

## LAND & LIBERTY

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### "IF BRITAIN IS TO LIVE"

Current events go to make it more than ever sure that, if the world is to get on its feet again, we must improve our eyesight and change our way of looking at things. We must make up our minds to recognize facts as facts; even though our dearest wishes may be at stake and though the passions, prejudices and hatreds of war time are not yet quite things of the past. Until they are dead and buried, and until we see economic facts as they are and not as we would like them to be, no healing of wounds or real reconstruction is possible.

Mr. Angell is before all a realist, and is in his element when driving these things home. He has never tried to keep up pretences or to curry favour by pandering to the prejudice or whim of the moment. We have followed with ever-growing interest his progress since the day, now fifteen years ago, when he first gave to the world his "Great Illusion," and believe it would be hard to find another author who has so consistently cast the cold light of common sense on those international events which during that time have so crowded one upon the other. Of course, he has paid the price and has ever since been the butt of all the imperialists and all the "illusionists." But though that book was written well before the Great War, and his conclusions were only the fruit of a considered process of pure reasoning, he made a wonderful anticipation of events which have since vindicated him in a most remarkable manner. In the light of recent happenings, will it now be asserted that, in modern warfare, the victor can really gain? Who will now maintain that, under 20th century conditions, any indemnities or reparations worth the taking can by force be extracted from the defeated nation? Mr. Angell and events have burst those bubbles. It was, therefore, with a lively curiosity and pleasurable hope that we turned to his latest book to which he has given the title "If Britain is to Live."\* Mr. Angell had already rudely shaken the war psychology, but results have shown it was but scotched and neither dead nor buried. Despite what men like him had done that spirit is but dormant, ready to emerge on the first favourable opportunity and rend us once more. Had our author pushed his attack further home, had he produced new facts, would we find that he had dealt the monster "the knock-out blow"?

The argument of the book is that if Britain is to live and support her population, even at pre-war standards, peaceful co-operation between the nations is the *sine qua non*. Conversely, if the world in general, and we in particular, persist in the present policy of rival national groupings, with the endeavour on the part of each political unit to be economically self-supporting and self-sufficient, as envisaged by the nationalist ideal, production in general will so decline that the overseas world, after meeting their own needs, will have no surplus food to send us in exchange

for our coal and manufactures. And as it is physically impossible for these islands to grow all the food we require half our people will have to starve or emigrate. Mr. Angell holds that this present, and the still greater future, threat results from the spirit of exaggerated nationalism, which, pursuing its aim of national self-sufficiency and flouting international co-operation, fatally checks production and closes the overseas market to British goods in exchange for food. If they will not take the goods we must do without the food. England sinned against herself when at Versailles she led the way in carving Europe into political units, each of which, behind tariff walls, strives to make itself economically independent of its neighbours. If Britain is to live this policy must give way to international co-operation, for which he shows that emigration or trade within the Empire is no substitute, because, on anything like an adequate scale, it is impossible. Moreover, this Nationalism breeds the war mind, and war further reduces overseas food supplies. Of themselves statesmen will do nothing to reverse their present policy. The formation of a vigorous public opinion on the side of the good, instead of on the side of the bad, alone will suffice.

To all this we repeat, Amen, that is, if we are to accept the major premise that this country cannot grow food to support its population. If he means (as we think he does) "under present conditions," then again we agree. But if he would imply that under no circumstances—even of economic freedom—could the thing be done, then we emphatically enter a caution. No man can, with certainty, say what will be the limits of production when once we abolish the obstacles we ourselves place in its way, though of one thing we may be sure—that the production of food will then enormously increase. Of the impossibility of feeding ourselves it will be time to talk when every British acre for which there is economic demand is brought into proper use. So long as there remain in Britain millions of fertile unused acres such talk is surely out of place. Let us see what will happen to these idle acres and to food production, too, when the British farmer, along with every other industrialist, enjoys those three essentials to work—fair rent, security of tenure and tax free improvements. We had hoped that Mr. Angell would have extended his inquiries at least some distance in this direction. If the change of mind at which he aims is to come about, this ground simply must be explored.

Nationalism, however exaggerated, is but one of the causes of war, and at best a secondary one. The Great War was the child of a greater war and a longer war—the social war waged within the boundaries of every so-called civilized country and which will continue to be waged so long as equal rights to live are, by law, denied. True co-operation either within the state or without it we shall never see till identity of interest is won, and identity of interest is impossible so long as equal right to use the land is denied. The division of communities into landowners and landless, into those who receive the earth's rent and those who pay it, drives a wedge right through society from top to bottom, dividing it into classes whose interests are violently opposed and bearing fruit which assumes a hundred different forms of dissension and hatred. This civil war cannot be retained within national frontiers. It quickly overleaps them and war between nations supervenes. Bigger and more elemental forces even than predatory nationalism are at work to queer the international pitch. Men's minds are made anti-social because, through the non-use or partial use of natural opportunities, there is not enough work to go round and, forced to scramble for their mere chance of employment, each in his ignorance of the true cause regards his fellow as one who robs him of his job, instead of as his helper, which, once out of our prison-house, we shall see him truly to be. For, with this denial of our liberties, we are all in captivity. In this environment of restricted opportunity, like caged beasts or dogs on the chain, our tempers suffer and unnatural combativeness

\* Nisbet & Co., 22, Berners Street, London. Price 2s. 9d.

quite foreign to our true instincts results, of which one symptom is this aggressive Nationalism which Mr. Angell so deplures. What but liberation can be the cure? What but extension of opportunity?

Along with "If Britain is to Live" Mr. F. E. Giant's "The Problem of War and its Solution"\* should be very carefully read. A view is there presented which we shall ignore at our peril. The problem of war cannot be divorced from the social problem.

In giving to the world his latest work Mr. Angell adds to the many services he has rendered to the cause of goodwill among nations. But though we are again indebted to him for a wonderfully able statement of truths which no student of affairs can afford to overlook, we still venture to hope that, in his capacity of realist, he will come to see that, till this basic fact is dealt with, we shall not go far to solve the problems dealt with in this, his latest, work.

W. R. L.

### "THE PRINCE OF THE DEVILS"

English friends tell me that Germany is only being served with her own sauce: and that given the chance the little finger of Hindenburg and Ludendorff would have been thicker than General Degoutte's loins. I do not doubt it for a moment. French friends tell me that they seek no territory, they seek no gold-fields—I seem to have heard that before somewhere—that all they want is justice and the reasonable recompense for their intolerable wrongs that the shifty policy of Germany continually denies them. And I think there is a great deal of truth in that too. Only, what is its relevance? It is no answer to the song. Beelzebub, invoked to cast out Satan, is Beelzebub still, even if he does it. It makes no difference whether he wears for the occasion Prussian grey or Italian black or French blue or English black and tan. The remedy in all cases is worse than any possible disease.

It is of no avail to talk of legal rights and documentary obligations when once the song has been raised. They have no more meaning when that happens than the shapes in the mist which the wind drives before it on Helvellyn. It is not exclusively a German song. It is heard in the long run wherever freedom is threatened by brute force—in Switzerland and in Boston Harbour, in Dublin and in Brussels, in Naples and in Paris. It may be heard some day (though God forbid) in London. It will always be heard wherever brave men are trampled underfoot, under whatever pretext, by tyranny. The poor lay figures do not matter—the von Bissings and the Degouttes, the Trotskys, and the Mussolinis and the Talbots. It is the figure behind them that matters: and what man of any country that is a man at all, looking up into the mean, cruel, lowering eyes of the disgusting ruffian Force, does not hear in his ears the song which has risen sooner or later in all ages and all countries where men have been oppressed, since Miriam sang it over Pharaoh and all his host by the waters of the Red Sea?—*Stuart Hodgson in the DAILY NEWS (London), 12th May.*

Very many of our readers will regret to learn of the death of Mrs. James Dundas White, who passed peacefully at their home in London after a long and often a painful illness. She first came into the movement along with her husband when he became candidate for Dumbartonshire some twenty years ago. She was devoted to his public work, and at his electoral campaigns made hosts of friends for the cause he had in hand. She was universally loved and admired for her own sweet sake. Gentle and unobtrusive in manner, Mrs. Dundas White was always a welcome guest at our meetings. We join with hosts of friends in extending to her husband our sincerest sympathy in his great loss.

\* Geo. Allen & Unwin, London. Price 12s. 6d. net.

### THE COMING OF "PROGRESS AND POVERTY" TO ENGLAND

When, as a very young man in the later seventies of last century, I began to take a small part in the political life of London, the Working Men's Radical Clubs were a strong political force. I soon found myself speaking on their platforms, and, among many friends whom I thus made, was Francis William Soutter, of the Southwark Radical Club. Now, at the age of 79, Soutter has just published a first volume of RECOLLECTIONS OF A LABOUR PIONEER (T. Fisher Unwin, 10s. 6d. net), with a very appreciative introduction by Mr. T. P. O'Connor, M.P.

A Londoner born, though of Scottish descent, Soutter has been all his life a bonny fighter for Radicalism, a clever organizer, and an open-air speaker of exceptional ability. Of recent years, he has devoted himself mainly to the defence of Free Trade. But he has an interesting, and at times exciting story to tell of many other struggles. He inspired and organized the very first Labour candidature, that of George Odger in 1869-70. He was mainly responsible for the attempt of my old friend and colleague, Miss Helen Taylor, step-daughter of John Stuart Mill, to enter the House of Commons in 1885. (The returning officer refused to accept her nomination.) He fought and won the battle of "Church Rates" in Southwark; opposed coercion in Ireland in the stormy days of "Buckshot" Forster; took an active part in the movement against Royal grants, and against the legislative usurpations of the House of Lords.

This poor London worker in a saw-mill, who married on £1 a week, and thought himself well-off at £2 10s., incurred, in the service of the public, debts which he almost starved himself to pay, and frequently found himself in conflict with the law in defence of public right. Indeed, only his natural forensic ability saved him from heavy penalties, and he had a narrow escape from penal servitude for taking part in an alleged "riot." All this, and much more, can be read at length in his interesting book; the more interesting to me because many of the Reformers I have known and worked with—such as Helen Taylor, George Jacob Holyoake, Michael Davitt, "Willie" Webster, Herbert Burrows, Dr. Pankhurst and, above all, Henry George—pass across his pages.

Henry George wrote to Miss Taylor from Brooklyn in September, 1885:—

The approaching Parliamentary election is exciting far more than usual interest on this side of the water, and among those who realize its importance that interest is very deep. I am rejoiced at your candidacy, but your election will seem to me a greater triumph and more potent for good than that of any other single individual could be. It will mean not merely a vote, but a voice for all the great reforms that are now coming to the front; and in the fact that you are a woman it will mean a great step in a world-wide advance. It is only of late years, and largely since I first met you, that I have come to realize the importance of women taking their part in politics. On this side of the Atlantic, where you are mainly known through your relation to that great Englishman who was our friend in the dark days of our bitter struggle, and whose name is potent as few names are, your election to Parliament will be regarded as a great triumph of that principle of sexual equality for which he contended.

Another story, now fully told for the first time, will interest the readers of LAND AND LIBERTY. In 1881-2 I used to look forward eagerly to the weekly issue of a paper called the RADICAL—the sworn foe of coercion in Ireland. But it was much more than this. For William Webster contributed to it a long series of articles on what was then a new book to English readers—PROGRESS AND POVERTY. It was Soutter, more than anyone else, who started the paper, and, at great personal sacrifice, kept it going. He writes:—

Very early one fine Monday morning, Webster arrived at our office in a state of great excitement. For several minutes I had to listen to a series of joyful-like ejaculations before he placed in my hands a letter and a newspaper from the United States containing the announcement of the publication of Henry George's long expected work, PROGRESS AND POVERTY. . . . He was