

balked. At the last moment he "ratted" on Home Rule, and was for some time a prominent "Liberal Unionist." But that section of the Liberals came to nothing, and Mr. Chamberlain and the rest went over to the Tories. There he found Mr. Balfour preferred to himself when Lord Salisbury's successor came to be chosen.

Defeated

To gain popularity Mr. Chamberlain became a Jingo, waged the South African War, and the Tory party went back with a big majority. But the war dragged on, the people were seized with a revulsion of feeling in regard to its glory and its righteousness, and so Mr. Chamberlain's reputation suffered. He started a new hare. A life-long opponent of Protection he now urged its adoption from a score of platforms. He appealed to Imperial pride, but all his oratory and exposition were useless against the stern facts and figures of the economists, and the Tory party in 1906 were swamped.

The fact that two and two make four would have daunted most men in his position, but Mr. Chamberlain persevered. He had confidence in himself. The Free Traders were driven out of the Tory party. To the argument that two and two make four Mr. Chamberlain replied—"Well, that means we must perfect the party organisation. It means it will be harder to win a majority, but not impossible." Could he but obtain a majority it would have mattered nothing to him what the multiplication table said. He felt himself superior to such trivialities.

And so he blundered on until struck down by paralysis. Still he continued to direct the campaign as far as possible. But two General Elections went against his cause, and the Protectionists lost heart completely. To-day they are in despair. They cannot maintain the same policy for a couple of months in succession.

To gain votes they decided to have no taxes on food. Then the farmers rose in revolt and said they would not support taxes on implements or anything else if farm produce was to be left out of the scheme. Not knowing what to do, the Tory press for the most part announced they would publish no letters on the subject, and would report none of the meetings held by the indignant farmers. The SPECTATOR and other papers have declared that "Tariff Reform" is dropped from the party programme; and this is followed by a threat from the Protectionists to revive the "Confederates"—the "black gang" that intimidated every Tory Free Trader candidate or Member of Parliament.

Thus Mr. Chamberlain's political career has ended with nothing accomplished. All his life he made the mistake of depending altogether on his own strength. He refused to recognise that social welfare is bound up in the observance of natural laws, and so he paid the penalty. Defeat met him at every turn, and where he has failed it is hopeless for others to expect to succeed.

MR. JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN AND THE LAND QUESTION

Mr. Joseph Chamberlain's retirement from the Parliamentary representation of West Birmingham recalls many stirring incidents in an active political career. The most recent, and best remembered, is his "raging and tearing propaganda" in favour of protection—miscalled "tariff reform"—into which he launched himself with all his great energy after the close of the South African War. But he could not proceed far with his campaign before he was reminded of his earlier speeches on the "fiscal" question when he was considered one of the most advanced Radicals of his time. The contrast between the one Mr. Chamberlain and the other is one of the most amazing phenomena in the

history of British politics. He was the revivalist of the "Fair Trade" movement of the 'eighties, which he himself helped to smash with arguments to which for force and conviction one can find few parallels in political records. He tore to shreds the protectionist sophistry, and he d it up to scorn and ridicule as a game of landlord bluff. And he lived to present the fraud once more to the people, but without success, despite the attempt to disguise it under the cloak of counterfeit Imperialism and plausible patriotism.

As a Radical, Mr. Chamberlain saw and stated how an increase of prices could have but one result, to increase rents—robbery of the working classes for the benefit of the landlords. He told his Tory opponents at Birmingham on January 20th, 1885, that "a tax on the food of the people . . . would undoubtedly raise their rents." At Ipswich on January 14th, 1885, he said:—

"The farmers will be very foolish indeed if they follow after this will o' the wisp. If they study history at all they will find that the condition of the farmer was never so hopeless, and that the state of the labourer was never so abject as when the corn was kept up at high value by a prohibitive or protective duty, when it was 64s. or even rose to 120s. a quarter. The food of the people was taxed to raise the rent of the landlord. None of the plunder found its way into the farmers' pockets, and I will tell them that unless they can secure permanence of occupation no artificial alteration in the price of wheat will help them one atom."

And at Birmingham on March 30th, 1885, he said:—

"If these new customs duties (*on food and clothing*) are to be levied, no doubt a revenue will be derived from them. What is to be done with that revenue? Lord Salisbury coolly proposes to hand it over indirectly, if not directly, to the landlords of the country in the shape of a contribution in aid of local taxes. I must say that I never recollect any public man propose, in a franker—I might even say in a more audacious—manner to rob Peter in order to pay Paul. And what makes it worse in this case is that Peter is represented by the landless millions, who have no other wealth than their labour and their toil, while Paul is a great landlord, with 20,000 acres, who is seeking to relieve himself of his share of taxation by shifting it on to the shoulders of his less fortunate fellow-countrymen."

In many of the speeches of his early career, Mr. Chamberlain pointed with convincing argument to the land question as the key to the solution of the poverty question. At Birmingham in 1876 he said:—

"There is a trade at present in our midst which would return to the wealth of England £250,000,000 per annum, which would give employment to 1 know not how many families of the working classes. And that trade we might win not by conciliating barbarous potentates with slavery circulars, not by exporting civilisation in chests of opium, or by forcing upon ignorant people at the bayonet's point, but by freeing the land of England from the trammels of a bygone age."

And in the same town on January 5th, 1885, he said:—

"If you will go back to the early history of our social system you will find that when our social arrangements first began to shape themselves, every man was born into the world with a natural right, with the right to share in the great inheritance of the community, with a right to a part of the land of his birth. But all these rights have passed away. The common rights of ownership have disappeared. Some of them have been sold; some of them have been given away by people who had no right to dispose of them; some of them have been lost through apathy and ignorance; some of them have been destroyed by fraud; and some have been acquired by violence."

He endorsed these sentiments a few days afterwards (January 14th, 1885) at Ipswich in the following words:—

"Land used to be held in common. Every man who was born into the community had his apportioned share

in the great natural inheritance of the race, and if he was willing to work his livelihood was assured. Now all that has changed. The birthright of the English people has been bartered away for a mess of pottage, and it has become the possession of private owners of property. I asked the other day, what ransom will property pay for the natural rights which have ceased to be recognised?"

His later advocacy of a policy, the effect of which would be to "raise rents," is all the more remarkable in the light of his earlier denunciations of landlordism. At Hull in August, 1885, he boldly proclaimed that:—

"The rights of property have been so much extended that the rights of the community have almost altogether disappeared, and it is hardly too much to say that the prosperity and the comfort and the liberties of a great proportion of the population have been laid at the feet of a small number of proprietors who 'neither toil nor spin.' The soil of every country originally belonged to its inhabitants, and if it has been thought expedient to create private ownership in place of the common rights, at least that private ownership must be considered as a trust, and subject to the conditions of a trust. Land must be owned so as to give the greatest employment to the largest number of persons, and so as to secure the greatest possible return in the produce of the soil. The land was not created—and it must not be used as a mere machine for exacting the highest possible rents from the cultivators of the soil—for the benefit of those who own it. . . . In any case I say that the land was not made for rent alone, and that the test of any system is how many families live in happiness and comfort on the soil, and not the amount of money which finds its way into the pockets of the landlords."

At Inverness on September 18th, 1885, he declared that:—

" . . . The time has arrived when it behoves us to say whether we cannot prevent the abuse of property, and whether we cannot define strictly the limits of its rights. I have said before, and I say now, that I am averse to all confiscation. . . . But when I speak of confiscation I do wish that the landlords would exercise a little reciprocity. When an exorbitant rent is demanded which takes from a tenant the savings of his life and drives him out at the end of his lease stripped of all his earnings, when a man is taxed for his own improvements, that is confiscation, and it is none the less reprehensible because it is sanctioned by the law."

That he favoured the taxation of land values as an effective means of attacking land monopoly is clear from these early speeches on the land question. For instance, at Ipswich in January, 1885, he stated it was a "very important matter"—"the anomaly under which the owners of land have escaped their fair share of taxation when the land passes on death by inheritance," and "the curious arrangement under which unoccupied land which is being held for speculation and investment, which is held for the unearned increment, escapes all contribution whatever for local taxation."

And at Warrington on September 8th, 1885, referring to the question of a "revision of taxation," he advocated:—

"The taxation of unoccupied land, of sporting land, of ground rent and of mineral royalties . . . much less for the amount they would bring into the exchequer than because I think they would discourage certain arrangements which have been productive of much inconvenience and suffering to the community."

Whether or not Mr. Chamberlain changed his views with regard to the taxation of land values as he changed his views on the tariff question is not certain; but in any case, at the Guildhall, London, in March, 1903, he gave, in the following words, an illustration which shows the justice of this system of taxation:—

"There has been one unexpected and important result of the war to which I should like to call your attention for a moment. Almost everywhere throughout the two

new Colonies the value of land has increased from 50 to 300 per cent. since the conclusion of the terms of peace. I naturally did not fail to inquire of my Boer friends as to their opinion of the cause of this great advance. They did not always agree, but I am disposed myself to think that it is to be found in what was frankly admitted to me by one of those who fought against us to the end with signal distinction, who said: 'There is no doubt that it is due to the expectation of greater prosperity under a stable and progressive Government.'

S. J. P.

WHO IS TO PAY A LAND VALUE TAX?

(Arthur H. Weller in the MANCHESTER GUARDIAN, January 21st.)

In a leader on Saturday you asked who is to pay a tax upon land values, the landlord or the tenant? An answer to this important question was given by the Land Values Group in Parliament in the Memorandum submitted by them to the Chancellor of the Exchequer a few months ago, in which were outlined practical proposals for carrying out the reforms advocated by the Group in the Land and Taxation Reform Memorial of May, 1911. In the memorandum are the following proposals (amongst others) as to land valuation, taxation, and rating:—

Taxation.—Such services as education, poor relief, main roads, and asylums, though now locally financed, are national in character, and contributions should be made towards their cost out of national funds. It is, therefore, proposed that there should be a uniform national tax levied on the new valuation. In imposing this national tax Parliament should provide that each person interested in the land value of each hereditament should pay in proportion to his interest. But since the tax will be on capital value, a scheme of collecting from the occupier with an automatic system of deduction from the rent paid to superior interests would be impracticable, and it is desirable that each person's contribution should be collected directly from him.

Rating.—The new valuation to be used as the basis for the imposition of a local rate on the value of the land, whether used or unused. The basis of the new rate on the value of the land being the enjoyment or control of the land alone, instead of the land together with all buildings and other improvements, the payment should be made by the man who owns the land value, or where there are several persons interested in the land value each should pay in proportion to his interest, notwithstanding any existing contracts which have been made on the footing of the old law, which will no longer be applicable.

While the ultimate transference of all rates from the composite value of land and improvements to the value of the land alone is the object aimed at, it will be advisable to adopt some gradual method of transition. In every rating area any excess over the amount raised by rate in each last financial year should in future be met by a rate on the capital land-value of all the land in such area; subject to that provision, the amount to be raised by rate should be met, firstly, by the levy of a penny rate on capital value, and, secondly, the remainder, at the option of the rating authority, either wholly by a rate on rateable value as at present assessed, or partly by such a rate and partly by a further rate on capital land-value. The rating authority to have power to transfer further portions of its levy from the old to the new basis from time to time. This change should be made annually or quinquennially, provided that no rate shall be levied on any basis other than land-value after twenty years from the date of commencement of the new levy on land values.

In this practical scheme of taxing and rating land values I think the possible hardships to a few people that are involved in any radical reform are reduced to a minimum, and its existence disposes of the alleged inability of land values taxers to agree upon a workable scheme.