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LAND LESSONS

FOR

TOWN FOLK.

BY

WILLIAM JAMESON.

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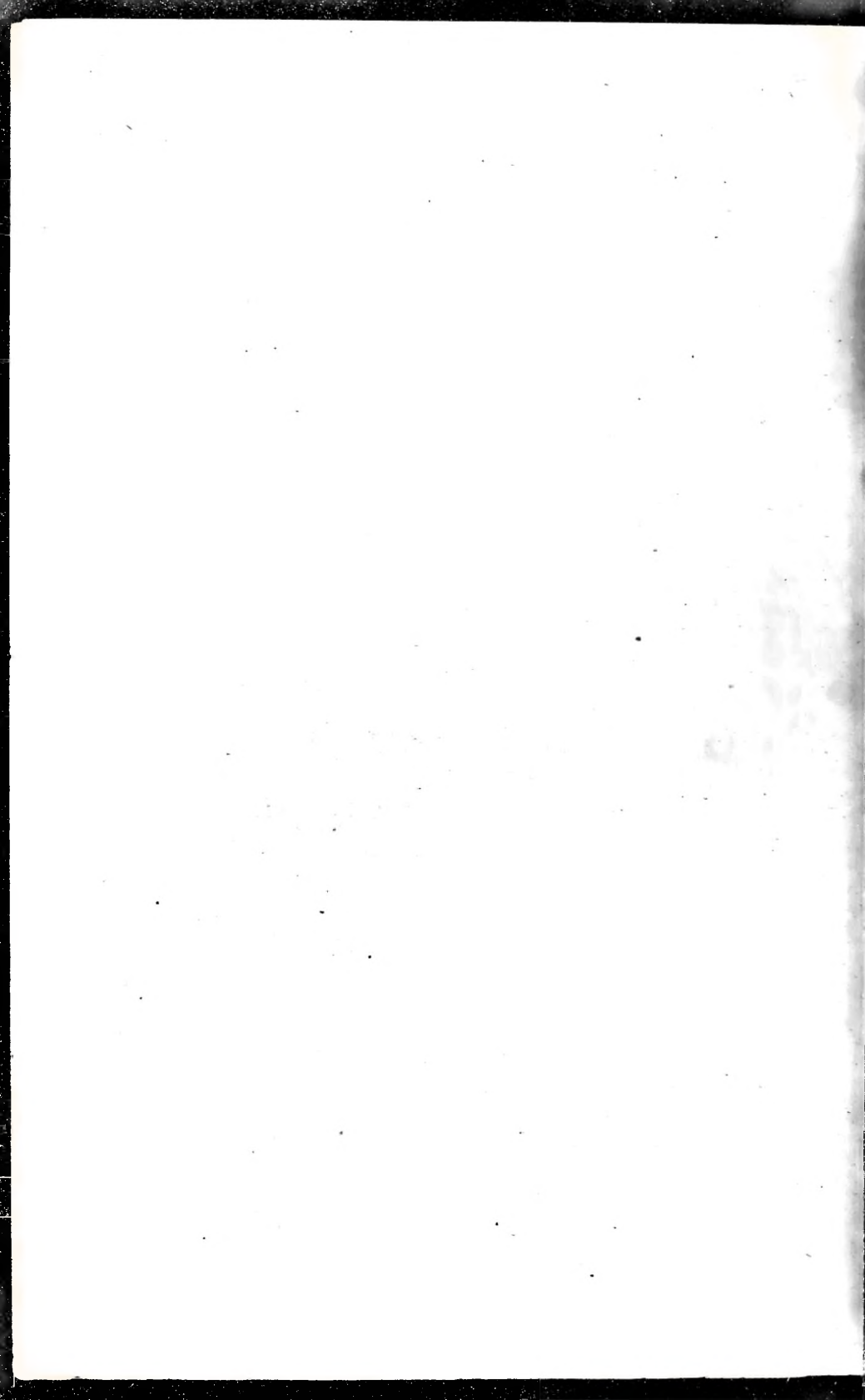
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"PIONEER" PAMPHLETS.—No. 1.

- (1) "Why Should London
Grow?"
- (2) "Guardian Angels."
- (3) "Cockneyfied Socialism."



WHY SHOULD LONDON GROW ?

I HOLD strongly to the view that a solution of the rural Labour problem will help materially to solve the Labour problem in towns.

Indeed, I look upon each step taken towards the industrial reorganisation of the village as a step towards easing the condition of the over-crowded workshop. But a line must be drawn at London, which is far and away the biggest workshop in the world. It is so vast, in fact, and its people are so closely wedged together, that attractive forces exercised by a reorganised rural industry upon the workers in an ordinary town would not be strong enough in themselves to pull many people out of London. Or, to state the case in another fashion, getting away from the industries of an average town into country industries may be compared to crossing a river—if a man cannot swim, he can easily be ferried across by people from the country side of it who know him. On the other hand, getting out of London is like crossing the ocean; crossing to reach an unknown shore! Therefore, an exodus of Londoners, in sufficient numbers to tell, effectually and lastingly, upon the condition of those who remain behind, must necessarily be organised from within the Metropolis.

But, stop. I see I am almost taking it for granted that London workers are likely to desire a change of situation. Unhappily, such is far from being the case at present. Our leaders here are very hot upon the question of taxing ground rents, and appropriating unearned increment. This is their *minimum* demand. Their *maximum* is, to socialise our Cockney institutions all round! Compared with men of equal thought and earnestness outside the huge city, the "advanced" people in London are careless to indifference about their birthright in the soil of the country. They seem to think that it is only necessary somehow or other to give the Capitalist "the dirty kick-out" to make London an industrial paradise—the envy of the civilised world!

Now, I entirely challenge this view of the case. And in asking the question "Why should London grow?" I am merely expressing, in a roundabout way, my most earnest belief that, not only should London cease growing, but that, in order to become an industrial paradise—or a paradise of any kind, its population, within its present area, ought to be diminished by just a million or two. As I want to justify this belief of mine to practical men, I shall, without apology, give a few dry facts and statistics straight away.

SIZE AND POPULATION.

Greater London, which is the area controlled by the Metropolitan Police, comprises 441,587 acres, or about 690 square miles. Within its limits dwell a population of six million souls, which is pretty nearly a sixth part of the entire population of the United Kingdom. But I do not intend to say much about this Greater London, for it is not a unity, such as is the area governed by the London County Council. In a sense, there are countrified spots here and there within its boundaries. Bricks and mortar do not in all directions extend from centre (say, the General Post Office) to circumference. Still, eastward, bricks and mortar do thus

practically extend; for at Stratford Greater London swells out into the municipality of West Ham—tenth in size of the big towns in the United Kingdom, and continues in at least one direction with an almost unbroken line of buildings as far as Ilford. Here, I am personally thankful to say—for I live in the place—you get to the country at last. And between this and the westward limit of our bricks and mortar line, which is somewhere about Putney, lies a space of at least twenty-two miles! South and north Greater London stretches itself to almost the same degree.

But Lesser London is what I want to talk about now. This is very much smaller in area than the former (74,672 acres; roughly, 120 square miles). Within this region, however, exist—it were a mockery to say live—three-fourths of the entire number of those who have to yield to the sway of the Metropolitan Police. Packed within these limits are the *four and a half millions** whose health is, or ought to be, the first consideration of the London County Council. And here I would remark that although, as a Londoner born (thank heavens, I have no London blood in me!) I am duly grateful to the above body for that thousand acres of green space which they have given to us all during their rule; this addition only brings the *total area* of our parks and play lands up to 3,656 acres—about a mile and a quarter of the article per million of population. Such are the boasted “lungs of London”!

Now let us, for a moment, compare London’s enormous population with others. To begin with, the population of all Lancashire is *less* by about a quarter of a million, and Lancashire can claim a population nearly equal to that of all Scotland! Ireland’s population, which has been steadily diminishing for years past, just about matches London’s at this present period; while the population of entire Wales is *less* by nearly three-fifths. “Neglected” Cockneys are entitled to note these facts, in view of current complaints about “neglected nationalities.” For, as I shall endeavour to show presently, Cockneys are a sort of nation, a peculiar people, with the brand of death marked upon their foreheads.

Finally, the total population of the next ten largest towns in the United Kingdom is less than that of Lesser London. And if we add together the population of every single town in the three kingdoms containing 100,000 inhabitants or more, this total is only from a half to three-quarters of a million bigger than that of the district embraced by the wide-spreading arms of the Metropolitan Police.

Now, are these facts to exult over? Proud patriots generally have not hitherto bothered their heads about them, although the question of London is, as I shall endeavour to point out, supremely a question of maintaining the Empire. Proud County Councillors—Progressive or otherwise—do I fancy, in their secret hearts rejoice to have a share in the management of such an enormous concern; “Nothing like it for size, in the wide world, you know!” Am I wronging them to say that their municipal ideal at this point reminds me of an old sketch in *Punch*? A self-made man wants an eminent artist to paint a picture for him. The artist is to fix his own price, but the price is to be reckoned by the square feet of canvas covered. On these conditions he can paint a picture as big as he likes—in fact, a quantity of picture suited to the importance of his customer. Ah! who of those who sit in council at Spring Gardens prefer quality to quantity? A smaller but artistic London (I am not now speaking of area but of population) in place of the present enormous daub? “No,” I fancy they will one and all say; “keep it big, only do let us try to make it better.” Better! Another park or two? A few more lunatic asylums?

* In making estimates, I have naturally taken into account normal increases in population since the census of 1891.

CONDITIONS.

We will now study some of the conditions of metropolitan life, just to see what sort of "bettering" is possible.

It is a well-accepted fact that twelve hundred and fifty thousand of London's industrial population earn less than 21 shillings per week. And, what a hideous mockery this pittance really is may be seen in the light of a statement made some years ago by a School Board inspector, Mr. Marchant Williams, viz., that 88 per cent. of London poor pay more than *one-fifth* of their income in rent! And for what sort of shelter do they pay this proportion? Alderman Fleming Williams has told us—and he, if I mistake not, has been Chairman of the Council's Housing Committee—that 828,941 people live in London in a state of overcrowding. Light is thrown on this statement by another which I have among my notes; that 386,973 Londoners live in single-room tenements. Yes, the head of a family, so situated, pays four shillings, or more, out of every twenty he earns, for the right to live in what can be little better than a piggery.

I pass on to think of his children. It seems to me not an unfair estimate to suppose that out of the eight hundred and odd thousand who live under overcrowded conditions, at least *five* hundred thousand are children. That is to say, two-thirds of the children in London Board schools go home to live as here described. Now, no less an authority than Mr. John Morley told us some years ago that 40,000 children went to Board schools in a condition of starvation, and Mr. Sidney Webb has put the same fact in a different way when he speaks of thirty thousand children going to school breakfastless. Evidently, then, only a minority, a considerable minority, of the poor darlings who sleep in overcrowded rooms, suffer the inconvenience of chronic hunger as well. This is something to be thankful for! Still, starving or not starving, here we have in our midst a population of children equal to the entire population of Birmingham, who are sheltered in a fashion which every person possessed of sound moral instincts most utterly condemn. We talk about

The fresh heart of a simple child.

What sort of freshness, what sort of simplicity can exist amid circumstances such as these?

To conclude this list of the horrors of London life, I may casually mention that there were in 1894 sixty-six thousand indoor paupers—more than the total number for the rest of England and of Wales. Also, that according to a recent census made by the County Council, we have 22,000 "dossers" in our midst—persons who have no registered address, and are too proud to find a night's lodging in the workhouse so long as they have fourpence or a little more in their pockets.

Then London has 8,000 epileptics among its people. How many inhabitants are contained by the *five* lunatic asylums governed by our Council I am unable to say. But evidently there is some slight overcrowding even here, for the Council is busy now in providing London with another lunatic asylum, although the vast establishment at Claybury was opened only three or four years ago.

Nor can I say definitely what is the *cost* of London's lunacy, since both the Council and Boards of Guardians contribute to the amount. However, it will be useful at this point to put in the fact that our London poor-rate is a trifle of five millions sterling annually. Such are a few of the conditions under which Londoners *live*. The manner of their death I leave to the imagination of my readers, after giving just one item of documentary evidence. The Registrar-General for London reported in 1888 that twenty-two and a half per cent. of the total deaths in London took place in workhouses, hospitals, &c. Is it

unreasonable to assume that now—eight years later, with such evidence as I have given, of increasing misery and destitution—is it unreasonable to assume that *one out of every four* of those who die in London die thus?

CONSEQUENCES.

Before studying the consequences of the present state of social life in London I have just one more statistical fact to set forth. Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace, in his presidential address to the members of the Land Nationalisation Society in 1885, stated, as the result of carefully examining the census returns for 1871-81, that there was a "total of nearly *two millions of people* who, in ten years only, had been forced by the struggle for existence to leave the country for the towns." For the purposes of this article I have studied the census returns for 1881-91, and have come to the conclusion that, at the very lowest, *twelve hundred thousand people* have been similarly forced into the towns during this later period. A superficial glance at the returns might suggest that as many migrated during the later decade as during the earlier one, for the general conditions were unchanged. But I have taken into account the fact that there was a relatively smaller population to draw upon, and accordingly have made a liberal allowance for this.

Now, how is the question of growth of London affected by statistics such as these? The answer shall be given in the words of Mr. Charles Booth ("Life and Labour in London").

"*London is nourished by the literal consumption of bone and sinew from the country.*" He further states that Essex is the chief recruiting ground for East London.

In these statements of his, the result of most laborious research, we have a clue to the puzzle of London's *growth*, despite the horrible conditions under which multitudes of its inhabitants crawl despairingly to a pauper's grave. Londoners are *dying out fast*; but "bone and sinew from the country" accumulate in the Metropolis faster still. It is the countrymen who do all the "show business" in metropolitan life. It is the stalwart countrymen who, on every side, are driving the "natives" harder and harder against the wall, in the fierce industrial struggle by which Capital alone thrives and waxeth fat.

Now, I am not "guessing at truth" when I say that Londoners are dying out fast. There is sound medical authority for the assertion. Mr. James Cantlie, F.R.C.S., stated publicly some years ago that:—

"It is absolutely impossible to find a fourth generation of pure Londoners, the progeny ceasing, partly from want, partly from physical decline and inability of continuance."

How, I ask, is the County Council of London prepared to deal with a statement of this sort? After all, Dr. Cantlie's assertion is but the natural climax to those sad statistics which have been quoted so abundantly earlier in this article. How, then, is the *new* Council going to face the situation? Two years ago one could have respectfully warned our municipal rulers, as patriotic men, against making London *more* attractive, since thereby they were but preparing a grave for the nation. At this moment such a warning appears to me to be needless, for the situation has changed. I am hopeful that Parish Councils will keep the countrymen at home; that, so far as country bone and sinew is concerned, London will "cease to draw." But on this assumption it is self-evident that the Londoners of the future will, to use Bismarck's famous phrase about besieged Paris, "have to stew in their own juice!" If this is the fate before us it doesn't really much matter, so far as I can see, whether we have "Progressive" cooks or are only "Moderately" done. Anyhow, on the face of it, the "Cockney" appears to be doomed to extinction like the mammoth and the cave bear! Unless—

Unless the London County Council is resolutely prepared to study the problem "How to grow Londoners."

This growing of Londoners cannot, I most strongly contend, be accomplished by simply carrying out the policy of the last Council to its logical issues. Wonders were done, I freely and gratefully acknowledge, by Sir John Hutton and his colleagues. They socialised the government of the Metropolis with almost bewildering speed. I trust that the pace may be maintained. Yet in the direction in which the most progressive of the Progressives is moving I see nothing that will help us to grow Londoners.

"Not in improved sanitation? Healthier dwellings?" No. There are plenty of villages in England which in these features are worse off than London. Still, somehow or other, the village type of humanity has persisted. Their environment evidently fails to kill them off in three generations. "Not by aiming at a 'subsistence wage' for all sorts and conditions of Londoners?" No. The villagers have been without it ever since the reign of Queen Elizabeth, yet—to be somewhat Irish—they have contrived to subsist.

The cause of the decay of Londoners is not to be found in this or that particular condition, but in their *total environment*. I cannot better express my contention than by quoting the words of a far-seeing man, written nearly fifty years ago. I pray that the new Council will enter them (for instruction) on the minutes of their meeting one of these days:—

"Is it to be credited that this crowding together of men in houses dove-tailed into each other, with everything of Nature—winds, flowers, verdure, the healthy smell of earth—shut out and replaced by a thousand miasms—is it, I say, to be credited that this is the normal condition of beings born with natural cravings for activity and pure air, with an intelligent eye for Nature's manifold picturesquenesses, with bodies requiring to be exercised, no less than heads? The very necessity for drains tells against us. All manure was meant directly to nourish the land it accumulates on—not to pollute our streams and rivers. Cities as they now are, and must probably always be, are abscesses of nature. The soil and terrestrial space are not meant for the rearing of food only, but to be dwelt and moved about on, to be daily enjoyed in all the variety of wholesome sights, sounds, and odours they afford us."

Now, it must not be forgotten that the primary duties of the London County Council are those of a Board of Health. If vitality—continued vitality—be *impossible* for the Londoner born, situated as he is, then the Council ought, as a matter of duty, to vitalise him *elsewhere*. This is a question going far beyond that of providing for the needs of the poor in our midst. It affects every single citizen who cannot, of his own free will, place himself outside of London to become thoroughly and permanently vitalised. In a word, the rulers of London ought, as a matter of duty to their constituents, to establish a claim for the use and enjoyment of the green fields of England. And the Council ought to repress any ambition it may have in the direction of governing the "biggest population in the world," and be content with having two or two and a half millions of Londoners "*in residence*," so to speak, at any one period, upon the existing area. Then, for the health's sake of those Londoners "in town," all Whitechapel, for example, might be turned into cheerful wilderness.

This, I admit, is a somewhat "large order." I contend, however, that it is eminently practicable. I don't suppose it could be executed in a day; but with the splendid organising faculty some of our councillors are showing, it ought to be accomplished within the next ten years. But how? Simply by establishing *London Colonies* in every English county. These, in order to prevent competition with rural industries as they at present

exist, would of necessity be self-contained. They would need to be "insulated," as it were, for industrial purposes. In plain language, they would have to be *socialised* institutions, remaining permanently attached to the "Mother City." The size of such rural colonies is a mere detail. So is the length of years during which Londoners should have a title to remain in them. The power to obtain land for their establishment is the only matter, I fancy, that the County Council need trouble Parliament about. At present, rural land can be obtained for sewage farms and lunatic asylums—purposes of health, in short. For this infinitely more important object of "growing Londoners," surely the Metropolis should have a right of entry upon the national estate?

In conclusion, I don't wish to go beyond my brief, by discussing the rights of the community generally in connection with this "estate." I am, however, as I said at the beginning, London born, and therefore feel that I have a right to speak for my fellow-Cockneys. They are, even if they don't last four generations, a sharp lot. I trust that they are sharp enough to see that along the lines I have indicated they can not only save themselves, but *save the nation*. For what will rural magnates be able to do to resist the Parish Councils Act and its necessary developments, when there is an independent Cockney colony looking on and "taking notes"? Why, the very *example* of a colony (organised by Mr. Sidney Webb, for example,) will be enough to "bust up the whole show" of landlordism in its immediate neighbourhood!

GUARDIAN ANGELS.

"DIRT," remarks a practical philosopher, "is merely matter in the wrong place." Our standing army of paupers represents in the main so much industrial dirt, which may be described as aforesaid. But, regarded as human beings, those who compose this standing army ought to be treated—so the public conscience is beginning to realise—with more kindness and consideration than has hitherto been customary. And the improved method of electing Guardians which is declared in the Local Government Act of 1894, certainly makes it *possible* to recognise the human claims of that waste product of our civilisation, the pauper.

Yet, while there is thus opportunity for the stern Guardian of popular imagination to become translated into a kind of elementary Guardian Angel, the average Briton, however well disposed, won't stand this sort of thing very long (that is, angelic treatment of the pauper), if it means *addition to the rates*. Therefore, it were well, perhaps, to anticipate the danger of reaction, by endeavouring to arrange for the said angelic treatment on the lowest possible terms.

My object in this article will be to suggest how *a start may be made* in the direction of economical, and, at the same time, humane treatment of the poor by those who now have their guardianship. Indeed, the method which I propose to suggest may very well be urged on the ground of economy alone. Still, provided that those who give effect to it exercise reasonable social wisdom, they can scarcely avoid showing practical kindness to the poverty stricken; while, concurrently, they may save the rates to a very marked degree—thus killing two birds with one stone.

Before going further into this matter, however, let me furnish a few

samples of the present cost of pauperism. In Cornwall, dividing the amount collected under poor rate by the number of paupers, we find the cost per head to be £13 per annum; in Somerset it is £14; in Essex £19; in Lancashire £22; while London pays a heavy penalty for its overgrowth in the shape of a cost per head of £37! This is nearly double as much as any other crowded centre of population, and it is well on to three times as much as the average cost in distinctly rural counties.

It will be seen then by these figures, that the crowded areas, and especially London, have a very serious interest in reducing the cost of pauperism. In fact, it would pay London to create a three per cent. stock and allot £1,000 of this stock to each pauper, supposing it could thereby permanently get rid of him. On the other hand, it certainly is against the interest of the rural areas to receive into their midst any portion of the surplus population of towns who are likely to be chargeable upon the rates. But, if a scheme could be devised by which these particular rates would be simultaneously reduced in town and country alike, surely this were occasion enough for all sorts and conditions of Guardian Angels to shout for joy?

Now, I make this modest demand upon Guardians, especially in London. I claim that in the exercise of their calling they should do what is expected of every business man worth his salt—try to anticipate the market. If they do this much, if they recognise it as essential to the proper discharge of their duties, that they should boldly anticipate the pauper market, then the ideas I respectfully submit to them may possibly be turned to permanent account. Not otherwise; not if the pottering policy of the past be adopted by the new type of Guardian, however greatly it may be characterised by the fresh spirit of kindness. With this proviso, I have no hesitation in saying that Guardians can, out of the powers they are already furnished with by the existing Poor Laws, devise a method that will not simply lessen local charges, but will increase the wealth of the nation.

Now, it is a general direction of these Poor Laws that a person reduced to pauperism should be ultimately chargeable upon the parish of his birth. There are, however, sundry qualifications to this general direction. I took pains to ascertain from a relieving officer what these were before writing this article. He very kindly told me that a person claiming relief in the parish where he resided, must have resided more than a twelvemonth in that parish to have any title whatever. Three years' residence made his claim absolute. Failing this, the custom was to pass him on from parish to parish until he reached the parish in which he was born. It is evident that this practice, so far as it relates to destitute persons who, when earning a living, do not settle for long in any particular spot (and trade statistics will show that there are thousands of workers, usually earning fair wages, who are thus conditioned), it is evident that this is calculated to bear rather severely upon the rates of the birth parish. On the other hand it is very hard on London, for example, that a man attracted to this great labour mart from rural districts should, if able to make a struggle for a livelihood that lasts three short years, become a liability upon metropolitan rate-payers for the rest of his days. There is, consequently, a perpetual conflict of interests between town and country unions.

I suggest that peace can be restored, that "industrial dirt" can become useful "industrial matter" in the following way. And as a concrete illustration will, perhaps, make my meaning clear, I will suppose the case of two warring Unions, Romford and Hackney. Let Hackney, in view of next winter's destitution, invite Romford to hire land whereon to plant able-bodied men, *born within the Romford Union*, who happen

to cast themselves upon the Hackney rates. The metropolitan Union would, it seems to me, be making a good bargain if it paid, by way of consideration for this transfer of industrial dirt, the whole cost of cottage building, and also make a small grant of capital (of course, through the hands of the rural Union) for every able-bodied pauper whom it thus got rid of. On the other hand, Romford would show a profit by "the deal" in two ways. First, it would add to its own stock of ratepayers; *e.g.*, a farm of one hundred acres cut up into twenty small holdings, with an inhabited cottage on each, would be worth more to the rates than before. Secondly, it would be checking at the fountain head, *i.e.*, London, that inevitable stream of pauperism that nowadays flows towards Romford as the "birth parish." Apply this method of exchange to every Union in London, or other crowded centre, and every Union in rural England, and possibly, before long, those Guardian Angels would be the only persons left who had "got no work to do."

Here I can bring in with effect those remarks of mine about anticipating the pauper market. Urban Guardians, once they had established friendly in place of hostile relations with their rural *confrères*, might do well to offer the facilities of this transfer to working men of country origin who were unemployed, but had hitherto kept their heads above the pauper level. Or they might cast an eye over the "out-of-work" list of the various trade unions. All this kind of thing could, I contend, be done on strictly business lines, with this main object in view, of *saving the rates*, by Guardians with a dash of the angel in them.

COCKNEYFIED SOCIALISM.

"THE Socialised Administration of Slum Property" does not strike one as an attractive theme. Nor does "Philosophical Anarchy for Footmen" seem a better one. Yet, a recent experience of mine, when lecturing to some members of the S.D.F. on the very practical subject of "London's Interest in the Land Question," inclines me to think that a vehement discourse on superfluities, such as "Slums" and "Footmen," will please some sort of advanced people a great deal more than a sober statement of facts concerning one of the prime necessities of existence, namely, Mother Earth. For my audience, although they gave me a very hearty reception, did not seem at all to realise that the control of the land was a matter of first importance.

Nationalisation of railways and of the instruments of production, was the chief interest in their view. This strikes me as equivalent to saying that the control of a parish pump is more important than the control of the spring that supplies it. Or, to use an illustration that may appeal more directly to the town dweller, my friends, the Social Democrats who criticised me, were really in the position of those who would ask for London's water pipes to be under municipal control, without first making sure of the water supply itself.

It ought to be obvious to anyone who reflects, that pumps, water pipes, railways, and other instruments of production, are, to a large degree, but the *conveniences* of human life; while water and land are absolute necessities. To attach greater importance to the former than to the latter shows a cockneyfied mind—a mind warped or obscured by unwholesome environment. London is not alone in exhibiting this mental type. All great cities tend to cockneyfy. Hence our Cockney Socialism.

It, has, I grant, enormous energy and vast aspirations. But these qualities show themselves too often in relation to things of a purely ephemeral character—the products of a civilisation that is rooted in injustice, and sustained only by fraud. The injustice shows itself in the denial of an elementary human right—*i.e.*, the personal use of land, to nearly every resident in the British Islands; and the fraud is seen in the consequent spoliation of Labour wherever it is exercised—either in husbandry or manufactures. Remedy that injustice, and the fraud becomes impossible; unless working men are such fools as to voluntarily submit to robbery. On the other hand, I see no hindrance to the fraud in Socialism of the Cockney sort.

“Oh, you are a mere Land Nationaliser,” says the indignant Cockney. “I believe in something more advanced. We ought to nationalise Capital, you know.” Then my friend explains away Capital as being those instruments of production already noted; and so we get back into the old rut!

Well, I'll just put in my confession of social faith at once, so as to avoid misunderstanding. I, too, believe in something more advanced than Land Nationalisation. I believe in Brotherhood; in “Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour.” This involves Socialism of a far more sweeping character than the town-made article, since it necessarily involves the destruction of that Capital which is Labour's enemy. For the “instruments of production” are not, I contend, the “Capital” in question; they are, after all, simply *land moulded into convenient forms by human labour*. [In this definition of land, minerals and wood are, of course, included.] And the forms thus moulded—railways, factories, houses, machinery, tools, &c.—are constantly wearing away: so that fresh human labour is needed to repair or replace them.

What, then, is the Capital that I wish to see destroyed?

It consists merely of a variety of *claims* upon Labour. And the sole reason why these claims can be enforced is that Labour is shut out from the direct use of land. Now, I say without the slightest hesitation, that were land monopoly abolished to-morrow, this claim-capital (which is really the main part of capital of the money market and banking houses) would all disappear within a twelvemonth. The claimants, *i.e.*, capitalists, would not be able to make good their claims upon Labour, for the very plain reason that Labour would no longer be compelled, by the *dread of starvation*, to yield up any part of its earnings.

The capitalist, so far as he is now the superintendent of the labour he controls, would receive an income—the wages of superintendence; but there would be nothing left over in the way of profit or dividend payable to *idleness*—Labour would absorb it all.

Now, personally, I should not like to see land monopoly destroyed at a single stroke. For one reason, that I should not care, on the grounds of brotherhood, to have those capitalists suddenly paid in the coin they have been paying Labour. I want them to be treated with such wise consideration as will induce them to loyally assist in making “Merrie England.” Another reason for preferring that the destruction of land monopoly should be gradual is, that the toilers themselves—the wage-earners—would suffer by the shock of sudden change. We need one and all of us to work out our own salvation, social or otherwise.

But where shall we begin the work? In town or country? I say, most earnestly, *in the country*. For the sake of the sickly wives and children, if for no other reason, I would urge upon those who have but Cockney ideals of Socialism, to turn their thoughts and their energies towards the green fields of England. Socialise the Parish Councils. Break the moulds of the rural mind.

This means that Socialists themselves should set their faces countrywards; should invade the rural districts. I don't for a moment suggest that every man of them should, when he got there, start cabbage growing. But this has to be borne in mind: Once in a given village for a twelve-month, the Socialist has a claim to use at least four acres of land. Ten or a dozen Socialists in that village—if they were selected men of a practical sort, could dominate its municipal life; they could, step by step, socialise it industrially. Thus while the farmer and squire were still looking on and wondering what this invasion of new ideas meant, that farmer and squire would get a sharp lesson in the shape of scarce, and therefore dear, labour; for the villagers would throw in their lot with the Socialists. All the rural workers would become "independent"! Independent, not of each other; in fact, leaning more than ever they did upon each other in a fraternal spirit of give and take; but independent of the employer of labour. Consequently, that particular capitalist, the farmer, would not be able to make good his claims upon Labour. To carry on business at all, he would need to make a claim upon the landlord instead; namely, for a considerable reduction in rent and reliable conditions of tenure. Well, just imagine this kind of thing going on in say *ten per cent.* of the rural parishes of England;—it would mean, unless I have altogether mistaken the action of economic laws, the speedy fall of rural rent in all parts of the country.

Simultaneously, there might be an organised exodus of socialistic workers from the big towns. They need not abandon the trades they were brought up to, unless these trades happened to be injurious or unnecessary to a socialised community. No; they would simply carry their town arts and crafts into the country, and for the future exercise these, not competitively, but in accordance with the ideals of the socialised village. And their exodus from the towns would tell *pro rata* upon the capitalists and ground landlords in towns. Gaps in the labour market, and emptied houses, would materially ease the situation for town Socialists in their work of organising urban industry upon fraternal lines.

To me, as one standing apart somewhat from Socialist activities, among the most hopeful signs of the times, is the "Scout" crusade of Bicyclists. I wish God speed to their efforts. They are likely to become the travelling prophets of the new era. They are getting to like the country themselves; they are waking up the villagers to the truths of Socialism. If they only carry their efforts a step farther, and look about for convenient spots whereon to establish Clarion settlements of the sort I have been indicating, they may thereby furnish object-lessons of permanent value to that unhappy Cockney Socialist of mine. In a word, they may start the work of socialistic evolution as opposed to revolution, and thus peacefully and fraternally lead all England to higher levels of life.

WILLIAM JAMESON.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1894, SEC. 10; ALLOTMENTS

ACT, 1887, SEC. 2.

The *modus operandi* is for "any six registered parliamentary electors or ratepayers resident" to address the Parish Council in writing, and declare that there is a demand for allotments. If satisfied that the facts are so, the Council has first of all to use its persuasive powers with land-holders to let to it the land required. If persuasion doesn't succeed, then force does the business, *i.e.*, the land can be hired compulsorily for from fourteen to thirty-five years, and (I quote words of the Act) "The Council may let to one person an allotment or allotments exceeding one acre; but, if the land is acquired compulsorily, not exceeding in the whole four acres of pasture, or one acre of arable and three acres of pasture." I frankly admit that there is enough rigmarole in these Acts to make it practically impossible for the timid agricultural labourer to live up to the land privilege they grant him.

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