

SIGNS OF OUR TIMES:

SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND RELIGIOUS.

A CRY FOR JUSTICE!

By F. T. A. DAVIES.

IN the midst of a half-peopled world, a world full to overflowing with the necessary raw materials for health, comfort and contentment for all, there is a cry for Justice, a cry from millions asking how to obtain a subsistence for self and family in a world of plenty; millions on the one hand struggling by slavery of 12, 14, 16, and 18 hours' labour a day to obtain the bare necessities of life, whilst hundreds of thousands are walking about searching for work, that is not to be obtained. This frightful state of things is not necessary, and should not be permitted to exist; therefore I call upon the Teachers, Law-makers, and Governors of the People, to consider the best means for changing this disgraceful condition of affairs.

The First Principle then to be recognized and understood, is the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man.

Secondly; that the world, with its land, water, air, and untold wealth, is given by the Father to His children to satisfy their necessities, not for the few to the detriment of the many.

The Cycle of Time has arrived when these cardinal principles should be understood, recognised, and put into practice. Live and let live is a maxim that men, women, and children, if they are to deserve the name, must consider. Selfishness, the curse of the human race, must give place to brotherly love and justice. True, the present is the result of the long past, when might was all powerful, and the few gradually by various means obtained the land—"the base of supplies"—and the government of the people; then these Gold worshipping classes gradually waxed more powerful and richer till the present time, when we have wealth and power on the one hand, and on the other—gaunt, poverty-stricken masses of sweated toilers, driven by want and wretchedness, to crime, sin, and death.

Already the people are verging on that state of hopeless despair when a very little may drive them to awful extremes, in which Thrones, Princes, and Governors would totter and fall. But it is to be hoped the ruling classes will awake to their responsibilities, and act honestly and justly to those they are permitted to reign over.

Doubtless there are many asking, "What can be done?" To these I throw out a few suggestions to be considered, elaborated, improved, and acted upon.

First then, the land—the people's property—must be regained by the National Government, and held and dealt with for the good of the people, individually and collectively.

To do this, the Government should compel registration by a specified date of all ownership in land, together with its market value. The land should immediately bear its proportion of taxes the same as other classes of property,

and not be allowed to go almost free, simply because the law-makers being large owners of land have avoided the burthen for their own shoulders, letting it fall, under various disguises, directly and indirectly on the people.

The land value having been fixed, the Government could take all increased values, and at the same time pass a land redemption tax on land, say of something like 5, 6, or $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., with the view of forming a fund wherewith to buy the land, thereby becoming the owners in from ten to fifteen years.

The guiding principle to be observed is to regain the people's own for the people, with as little hardship as possible, compatible with justice, to those who are at present, perhaps unknowingly, the wrongful owners.

Another way would be to pass a law by which all the land should, without compensation, revert to the Government, in trust for the people, within one, two, or three generations, say 33, 66, or 99 years, so that no one living at the present time would be injured or robbed of his inheritance.

The trustees of the people on becoming possessed of the land, could act as the freeholders, letting the land by public auction to the highest bidders for a just and reasonable term, the money to be used in the payment of taxes, and for the good of the governed.

Perpetual pensions, another crying evil, should, without compensation, cease with the life of all those heirs at present living.

Every male and female on reaching the age of responsibility, say 14 or 21 years, should receive equal voting rights, as being the governed they are justly entitled to equal powers in choosing whom they will to reign over them.

If a house of representatives is proved to be the best system of government, the representatives should be paid, for under the present system in England, the people are not represented, as the men and women who would stand for election are too poor to do so. Thus the present system of no payment of members throws the law-making into the hands of those who do not understand the rights and requirements of those they govern, and they use the opportunity to safeguard their own interests, and to climb to place and power.

Law-making under the present recognised rights of heredity must be abolished, together with the present governing body called the House of Lords. The right to pass laws, and to domineer over one's fellows, cannot with justice be conferred upon any, solely on account of the accident of birth. The governed have, in my opinion, the INNATE right to choose whom they will to govern them, or they should not be bound by or compelled to acknowledge laws passed by the usurpers of governing powers that are not conferred on them by the people.

The old, un-philosophical, and ridiculous ideas as to the divine right of Kings, fostered by Princes in league with lying Priests, and supported by the State, the Church, and the Wealthy—the three powers which for many centuries have been linked together, to conserve for themselves the places and good things of this world—is dying under the light of REASON, which in these days of advanced thought, teaches man that the supposed divine right has acted in anything but a satisfactory manner, in placing such a questionable lot to show forth His Wisdom and Justice. Look back for the last ten hundred years on the history of all the civilized nations, and take each of the rulers individually, trace how they have climbed to power, and on till they reached the summit of their ambition; were they good and pure? Were the

laws they passed for the masses, or did they use the opportunities for pandering to their own and friends selfish appetites? Did not they, with the assistance and blessing of the Churches, pour out their bands of licensed murderers, called soldiers, upon their brother rulers' lands (when not sufficiently protected,) and deluged them with blood, to satisfy their unlawful ambition and craving for power? Take the whole of these rulers (pretending to rule by divine right and by the grace of God,) how do even the best of them compare with America's Presidents—men chosen for their truth, sincerity, and fitness for the office, by a nation that had burst its bonds, and stood out a free and great people, a people that knew its requirements, and accordingly picked from its millions, for the highest post, men of experience, honesty, and sincerity, who earnestly devoted all their capabilities to raising the people committed to their care to a state of happiness, freedom, and prosperity. Compare these rulers I say, and you must give a hearty verdict in favour of the peoples' choice.

The day when men are to be titled, respected, and thrust into high places, for which they are unfitted, simply because they are the sons or descendants of so-called noblemen, is past. This injustice was inflicted on the people in the dark ages, and must cease to exist in the dawn of light that is now appearing all over the earth. Hereditary rights and titles must disappear, and in their place, men and women who have worked and earned the admiration and gratitude of the people shall be chosen for honour or titles; not chosen because they have slaughtered their fellow creatures in battle, or because they have pandered to power, but because they have struggled for and benefitted mankind.

The link between Church and State must be severed. For a particular Church to be governed and supported by the State, is an insult and a galling injustice to religion and to religious bodies of other denominations. Therefore the Church, as at present existing, must be dis-established, and perfect religious freedom given to the people.

Public libraries must be founded wherever required, together with colleges for technical and theoretical instruction in all handicrafts.

Board school fees should be optional, and at least one sustaining meal a day given to those scholars who care to avail themselves of the privilege.

Should the land not yield sufficient to pay all taxes, then let nearly all taxes, excepting taxes on land, be abolished, and a gradual tax on incomes be substituted,—the SCALE to be higher and higher in proportion to the wealth of the individual taxed, so that the strain should fall on those best able to bear it.

Workmen's dwellings, at present the centres of disease, should be taken under immediate consideration. Some should be condemned, others put into thorough sanitary condition; while, at the same time, the Government should, and could without loss, build artizan's dwellings, borrowing the money at 2½ or 3 per cent., and letting them under certain conditions at rents sufficient to pay for deterioration of property, repairs, and interest. On these lines suites of rooms could be let at something like one shilling a week each room, certainly at half the present exorbitant average prices charged by private owners.

The great despairing cry of labour, the deep determined demand of labour for justice, is being made by millions in all parts of the world, and will not

go much longer unanswered. From labour all wealth is derived, and by shortening the hours of work, employment for all can be found. Therefore the adoption of the eight hours system should be compulsory. The Government commencing at once, by putting it into practice in all governmental departments, and by passing the necessary acts. Eight hours' work should entitle the labourer of whatever class to the wherewithal to feed, clothe, and house himself comfortably, according to his station in life.

In all ages Capital and Labour have been antagonistic, but this should not be so—it is not just, it is not even honest, and it is contrary to pure religious thought to demand work at what is called market value—a value fixed, not by the WORTH of the wealth created thereby, but by the COMPETITION of the starving masses, struggling for the bare necessities of life.

Says the employer, "My price is so and so, take it or leave it, I can get others to do it, or I can import foreign labour;" and the man, with the famished faces of his wife, and ragged, pinched children before his eyes, accepts it, as the dog would crumbs from his master's hands.

Oh, Capitalist! the law allows it, and the court awards it, but as true as there is a God in heaven, these wrongs you shall and must undo before you obtain your heavenly rest, in spite of all beliefs and priestly absolution. God is Justice, Love, and Wisdom, and the least He will demand, is restitution at your hands. Compensation for all good or evil is the law of the present cycle; acts, not beliefs, is the creed of the future.

If you, my reader, are an employer of labour, or an investor in trading concerns, do your utmost to reconcile Labour and Capital, by initiating or furthering a just system of trading, by dividing equally the profits that are derived from the association of labourers, capitalists, and consumers. Wealth is not derived from the one alone; one depends upon the other, and the three in unity are necessary to deserve success: therefore, be just at least, and divide the fruits of the association equally amongst the three who have individually and collectively made the profits. To the Capitalist give from 3 to 6 per cent. interest for his capital; to the worker, the market price for his work; and to the customer or consumer, the goods at market price; then periodically divide the remainder equally.

This system, or a modified form of this system, must come into existence. If the capitalist class remain hard-hearted—dead to everything but self,—then the law must make it compulsory, and capitalists, syndicates, millionaires, and syndicates of millionaires, who are fast becoming, through their avaricious greed, and by the power of their wealth, possessed of the raw materials and factories of the world, and thus, I might also say, the masters—body and soul—of the toiling millions, must make way for the reign of Justice, Love, and Wisdom.

That the million may each do their little to bring about this bloodless revolution in the social, political, and religious life, is the hope of

Yours very truly,

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Spiritualist and Reformer.

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