

INTRODUCTORY NOTE,

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THE author of this volume is a gentleman who has been long settled in Tasmania, and is a considerable landowner there; and the present work is founded upon personal observation in the Australian Colonies and also in England. It says much for his freedom from prejudice and independence of thought, that under these conditions he has arrived at conclusions which are practically identical with those of English land nationalisers as to the evil results of private property in land.

The lesson afforded by Tasmania is indeed very striking. It is by nature one of the most favoured countries in the world. It possesses a delightful climate, free from the extreme heats and long droughts of Australia; its soil is varied and fertile, its forests are magnificent, its streams numerous and overflowing; all the products of the temperate zone flourish there, while for fruit production it is unsurpassed; it has excellent main roads constructed by convicts long ago, with railroads and navigable rivers. Here would seem to be all the conditions requisite for the support of a large agricultural population in comfort and prosperity; in place of which we find a large proportion of the land still uncultivated, and instead of general happiness and well-being, universal complaining, as with us, of trade depressed, capital unemployed, farming unprofitable, and all kinds of labourers out of work.

In that portion of the volume dealing with land nationalisation, the author shows us clearly the cause of this state of things,

and what is still more important, he explodes one of the commonest fallacies of our opponents—that large farms lead to better cultivation and higher production than small farms or peasant-holdings. This part of his work is especially valuable, because he shows, as the results of observation and owing to the inevitable working of the law of self-interest, that the large owner or large tenant will often cultivate his land badly, or even leave much of it uncultivated, *because he obtains the largest net returns by doing so.* The peasant farmer, on the other hand, working a small area by the help of his own family, finds his profit in high culture and the maximum of production from the land. By the former system one man gets a large profit but small proportionate produce by employing say ten men on a large area of land ; by the latter system twice that number of men work for themselves on the same area, produce double the amount of crops and stock, and live, all of them, in independence, and in that healthy enjoyment of life which a man obtains when he works freely upon the soil and knows that the whole produce of his labour is his own.

Other chapters deal with various problems of political economy, and especially of the currency ; and although here the author cannot claim to speak with such practical experience as he possesses in regard to the land, yet he has claims on our attention as an original thinker and an acute reasoner, and as possessing the rare quality of expressing his views on some of the most intricate of these questions so clearly and forcibly as to render them intelligible to any careful reader.

I have therefore much pleasure in introducing these instructive and suggestive essays to the general public.