

proprietors to the State, either directly or by the use of the taxing power, will have to begin by reducing the landowners as a class to the very condition which they propose to extirpate; or rather they will have to begin by fighting the farmers, who will certainly defend their farms, and the opening of the millennium will be an agrarian war, in which it seems by no means certain that the victory would remain with the philanthropist. The world began with common ownership of land of which in barbarous or half-barbarous countries vestiges still remain; and the almost universal change to private ownership is the verdict of almost universal experience. What the community wants is that the land shall produce as much bread for us all as possible, and how can we expect the highest rate of production without the stimulus of private ownership? Have not the land reformers in their crusade against landlordism been always telling us that the land could never yield its fruits in due measure while the tillers were mere tenants at will? Systems of taxation may always be capable of improvement, and it is highly probable that in cities real property is the best and the fairest basis of taxation; but how the world as a whole can be made much richer by merely shifting the burden of taxation from one shoulder to the other seems difficult to conceive. It appears to be assumed that in the social and economical sphere perfection is the law of nature, and that imperfection is the consequence of bad legislative arrangements which might at once be set right if labour reformers and poverty-destroyers could only get power into their hands. Unhappily everything which meets our eyes proclaims that not perfection but imperfection is the law, the law of the social as well as of the physical organism, of the body politic as well as of the individual body; of man's dwelling-place and life; of the solar system itself, which seems to be full of gaps and wrecks; of the stellar system, if it be true that astronomy has witnessed the destruction of a star. The only optimism countenanced by