

The United States of America must be a terrible thorn in the side of that well-meaning being, the half-way land reformer; for although he is a fairly purblind person, he must be more or less conscious of the hollowness of his cry for Free-Land, Taxation of ground rents, etc., etc., whenever he comes across such little pamphlets as that just published by the Land Nationalization Society (*b*). Perhaps he never does come across them, though. Let us hope he doesn't; for it is difficult to believe in the honesty of a man who, after reading Professor Wallace's address, can still believe that

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(*b*) Land Lessons from America. By Alfred R. Wallace, LL.D., F.R.G.S., Land Nationalization Society, 57, Charing Cross, S.W.

anything short of the complete destruction of Land Monopoly will make even a beginning of the cure of the evils of our time. In America every reform for which your Radical clamors is the law of the land. There is no primogeniture or entail—there is complete registration of sales and mortgages, cheap and easy transfer—and full taxation of land values. Over and above all these advantages the Americans possess a practically inexhaustible extent of land—much of it being of wonderful fertility—and yet all the evils of which we here complain are there “as rife as sins.” “Land speculation, which we think is bad enough with us, is but a trifle here compared with what it is in America. It is the great mode of making money.” How about the putting a stop to the iniquitous speculation, gentlemen of the joint committee for the taxation of ground rents? The prohibitive price of land in England is frequently attributed to the smallness of our supply. Well, in Boston it is selling at £160,000 an acre, and even in the small towns of Massachusetts it fetches from £300 to £400 an acre. Again, our land system is blamed (and rightly) for the way in which the homes of our people are crowded together, and for the absence of gardens and breathing spaces. But how little the pet remedies of our land reformers will do to alter this state of things may be judged from the fact that in the suburbs of Washington the houses are still more closely huddled together; two “villas” being built on a frontage 30ft. wide. “One of the most disagreeable features of American houses to Englishmen is that there are no gardens.” Wholesale evictions go on as merrily in the land of ‘Triumphant Democracy’ as in Connaught—or Bethnal Green—and twenty million acres are held by non-resident landlords! Now we are firm believers in experimental legislation, and we hold that statecraft, like every other science, can only be mastered by careful experiment and patient observation—by much disappointment and many failures; but in this matter of Land Reform it seems to us that the experiments have been made for us, the favourite radical remedies have been tested and proved spurious, and nothing but political cowardice will cause the lesson to be lost upon us. We hope that this tract will find its way among the members of the Free Land League and that ilk.