

Henry George on India.

CAUSE OF FAMINE NOT THE NIGGARDLINESS OF NATURE BUT THE RAPACITY OF MAN.

In view of the present terrible famine and pestilence in India, says the *National Single Taxer*, the following extract from one of Henry George's books is peculiarly appropriate and instructive at this time:—

"The millions of India have bowed their necks beneath the yokes of many conquerors, but worst of all is the steady, grinding weight of English domination—a weight which is literally crushing millions out of existence, and, as shown by English writers, is inevitably tending to a most frightful and widespread catastrophe. Other conquerors have lived in the land, and, though bad and tyrannous in their rule, have understood and been understood by the people; but India now is like a great estate owned by an absentee and alien landlord. A most expensive military and civil establishment is kept up, managed and officered by Englishmen who regard India as but a place of temporary exile; and an enormous sum, estimated as at least £20,000,000 annually (raised from a population where labourers are in many places glad in good times to work for 1½d. to 4d. a day), is drained away to England in the shape of remittances, pensions, home charges of the government, etc.—a tribute for which there is no return. The immense sums lavished on railroads, have, as shown by the returns, been economically unproductive, the great irrigation works are, for the most part, costly failures.

HEREDITARY TAX GATHERERS.

"In large parts of India the English, in their desire to create a class of landed proprietors, turned over the soil, in absolute possession, to hereditary tax gatherers, who rack-rent the cultivators most mercilessly. In other parts, where the rent is still taken by the State in the shape of a land tax, assessments are so high, and taxes are collected so relentlessly, as to drive the ryots, who get but the most scanty living in good seasons, into the claws of money lenders, who are, if possible, even more rapacious than the zemindars. Upon salt, an article of prime necessity everywhere, and of especial necessity, where food is almost exclusively vegetable, a tax of nearly 1,200 per cent. is imposed, so that its various industrial uses are prohibited, and large bodies of the people cannot get enough to keep either themselves or their cattle in health. Below the English officials are a horde of native employes who oppress and extort. The effect of English law, with its rigid rules, and, to the native, mysterious proceedings, has been but to put a potent instrument of plunder into the hands of the native money lenders, from whom the peasants are compelled to borrow on the most extravagant terms to meet their taxes, and to whom they are easily induced to give obligations of which they know not the meaning. 'We do not care for the people of India,' writes Florence Nightingale, with what seems like a sob. 'The saddest sight to be seen in the east—nay, probably in the world—is the peasant of our eastern empire.'

CAUSE OF FAMINES.

"And she goes on to show the causes of the terrible famines, in taxation, which takes from the cultivators the very means of cultivation, and the actual slavery to which the ryots are reduced as 'the consequences of our own laws,' producing 'in the most fertile country in the world a grinding, chronic semi-starvation in many places where what is called famine does not exist.

"Says H. M. Hyndman:—'The famines which have been devastating India are, in the main, financial famines. Men and women cannot get food because they cannot save the money to buy it. Yet we are driven, so we say, to tax these people more.' And he shows how, even from famine stricken districts, food is exported in payment of taxes; and how the whole of India is subjected to a steady and exhausting drain, which, combined with the enormous expenses of government, is making the population year by year poorer. The exports of India consist almost exclusively of agricultural products. For at least one-third of these, as Mr. Hyndman shows, no return whatever is received; they represent tribute

remittances made by Englishmen in India, or expenses of the English branch of the Indian Government. And for the rest the return is, for the most part, for Government stores, or articles of comfort and luxury used by the English masters of India. The very efforts made by the Government to alleviate famines do, by the increased taxation imposed, but intensify and extend their real cause.

SIX MILLIONS STARVED.

"Although in the recent famine in Southern India six millions of people, it is estimated, perished of actual starvation, and the great mass of those who survived were actually stripped, yet the taxes were not remitted, and the salt tax, already prohibitory to the great bulk of these poverty-stricken people, was increased forty per cent., just as after the terrible Bengal famine in 1770, the revenue was actually driven up, by raising assessments upon the survivors, and rigorously enforcing collection.

"In India now, as in India in past times, it is only the most superficial view that can attribute want and starvation to pressure of population upon the ability of the land to produce subsistence. Could the cultivators retain their little capital—could they be released from the drain which, even in non-famine years, reduces great masses of them to a scale of living not merely below what is deemed necessary for the Sepoys, but what English humanity gives to the prisoners in the jails—reviving industry, assuming more productive forms would undoubtedly suffice to keep a much greater population. There are still in India great areas uncultivated, vast mineral resources untouched, and it is certain that the population of India does not reach, as within historical times it never has reached, the real limit of the soil to furnish subsistence, or even the point where this power begins to decline with the increasing drafts made upon it. The real cause of want in India has been, and yet is, the rapacity of man, not the niggardliness of nature."

The Lord of Cumnock.

A native of Cumnock writes:—

The refusal of Lord Bute to renew or extend their present building leases, has in a great measure put a stop to all building operations in the town. Whenever a lease expires the property has been taken over by his lordship without any compensation. True, it may be in terms of the lease, still his lordship has it in his power to do otherwise. Recently, I understand, a property held by John Baird's trustees, with a rental of £30 per annum, which went for the upkeep of reading and recreation rooms, founded by the settlement of Mr. Baird, and which has been a public benefit, has been refused renewal, and is now to be taken over by his lordship. In a few years some of the best shop premises in the town will also expire, and if no change in the law takes place, will be taken over.

Fleeing the Ratepayers.

An Arbroath correspondent writes:—

If the ratepayers of Arbroath remain unenlightened regarding the evils of the present mode of taxation, it is not for want of examples.

The latest example is in connection with their water supply. The Police Commissioners propose to construct an adit 60 feet or so under the surface, which must pass for about 200 yards through the property of the Rosebrae Trustees, at that depth. For the privilege of way-leave the trustees demand an annual payment of £25 in perpetuity, with option to abandon the scheme within six months on payment of £100. This adit will cost about a £1,000, per 100 yards, and is regarded by the most sanguine as being of a temporary nature only; will serve for a few years at the most. The addition to the cost, of £750—the annual payment—at thirty years' purchase, has, naturally, staggered the Commissioners, and the convener's remark that, considering the prices the trustees were getting for fees, they should not be so hard on the community, was weak and inconsequential. He thought the trustees would act on the motto that "giff gair mak' guid freends," on this occasion. Vain wish. Landholders recognise no other principle than "I fleece, will fleece, and ever shall fleece." They exist for no other purpose; but if they do yield a little, it is because they see a better opportunity, at some future time, of fleecing the poor ratepayer the harder.

Old saw—"The man who gets enjoyment by making others happy need never be miserable." You can invest in any quantity of this kind of enjoyment by sending on new subscribers to the *Single Tax*. Try it. If you send on one subscriber you will feel better right away. If you send on six you will be quite happy; and if you send on a dozen you will positively enter into the realms of blessedness.

Landlordism in China.

BY REV. C. E. GARST, TOKYO, JAPAN.

The following is an interview with Dr. W. E. Macklin, Nankin, China, on the Land Question in that empire:—

"Is there any landlordism in China?"

"Half the land, according to the Royal Asiatic Society's report, is held by landlords, and the remainder is held by actual users and graveyards."

"What is the effect of this on the condition of the people?"

"It makes a class of renters, and reduces the people to poverty. There is an abundance of good land held out of use—idle—and at the same time there are millions of men out of employment."

"How is city land taxed?"

"It is not taxed at all, and agricultural lands only taxed when cultivated."

"How are city revenues obtained?"

"Licenses, squeezes, court fees, and a large part is obtained as land transfer fees."

"Have the Chinese an internal revenue system?"

"There is a tax on opium and salt. Tax barriers are very numerous all over the country, where a tax is levied on goods in transit from one part of the country to another. It is a sort of internal 'protection' system."

"What is their tariff system?"

"There is a five per cent. duty on imports."

"Is much of the land in use for graves, temples, shrines, etc.?"

"Yes, and besides this, there is a great deal of vacant land."

"About how many tenants are there to 100 acres of land?"

"From twenty to fifty."

"What rent does the landlord exact?"

"From one-third to one-half the crop."

"Does the landlordism of China interfere with the Christian propaganda?"

"It does, by pauperizing the people: tramps and paupers are hard to Christianise, and landlords and plutocrats are hard to reach with 'the gospel to the poor.'"

"Has landlordism always prevailed in China?"

"No: up till two or three hundred years before Christ, every man drank from his own well, ploughed his own field, and ate his own harvest."

"How do the Chinese regard that age?"

"As the golden age of their history; the Confucian classics are built on the customs and righteousness of that age. The Chinese historians say that poverty, crime, and suffering commenced when that custom was changed."

"How much land do some of the great landlords own?"

"Thousands of acres; the officials generally put their plunderings into land and into pawnbroker shops, to hoard their fortunes. Pawn shops get twenty and thirty per cent."

"Is Li Hung Chang a landlord?"

"Yes; all the officials own immense quantities of land."

"Are there many Single Taxers among the missionaries?"

"There are a number who believe in it, but the ardent workers are very few."

"What has been done to enlighten the Chinese?"

"A few articles by Mr. E. T. Williams, of Shanghai, and myself, in Chinese magazines. Mr. Williams has been requested by the Reform Society (composed of prominent Chinese scholars, to write a work on political economy. He will base his work on Henry George's theory of land value tax."

Note.—Dr. W. E. Macklin, Nankin, China (via L. P. Shanghai), is a zealous Single Taxer. He has been in China ten years, is a first-class Chinese scholar, and seems destined to do a great work in a holy cause, in China. Mr. E. T. Williams, Shanghai, China, has made a rare record as a missionary and as a scholar in the Chinese, being among the best in the empire. He has special opportunities to help on a great cause, and everything indicates that he will do it with great power.

"Are you in favour of Taxing Land Values?"