

INTRODUCTION.

"THERE is in nature no such thing as a fee simple in land."

"Though his titles have been acquiesced by generation after generation to the landed estates of the Duke of Westminster, the poorest child that is born in London to-day has as much right as has his eldest son to these estates."

"This natural and inalienable right to the equal use and enjoyment of land is so apparent that it has been recognised by men wherever force or habit has not blunted first perceptions. To give but one instance: The white settlers of New Zealand found themselves unable to get from the Maoris what the latter considered a complete title to land, because, although a whole tribe might have consented to a sale, they would still claim with every new child born among them an additional payment, on the ground that they had only parted with their own rights, and could not sell those of the unborn. The Government was obliged to step in and settle the matter by buying land for a tribal annuity, in which every child that is born acquires a share."—HENRY GEORGE.

THE only royal road to universal peace among civilised nations is Universal Free Trade, and the only royal road to that is, that we shall have absolute and entire free trade in England both as regards Excise and Customs taxes. This will bring about by gradual and spontaneous self-acting process, Universal Free Trade, and then the "first condition" of universal peace will exist. The enemies of this and every country will be converted into friends, from *a selfish point of view*, not by the sword, but by virtue of setting free of the use of the plough, the ship, the shuttle, and the locomotives everywhere. The various populations will then have their eyes open to the fact that under universal freedom of exchange the world's wealth will be equitably distributed, and that there will be enough for all and to spare. Thus showing that God had created man and endowed him with a *selfish* propensity for a good purpose, and not for an evil one. Then will all men comparatively, *i.e.*, all who can speak and vote, speak and vote for peace and freedom, and where will then be the power of party, crown, or Government, or its army of diplomatists to resist such a public opinion? The power of peace and war, tariffs and taxation, will then be with the people and not with the Government or party for the time being. As the people become perfect, so will their Government become perfect.

He who wishes wisely and well to British industry, will denounce all taxes upon commodities whether they be of a native or foreign production, luxuries or necessaries, or whether for protective or revenue purposes.

When I first began to write on the land question (some 35 years ago) I did not then see my way through the entanglements of the land question further than that there were deep-seated vested interests in Land resting on a rotten foundation, consisting of rights and wrongs, and duties which must some time, not far distant, be investigated. The landholder class being for centuries the predominating power in the legislature, had been in the habit of making unjust laws by which they were enabled to assert *rights* (created by their own Acts of Parliament) without being called upon to perform the *duties* justly inseparable from those *rights* (so-called). For instance they had undertaken, as a condition of their holdings, to furnish out of their receipts of rack-rent, &c., the necessary expenses of the State, thereby leaving industry free from tariffs of any kind, but they ultimately managed to gradually throw off his duty from their own shoulders on to that of industry by a system of Excise and Customs duties. At that era their selfishness being so much stronger than their economic knowledge, blinded them to the fact that it was a suicidal policy, as the Herbert Spencers, the Henry Georges, the Lattimers, and a host of other writers and speakers on the question of Land Reform are proving it to have been ; and, if other facts were wanting to prove this, the condition of Ireland at this moment can furnish ample data. In Mr. George's book, "Progress and Poverty" (which can be had from all booksellers), page 327 (large book), quoting from Herbert Spencer, he says : "Had we to deal with the parties who originally robbed the human race of its heritage; we might make short work of the matter." "Why not make short work of the matter anyhow ? for this robbery is not like the robbery of a horse, or a sum of money, that ceases with the act. It is a fresh and continuous robbery, that goes on every day and every hour. It is not from the produce of the past that rent is drawn ; it is from the produce of the present. It is a toll levied upon labour constantly and continuously. Every blow of the hammer, every stroke of the pick, every shot of the shuttle, every throb of the steam engine, pay it tribute. It levies upon the earnings of the men who, deep underground, risk their lives, and of those who over white surges hang to reeling masts ; it claims the just reward of the capitalist and the fruits of the inventor's patient efforts ; it takes little children from play or from school, and compels them to work before their bones are hard, or their muscles are firm ; it robs the shivering of warmth, the hungry of food, the sick of medicine, the anxious of peace. It debases, and embitters, and embrutes.

"It crowds families of eight or ten into a single squalid room ; it herds like swine agricultural gangs of boys and girls ; it fills the gin palace and grogillery with those who have no comfort in their homes ;

it makes lads who might be useful men candidates for prisons and penitentiaries ; it fills brothels with girls who might have known the pure joy of motherhood ; it sends greed and all other evil passions prowling through society as a hard winter drives the wolves to the abodes of men ; it darkens faith in the human soul, and across the reflections of a just and merciful Creator draws the veil of a hard, and blind, and cruel fate."

"The property that a man has in his own labour, as it is the original foundation of all other property, so it is the most sacred and inviolable. The patrimony of a poor man lies in the strength and dexterity of his hands, and to hinder him from employing this strength and dexterity in what manner he thinks proper, without injury to his neighbour, is a plain violation of this most sacred property."

—"Wealth of Nations," book 1, chap. 10. That Customs and Excise duties tend both directly and indirectly to violate this sacred property, it is the purpose of the following pages to demonstrate.

When I wrote my Model Budget, some seven years ago (see page 55 in this book), the Nemesis had not then been so generally felt, and ten per cent. tax would have sufficed upon land and other realised property for the Imperial revenue. But since that time the shrinking of values and profits has rendered it necessary to take as a basis fifteen, or perhaps twenty, per cent. now, from the annual income of land (as originally intended by Act 4 William and Mary, 1692), to cover the present extravagant expenditure of the State. Perhaps the landed interest will listen to the voice of warning when it is too late ; when they find their land, so to speak, slipping from under their feet. It has recently been a fashion to speak sneeringly of the following extract from one of Cobden's speeches. "That we had as much right to doubt that the sun would rise to morrow morning as we have to doubt that in ten years after we had set the example of perfect Free Trade, the whole civilised world would follow our example." The true answer to this is, that we have never set the example. Let us do this, and the peoples will then abolish Customs and Excise taxes everywhere, and men may everywhere say with the people of this country, I love my home, I love my country, I love my fellow citizens ; my home is Great Britain, my country is the World, and my fellow citizens the dwellers therein. There is an absurd theory that luxuries ought to be taxed, but if this theory be sound we ought to include all luxuries in order to be just. What right have we to grumble at Providence for the weather damaging our crops when we, by our fiscal laws, waste fifty or sixty millions sterling a year in order to put eight millions into the treasury?