

SIR HENRY BALLANTYNE

SIR HENRY BALLANTYNE who last month died, aged 86, at his home at Monkrigg, near Haddington, was a man held in high esteem in public and business circles in the Border districts of Scotland. In the politics of advanced Liberalism he rendered life-long and outstanding services and most notably so as chairman of the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Industrial Population of Scotland, whose five-year investigation (1912 to 1917) produced startling and shocking revelations. He was head of the firm of D. Ballantyne & Bros. Ltd., tweed millers, in Peebles; for nine years was Provost of that town and was its public benefactor. He was knighted in 1906. Although he took an active and leading part in national and municipal affairs he never sought position in Parliament, although his broad-minded statesmanship entitled him and would certainly have secured for him the representation of any constituency in the South of Scotland if he had had the leisure and the inclination. His radical views on the land question have been expressed on many occasions and with emphasis, and his support financially and by personal service to the movement for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade was given regularly and generously over a long series of years to the last moment. We recall among the events in this association his and Lady Ballantyne's interest in the successful Bazaar of the Scottish League in 1902, his attendance at the twenty-first anniversary dinner of the United Committee in July, 1928, and the reception and garden party which Lady Ballantyne and he gave, at Monkrigg, to the International Conference held in Edinburgh, August, 1929. Good citizen, in business respected and admired by all his associates, zealous for the welfare of each, eager to give his counsel whenever it was wanted, Sir Henry's name deserves a high place in the annals of the Scotsmen who have served their country in the truest sense. He was predeceased by three sons. To Lady Ballantyne and her two daughters we extend our sympathy in their bereavement.

WHY THE GERMAN REPUBLIC FELL AND OTHER STUDIES OF THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

This book of selected essays, reviews and extracts, reprinted from recent issues of *Land & Liberty*, has been produced in response to numerous requests. With economic freedom and equality of opportunity as its keynote it offers a distinctive and important contribution to the study of the New Social Order.

"Irrespective of the name we give our form of government," as Judge Samuel Seabury says in his eloquent address which makes the final chapter, "or the method by which we choose its administrators, the philosophy of freedom cannot be realized unless the world recognizes the common rights of men in the resources of nature, unless it recognizes the right of every people to trade with other peoples, unless it safeguards the individual rights of life, liberty and property, and unless it ensures tolerance of opinion. These principles are the essential life-giving attributes of freedom: without them there can be no civilization in the sense in which that term is used by a free people."

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SCOTTISH HOUSING CONDITIONS

The most important work Sir Henry Ballantyne undertook was as chairman of the Royal Commission on Housing in Scotland. His co-members were Lord Lovat, Sir William Younger, Councillor W. F. Anderson of Glasgow, Mr G. F. Barbour, Mr Charles Carlow, Mr J. Duncan and Mr David Gilmour. Their report was published in October, 1917, in a document valuable for its evidence, failing, however, in the absence of radical proposals for betterment and still less for solution, the cause of which may be that the personnel was such as to hold conflicting views on ways to counter the power of the landed interests. In the course of the investigation Sir Henry visited almost every part of Scotland, including the Hebrides. He was able to publish an exposure that spoke and will speak again to all who know how and why such wretched housing conditions have arisen and how they are to be remedied.

"These are the broad results of our survey," it was written, "unsatisfactory sites of houses and villages . . . widespread absence of decent sanitary conveniences . . . badly constructed, incurably damp labourers' cottages on farms, whole townships unfit for human occupation in thecrofting counties and islands . . . gross overcrowding and huddling of the sexes together in the congested industrial villages and towns, occupation of one-room houses by large families . . . clotted masses of slums in the great cities."

The Report throws a fierce light upon the unhappy lot of those who live in poverty no matter how hard they work, who build houses they cannot inhabit, and produce things they cannot possess. What is the cause? Significant is the statement that "the mass of the people have no rights either to housing or protection, or even to the possession of any area sufficient to stand upon." And again: "Land is in many ways the most important factor in housing. Without a plentiful supply of cheap land and easy access to it, house dwellers cannot get sufficient space, nor water, nor sunshine; they cannot get even sufficient air. . . . The high feuing rates which have been in the past paid for building land undoubtedly influence owners of land in the direction of holding up land until they can obtain those high prices—and that without particular regard as to whether or not their land is as ripe for building as the land for which these high prices were paid. The result frequently is that the owner of the ground waits till the requirements of the community becomes so urgent that he is able to exact his own price for land. . . . We advance very definite views on the relation of land to housing. The question of the land is fundamental. If nothing is done to make it possible either for individuals or for public authorities to obtain building land at more reasonable prices than hitherto, housing reform will be paralysed at the outset."

The Commissioners quoted many particular examples of the feuing price* of sites for housing. Their summary showed that in 68 burghs of population below 5,000, feus varied from four or five times to about thirty to thirty-five times the previous agricultural rental; in 18 burghs with 5,000 to 10,000 population, from about six to nine (in five cases) and from ten to twenty times; in 20 burghs with 10,000 to 25,000 population, from between five and six times up to twenty to forty times (in the case of Rutherglen) and twenty to fifty times (in the case of Port Glasgow); in 9 burghs with 25,000 to 50,000 population from seven to twenty times (Dunfermline) to twenty and twenty-five times (Hamilton).

* In Scotland, land for building is normally "feued," instead of being bought or sold outright, the "feu" being a fixed annual rent payable in perpetuity to the ground landlord and his assigns.

and in Clydebank from ten up to about seventy-five times. The meaning of all this is that for every pound landowners were previously getting in rent for agricultural uses, they now receive in *perpetuity* rents for housing purposes multiplied four or five times, twenty times, forty times, seventy-five times, as the case may be. In a case like that in Clydebank a rental of £1 per acre becomes £75 per acre which, in perpetuity and at, say, 5 per cent, is equivalent to a selling price of £1,500 per acre. In Dundee a very usual feuing price for sites for working-class houses was £80 to £120 per acre and it has been as high as £400; in Glasgow £200 to £300 per acre and sometimes much higher; in Edinburgh £150, £200, £300 and in many instances much higher, even up to £656 per acre, these all being rent per annum payable in perpetuity. Visualise this process, consider the width and depth and height of it in time and place, and calculate the immensity of the tribute that this landlord institution exacts and continues to exact, exercising the powers to withhold land from use and bring industry to a standstill if the price is not paid.

The report was describing conditions as they were twenty-five years ago, looking at what must be done "after the war." There has been little change since. The only legislation that has put some check on exorbitant land prices is the Acquisition of Land (Assessment of Compensation) Act of 1919 which enables public authorities to bring to arbitration the "market value" of land for the acquisition of which they have secured compulsory purchase powers. That Act, if it aids public authorities when at bay, aids them only, since its provisions do not extend to negotiations and transactions in land between private parties; and when its provisions are applied in arbitration cases, the result is the "award" of the market value to the landowner; in other words the monopoly price of the land which bears no relation whatever to the previous rateable value. The reader is asked to consult the book *Why Rents and Rates are High** for the more than 600 examples of the manner in which the land monopoly is operating to-day to hold up every sort of development.

We are now, hopefully, approaching another "after the war" period and if testimony is wanted as to the conditions that have persisted, which Sir Henry Ballantyne's Commission so grimly set forth, let the voices be heard that in all departments of municipal life are speaking to-day of the country's urgent needs and are calling for drastic action: in Scotland, for example, Sir William E. Whyte, the Chairman of the Scottish Housing and Town Planning Council, who at the annual conference of that body, on 16th May, emphasized the magnitude of Scotland's housing difficulties, said that the official estimate of houses still required to remedy overcrowding and remove slums was 300,000 but thought himself that 400,000 would be nearer the mark at the close of the war.

A foot of column notice in the *Jewish Chronicle* of 27 June says—*My Neighbour's Landmark*, by Frederick Verinder (The Henry George Foundation of Great Britain, 1s.), is the fourth edition of this well-known collection of studies in Bible land laws. It contains several notes by modern Jewish scholars, and its value is indicated by the Chief Rabbi's citations in his Commentary on the Pentateuch.

* Published by the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values, price 1s. paper covers; 2s. cloth.

THE RELIGIOUS ASPECT OF THE LAND QUESTION

SOME years ago Charles H. Smithson of Halifax felt a call to visit meetings of the "Society of Friends" in all parts of the country to draw the attention of the Society to the fact that our treatment of the natural resources of the earth is altogether incompatible with the orthodox acceptance of the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God.

The view he submitted for the consideration of the "Society of Friends" was that it is the duty of any organized body of Christians to protest against any feature of the existing social order which is inconsistent with the Christian Faith and he urged Quakers to give a lead to the other Christian Churches in condemning the legalized power which enables a limited number of individuals to withhold the Creator's free gifts to ALL, from their fellows.

Charles Smithson has again recently addressed a "Monthly Meeting" of the "Society of Friends," held at Skipton on July 5th, when the following "minute" was drafted and unanimously accepted as "The sense of the Meeting."

"We recognize that the Earth and the fullness thereof is a provision made by the Creator for the equal use of all His children, and should therefore be treated as the equal heritage of all.

"To bring human law into harmony with the Divine Will, in regard to this matter, we support the view that any publicly created value attaching to the free gifts of the Creator should be used for the communal benefit of all.

"We further recognize that the application of this Principle would remove an anti-Christian feature in the existing Social Order."

IN THE BRAILLE

MR ALEXANDER FRASER of Edinburgh, at the request of the National Institute of the Blind, is completing a new transcription of *Progress and Poverty* into the Braille. It will be ready this month and will be available for lending to students and others interested. We are to understand that the fact of the transcription being made does not in any way imply an indorsement by the Institute of the views developed in the book, their Library existing only as an aid to study in economics, as in religion, philosophy, etc.

Years ago the late John McTaggart of Machrahanish (he was a companion in youth of John Paul and lost his eyesight by a factory accident) made the Braille transcription of *Progress and Poverty*, *Protection or Free Trade* and the *Land Question* when he settled in Kintyre as the cultivator of a croft, taking the road also among neighbours as a purveyor of tea. Once he made a longer journey, at the instance of his dearest friend John Paul, all the way to Edinburgh, being present at the National Conference held there in 1922. It was for him a rich and moving experience. Mr McTaggart's transcriptions were presented by him to the Outdoor Asylum for the Blind in Glasgow.

"London's Lead, Checking Land Racketeers" and "Pedlar's Acre" are the titles of letters from Fred Messer, M.P., and Andrew MacLaren, M.P., issued by the Press Bureau of the Land Values Parliamentary Group, which have appeared in numerous newspapers. Our Press Agency have provided clippings from papers in the City, Islington, Marylebone, Norwood, Poplar, Bath, Greenock, Hayward's Heath, Manchester and Workop.