

THE LAND PROBLEM.

With many millions of unoccupied acres and with her comparatively sparse population, Canada has at present very little interest in the great Land Question of the day—a question which underlies the Irish trouble and upon the solution of which depends in a great measure the preservation of the union between Great Britain and Ireland. Private ownership of land is a right which no one can properly disregard. But when the Nation, which is the people, is fully convinced that individual proprietorship is opposed to the best interests of the people as a whole, then we see no reason why the nation, having given the owners of the soil adequate compensation, should not assume for itself the sole ownership of the land. The tendency in all countries as they grow older is in the direction of land monopolies; at the present time the lands of Britain are in the hands of a few thousands, while the millions who constitute the nation, have no rights which the law respects, saving in public thoroughfares, parks and commons. Gladstone proposes to deal with this question without fear or favor—Ireland! Unhappy Ireland! is at length to be relieved from her curse—absolute landlordism. The British Government proposes buying out the Irish Landlords, and letting out their land at a moderate rental in small holdings. The experiment will be watched with interest throughout the civilized world, and its results carefully studied by the statesmen of all nationalities. With free access to the soil, the Irish people may be trusted to earn for themselves that competence which oppressive and over-reaching landlords have hitherto prevented them from obtaining.

THE SILVER DOLLAR

A wide-spread agitation is now going on in the United States, with respect to the continued coinage and use of the silver dollar, as a medium of exchange. The bi-metalists claim that if treasury bonds were made payable in silver, the coin would pass at its face value, enter into general use in the daily transactions of the people, and become as fixed in its value as the gold eagle. Those who oppose the continued coinage of silver in the United States point to the fact, that the trade value of the silver dollar is but seventy-eight cents, and that any attempt to force its circulation at its face value, would create a panic which would shake to their very centres, the financial institutions of the country. In India and China, silver coinage is recognized as the principal medium of exchange—and in many European countries, the silver coin in use, bears a much larger proportion to that of gold coin than it does in the United States. France has about \$600,000,000 of silver to \$800,000,000 of gold, and has no trouble to keep them in circulation. The United States have now \$650,000,000 in gold in circulation. To have the same proportion of silver they should have about \$490,000,000. If the coinage of silver is continued at the present rate, it will take about ten or twelve years before they increase their stock of silver so as to have the same proportion of gold that France has. The question is deemed one of the most important with which the Congress now sitting has to deal.

The West is a unit in favor of the continued coinage of the silver dollar, being the great producer of the precious metal.

The scarcity of money in the South makes the people of that section of the country unfavorable to any stoppage of its coinage, but in the Northern and Middle States, there exists a wide-spread dissatisfaction with the attempt to force upon the country an untried medium of exchange such as the American trade dollar. We shall watch with interest the action taken by Congress upon this question of silver coinage, but we imagine that we are quite safe in predicting that the proverbial "Almighty dollar" will push its way to the front despite the efforts of those who are endeavoring to crush it out of existence.

A REPRESENTATIVE SENATE.

The pertinent question now being asked by many of our people is—whom do the Senate of Canada represent?—and the answer which at once suggests itself is that the Senate of Canada as now constituted, represents the party in power, and that, in the event of a change of government, it would, in the course of a comparatively few years, represent the administration then holding office. When the framers of the B. N. A. Act adopted the nominative system for the Senate, they doubtless believed it most suitable to our young confederation, but, experience has proved that in this they were mistaken. Under the nominative system the Senate is not and never can be an independent body of legislators; but while this is true, it yet remains to be shown by what method the Senators could be chosen so as to be beyond the limit of party influence. The *Ottawa Free Press* recommends "The election of five or six senators from one large area, embracing a group of Commons constituencies." Under this plan, each of the two large provinces would be divided into four districts; Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, into two districts each, while the other three members of the Confederation would elect their representatives by a provincial vote without any divisions whatever. Some such system prevails in the Cape of Good Hope, where the colony is divided into two sections, the western electing eleven, and the eastern ten members to the Upper Chamber. In South Australia, the whole colony is thrown into one electoral district for electing members to the Legislative Council. The members of the Upper House are elected under a property franchise for a period of twelve years, and the members of the Lower House by universal suffrage, for three years.

However well this system may work in our sister colonies it would be found unworkable in the Dominion. Some of our politicians are of the

opinion that we should follow the example set us by the United States and allow the legislature in each province to elect the provincial representative, in the Senate for a limited term of years. The system has worked well in the United States, but it is doubtful whether the same would be the case in Canada. In the United States each state raises its own revenue by direct taxation, whereas in Canada each province draws the greater proportion of its revenue from the federal treasury. Under these circumstances the Senators elected for any one province would merely be a committee sitting in the Senate to represent the interests of the legislature of that province, and as such could not be expected to deal in a broad and liberal spirit with questions affecting other portions of the Dominion. For our own part, we believe, that the Senators should be elected indirectly by the people for a term of five years, or for the duration of the parliament, in the Upper House of which they were elected to sit. The French system in this respect is most admirable, and is worthy the careful study of our young and rising politicians.

PRISON REFORM.

In an article on Prison Reform which appeared in the February number of *Harpers' Monthly*, Mr. Charles Dudley Warner strongly advocates a Measure whose aim is to send criminals from prison in a truly reformed condition. The term of imprisonment, instead of being proportionate to the crime actually committed, is to be indeterminate, and liberation is to be made conditional upon the cure of that viciousness of body, mind, and morals, which is inherent in criminality. The old system of severely punishing crime by long and close imprisonment has failed to check criminal tendencies even in the persons to whom it has been applied, as may be seen by their frequent returns to the prison cell. A well-meaning but mistaken philanthropy, such as that practised in Mr. Creakle's model establishment, described by Dickens, has only had the effect of developing hypocrisy in the prisoners. The system advocated by Mr. Warner has been for some time in vogue at the Elmira Reformatory. The main object is, not so much punishment as, reform.

There is no doubt that much of the crime with which society is afflicted is due to weakness of will, to lack of definite and legitimate purpose, and to the absence of those circumstances, which would render it possible to lead an honest, active, useful life. The whole tenor of prison life at Elmira is intended to remove the first two difficulties. Prisoners are subjected to a rigorous and careful training, mental, moral, and physical. Their progress is strictly observed, and the spirit in which they act is closely watched. Their liberation depends on their improvement, and every precaution is taken against hypocrisy and imposture. The third great obstacle which has confronted criminals, especially after they have spent a term in prison, namely the difficulty of obtaining employment, is also to a large extent obviated by the efforts of the prison authorities to place them in a position to earn an honest living.

From a purely economical standpoint, reform and punishment are better than punishment alone; and when we consider that few criminals are without their strong, redeeming qualities that some of them are really superior to many respected members of society, that a great proportion of them are placed in circumstances which would test the virtue of the best of us, we cannot but heartily second any effort to give them an equal chance with their fellow-men.

OUR PARLIAMENTS.

The openings of the Dominion and Provincial Parliaments, which were yesterday ushered in with pomp and state, are but the prelude to the active removal of political hostilities. Governments, Grit or Tory, are the better for healthy opposition, but when that opposition invariably criticizes in an unfavorable—not to say unfair manner—all measures introduced by the Government, it is scarce surprising that the people come to regard the long, tedious, and unnecessary debates, as farcical and futile. Our legislators, Dominion and Provincial, are gathered together to transact the business of the country; and if they do this in a business-like manner, the people of the country will have reason to be satisfied. The Dominion Government has good cause to congratulate the country upon the completion of our great National Railway, but they will be called upon to submit a full and detailed account of the North-West matters, and they will likewise be obliged to readjust the tariff so as to meet the deficit in the revenue. Maritime Province men will urge on the Government the necessity of making provision for the protection of our fisheries, and for the maintenance of trade rights.

Our Provincial Parliament, meeting as it does for its last session, will have to devote a large portion of its time to the problem—how to make bricks without straw. Railways are required in certain sections of the province, the people of those sections have decided that the life of the Government shall depend upon its railway policy; and the Government in self-defence will be obliged to do, or die. One important measure with which the present legislature will have to deal, is that of the amendment of the assessment law. Inequitable taxation, while it may be acceptable to those who, under it, can shirk their fair responsibilities, must be oppressive in many quarters; and it is therefore imperative upon the Government to remodel the law so that it may be fair, equitable and just. This task we admit is a most difficult one, but as in its discussion the political element may be entirely dropped we may hope that the combined good judgment and common sense in the House will evolve a Measure of which future generations may feel proud.