, as I believe we may with justice, that public opinion is prepared to grant the essential distinction between the right of property in a natural agent and in a product of labour, it becomes important and imperative to further point out how the present system of private property in land may be changed for one that will fulfil every requirement of justice. For many who accept the first principles of land nationalisation cannot at once see their way to a method for their application. There seems to be a widespread impression that the remedy must be worse than the disease. "Land nationalisation," say they, "will entail corruption and mismanagement. Moreover, with compensation to landlords it will spell national bankruptcy, and, without compensation, it is shameful spoliation. And in any case it is utterly impracticable and unworthy of serious discussion."

The bogeys thus conjured up lose their terror as is usual when approached and examined, and the feeling is growing that the reform we strive for is neither so visionary nor so dangerous as it seemed when men were too timid or too prejudiced to carefully consider it.

In the first place we seek the nationalisation of land *apart from improvements*. These latter rightly belong to those who have effected them, and State-tenants will enjoy the utmost security in reaping all the benefit of the work of their hands, without the sinking of capital in the purchase of the freehold. Thus the duty of the State will be greatly simplified.

Bare land needs no "management," in the ordinary sense of the term. Of corruption, favouritism and Lord Bramwell's "army of officials" we have no fear. Corruption and favouritism can be avoided with a thoroughly popular and decentralised authority, and with a vigilant and enlightened electorate; and the ground-rent can be assessed and collected with a much less complicated machinery than is needed to collect our present rates and taxes, so numerous and so diverse. For it should not be forgotten that the rents will eventually render all other taxation unnecessary.

Of course, the ideal method of nationalisation is for the whole land to be brought under national control at the same time in one Act of Parliament. This is what we seek. But, failing the ideal, we can accept the immediately possible; and meanwhile, more than one mode of attacking the land monopoly presents itself for our adoption.

1. *Compulsory, gradual, and equitable expropriation of landlords.*— In theory, the State is still the landowner, and, in particular cases, constantly exercises its right to expropriate present landholders.

Thus, every mile of railway that has ever been laid down has had at its back Parliamentary authority to force unwilling landlords to give place. Again, the Allotments Act of 1887, passed by a Conservative Government, admits what Mr. Gladstone, at Manchester, called "the good principle that, where in the judgment of a competent public authority land is necessary, then it shall be taken whether the owner desire it or not." "The landlord would be entitled to receive fair compensation, but he would have no right to object." This good principle is the very heart of land nationalisation, and we strive for its practical recognition by an Act of Parliament so amending the Allotments Act as to bring within the reach of *every* man in town and country as much land as he can personally use, at a strictly reasonable (and hence revisable) rent, and with liberty and encouragement to make his *home* upon his holding.

Such a scheme should commend itself to those persons who, through a misapprehension of our real purpose, profess a preference for municipalisation as opposed to nationalisation. Of course the land must be made *national* property, although it will most probably be administered municipally under central supervision.

2. *Equitably Progressive Taxation of Land Values.*—This method, which is a fiscal reform rather than a land tenure reform, is nevertheless good, as calculated to force land into use, to destroy speculative values, to relieve industry, and to tax a class which has too long been exempt. By itself it is *totally inadequate* as a means of restoring the land to the people, but, when supplementing the actual expropriation of landlords is very useful in helping to break the back of landlordism, and in reducing the compensation which might otherwise prove inordinate.

While, however, all measures which practically assert State sovereignty over the land will be welcomed by nationalists, nothing less than the complete nationalisation of the land will be satisfactory or final, nothing less than the thorough emancipation of labour by the provision for all men of an alternative to wage-service, without which the wage-worker is, and ever must be, a bondsman and wage-slave.

JOSEPH HYDER.

A giant at play is always an interesting spectacle to ordinary mortals. He seems nearer our level when we find that to him and us alike *dulce est desipere in loco*. It is for this reason that I feel profoundly grateful to Professor Huxley for his article, "Capital the Mother of Labour," in last month's *Nineteenth Century*. There we see the unbendings of a great mind—Capital, says the professor, is the mother of labour. The proof is very simple: Can a man be born before his mother? No. Must not the mother eat while the child is maturing? Yes. Then capital is the mother of labour.

Q.E.D. It is an exciting operation for a pigmy merely to watch the gambols of a giant. For my part I have just breath enough left to inquire whether the mother must not work before she can eat. Whether labour must not be an essential ingredient in all capital, and whether therefore if capital is the mother of labour the child must not be born before the mother. Not at all, says the giant. By capital I mean something entirely different from what is ordinarily meant by that word. By capital I mean land. There is, you know, no difference between land and capital. The giant remains master of the field.

Excellent fooling i' faith; tho', perhaps, a little hard on those devoted followers of Professor Huxley who, like Lord Bramwell, mistaking the jest for sober earnest, repeat the same proposition in other forms. Even the heathen Chinese did not play it off upon his friends.

If, however, one may accept Professor Huxley's jokes, and Lord Bramwell's serious statements as authoritative, the fundamental difference between the upholders of the system of private ownership of land and the advocates of Land Nationalisation is this: The former contend that land is as properly the subject of private ownership as any other property—a watch for example; while the latter contend that land has characteristics peculiar to itself, rendering it unfit for private ownership.

With great deference to the doughty champions of *laissez-faire*, I venture to think that their contention cannot be supported.

Is it not true of land to say that

It is necessary to life; is limited in quantity; contains no element of human labour; nothing else can be substituted for it?

Can the same combination of qualities be found in any other kind of property? I think not; certainly not in a watch.

If this combination of qualities is peculiar to land, there should be no difficulty, in spite of Lord Bramwell's avowed inability, in understanding the possibility of treating land on a different footing to other property.

The demand for such treatment may be right or wrong; but at least it is intelligible.

The test of the righteousness of this demand is, according to Lord Bramwell, the common weal.

That test I gladly accept. It would need a bolder man than I to incur the contempt of Professor Huxley and his followers by suggesting that man has any natural rights—has even a right to live. I will, however, summon up courage to submit two or three reasons why private ownership of land is irreconcilable with the common weal.

Lord Bramwell, at any rate, must admit that the common weal requires that in the various relationships of social and business life,

such as landlord and tenant, master and servant, there should be freedom of contract. Perfect freedom of contract imports equality of alternatives. Freedom of contract cannot be said to exist even imperfectly unless reasonable alternatives are open to both contracting parties. What reasonable alternatives has a landless man bargaining with a landowner? Is not the former practically as much at the mercy of the latter as the lonely traveller at that of the armed highwayman? Are not all the landless man's promises made under duress?

Again, does not the common weal require that the people should be self-governing? If so, then, in this respect too, private ownership of land is harmful. History and experience alike teach us that the landowners are the lawmakers.

Let one more reason suffice. Is it not right, does not the common weal require that the labourer should reap the fruits of his labour, and should not be compelled to share such fruits with those who have contributed nothing towards their production? But private ownership of land compels the landless to share the produce of their labour with the landowners, although these latter have in no way assisted in the production.

They do not assist by work. Nor do they contribute towards the result in any other way. If they claim to provide the land, the claim is preposterous. How can any man provide what no man has had any share in producing?

Carlyle has long since described the power of landowning as an alchemy, whereby he that hath land can extract from the landless all the produce of his labour above barest subsistence. The alchemy is not only powerful, but is so subtle withal that it has long rendered landed and landless alike blind to the true nature of the transaction.

The landless, at any rate, are beginning to open their eyes; to see that the landlord is the labourer's enemy. Nor has all the dust that Professor Huxley can raise so much magic in it as to enable the landlord to assume the character of a harmless villager.

CLEMENT M. BAILHACHE.

What is the Use of a Landlord?

Our aim is to abolish Landlordism. By a landlord we mean a person who has got possession of more land than he can use by his own personal labour, and who prevents other people from using it by their labour, except at his will and pleasure, and then only as his tenants or hired servants, that is for his profit.

It is said that a landlord fulfils several useful functions. What are they?

First, it is said, by making improvements. As a matter of fact many landlords (notoriously so in Ireland) make no improvements, but only stand ready to appropriate the improvements made by other people.

The mere ownership of land, however (which is alone what constitutes a landlord), does not enable any one to make improvements. To do this, he must own capital as well as land; and we have no objection to capitalists. If his capital comes to him as a landlord, that is from rent, it is only the tenants' earnings transferred; and they might just as well be invested in improvements by the man who wants them and who will have to use them, without first going into the landlord's pocket. These earnings are not increased in efficiency, but only very much diminished in volume, by passing through the landlord's hands.

But supposing his capital comes not from rent, but from other sources. Then, if he makes improvements, he does so from one or other of two motives: as a profitable investment (the interest on them being added to the rent), or from benevolence or public spirit. But it needs not to be a landlord to make a man glad of a profitable investment or to make him benevolent or public-spirited.

As to making improvements as a matter of business, any capitalist, whether he owned land or not, would jump at the chance. There are building societies in plenty whose sole business is to make improvements, and who are cutting each other's throats in their eagerness to do it.

But the tenant, in most cases, would be only too glad to make the improvements himself if only he were guaranteed the full fruits and undisturbed enjoyment of them, which he can rarely get. Many such improvements require no capital at all but only labour, which the poorest tenant would gladly supply, but for the uncertainty of enjoyment. For the more costly ones he could save, or borrow on the security of his crops and stock, if the landlord did not as usual stand in the way; and so progress is paralysed. The landlord does immeasurably more to hinder improvements by refusing to grant that security of possession and enjoyment without which there is no inducement to make them than he does by his occasional outlay; and when he does make them he renders no real service, because he makes them with other people's earnings, not his own, and only does what these other people would much have preferred to do for themselves.

A landlord, in short, is like a person who forbids you to procure a knife and fork for yourself, but who takes five shillings out of your pocket, spends four shillings on himself, and with the balance buys a knife and fork for you, saying at the time, "Since I supply you

with the instruments of eating I reserve the power to dictate what and how you shall eat. You shall not eat what you would like best, but what I think proper for you to eat; and this four shillings which I keep, I keep as a proper remuneration to myself for the trouble and expense in providing you with a knife and fork and regulating your diet.

But the landlord, it is supposed, has a special and personal inducement to make improvements in the consciousness that his tenants and labourers are dependent on him. But this dependence is one of the chief evils we complain of. Why should one man be made artificially dependent on another? Why, above all, should the useful man who does the work be made dependent on the useless man who does really nothing? We want to see men free, not dependent.

Personally, of course, a landlord may be everything that is good; we are not speaking about that. But *as a landlord*, as a lord and controller of the land, he is simply a person licensed to obstruct and to extort; licensed to place what arbitrary restrictions he may please on the use of the land, or to forbid its use altogether; and to demand payment for the mere permission to occupy a certain portion of the earth's surface. He is a parasite and an obstructionist, and nothing else. As a parasite, he lives on the earnings of others without producing anything himself, and the amount that he so takes is measured by the whole ground-rents of the British Islands. But he is far more injurious as an obstructionist than he is as a parasite. He withholds building sites around all the growing cities, causing overcrowding at the centres, scarcity of accommodation, and high house-rents. He keeps farms vacant (declaring he can't let them), because he requires a rent which, though often greatly reduced, is still excessive in view of changed conditions. He prevents the development of minerals by demanding exorbitant royalties. He refuses allotments to the labourer by either asking three or four times as much rent from him as he gets from the farmer, or by imposing arbitrary restrictions and unsecured tenure. He prevents improvements in all directions by refusing that security of possession and enjoyment without which there is no inducement to make them. He depopulates whole counties in Scotland to turn the land into a wilderness for sport. He keeps Ireland in a state of chronic smouldering insurrection by his exactions and evictions. He is a glaring immeasurable evil without a single redeeming feature.

We can understand the position of those of our opponents who recognise, however dimly and adequately, that he is an evil, but who don't see how he is to be got rid of without injustice. But we find it difficult to understand the position of those who think that in some mysterious way he is a blessing, and who wish to establish him on a firmer basis, to multiply his numbers, and to intensify him in every way.

I think it is Mr. Goschen that has said that "the living hand

should grasp the land." I don't know whether any one understands this highflown and mystical remark; but if it has any meaning at all, one would suppose it to mean that the man who was actually using the land should have full and undisturbed possession of it so long as he chose to use it. That is exactly what our proposals would secure. That is exactly what landlordism effectually prevents.

A. J. OGILVY.

Private property in land has for centuries been an English institution. The impropration equally of its prairie value, and of the unearned increment, and of the extra value accruing from individual expenditure of skill and labour, has for many centuries enjoyed the sanction not only of our laws (in their practice if not wholly in their theory), but also of our national moral sense; while even our religious teachers have assented to the system.

Per contra, both the injustice and the impolicy of such impropration, after being suggested by philosophers like H. Spencer and J. S. Mill, and then demonstrated, both *à priori* and experientially, by H. George and A. R. Wallace, have been publicly denounced throughout the land, in treatise and in tract, by lecture and by speech, through the agency of two societies, which, differing in minor points and methods, have for their common object the liberation of the national land from bondage to the individual, and the restoration of the benefit accruing from it from the few to all.

At present, no publicist or politician, though but moderately informed, and no M.P. of either house, can fail to be aware that to a great extent the sense of the nation, both its common and its moral sense, revolt and openly protest against monopoly of land by individuals, and further that this conviction is daily widening and deepening. In fact, just men, if also well-informed, are of opinion generally that private possessions in land, so far as their value is either a gratuity of nature, or an unearned increment, are, in the truth of things, but so much "stolen goods"—"stolen" as a matter of strict objective fact, though "stolen" under circumstances which entirely acquit their "receiver" of any particle of guilt.

The position is therefore this:

On the one hand, we have the great mass of our countrymen deprived, because of this transaction, for several generations, of one of their chief birthrights—*i.e.*, of all unpurchased interest in Nature's gifts of land and raw materials! And not only is this gift withheld from them at present, but there are accumulated arrears of benefit owing to them from centuries of past privation! And further, these rightful owners of the "stolen goods" are rapidly becoming wide awake to the theft which has been practised on them, and are demanding restitution of their treasure.

On the other hand, the actual holders of the goods in question are subjectively quite innocent and honest men, their action and position having had up to this time the complete sanction of society.

Looking now at these two opposing facts and factors, a humane and sympathetic man can hardly help concluding that to do perfect justice to either of these parties would involve grave practical injustice to the other—that the just claims of *both* cannot be fully satisfied—and that, therefore, a compromise between them must be made. Thus, while the deprived masses must ultimately be permitted to recover the full value (arrears excepted) of which they have been stripped, the spoliation of the present holders must be gradual to prevent its being cruel!

It has therefore been suggested—*e.g.*, that the needful restoration should not be made, in the case of any property, in the lifetime of its *living* heir or owner, but should be deferred until his death in every case.

But, of course, a concession of this sort and magnitude would be made upon the sole ground, and with proviso in every case, that the property had been acquired with the full sanction of the will and conscience of the nation, and when no one offered any protest on the score of either policy or justice! If a suspicion was entertained, and if a warning had been given to the would-be purchaser, of any flaw of this sort in the title to the property, then— *caveat emptor!* the new acquirer must run the risk; and, should the existence of the flaw be established upon trial, then he must suffer, unpitied, the whole loss! So justice would suggest!

Now, it may fairly be maintained, I think, that precisely such a warning of a flaw in the title has been given, and is being constantly repeated in the public ear—in regard to private property in land. The counsel for the plaintiff has already completely demonstrated the existence of a fatal flaw; and yet, before the trial is completed and the judgment has been pronounced, it is proposed to enter on a course of fresh land-transfer! “It is ill swapping horses in the middle of the river!” is a remark which it were well to take to heart in the present crisis of the land question. For, now that the wrongness and impolicy of private property in land have been affirmed and proved, whoever subsequently promotes a new and general system of the kind, with the truth ringing in his ears, and in the face of earnest protest, must take the consequences! The nation, which is as certain to nationalise the land some day as London is to supply itself with water, will not forget, when that day comes, that the new purchases were effected in the teeth of a rapidly growing public opinion, and have consequently forfeited all moral claim for compensation!

E. D. GIRDLESTONE.