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Cities For Sale

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Long a keen analyst of British social and economic affairs and an active participant in exposing the evils of monopoly, Douglas J. J. Owen, in his monthly letters to MARCH OF PROGRESS, brings a refreshing viewpoint to us in America. It is important to know what steps are being taken in Britain—the bulwark of Old World forces for autocracy—toward co-operation with our own country in advancing the cause of democracy.

WHEN it comes to land deals in Great Britain there are no halfway measures. Just before the war, half of the city of Cardiff was sold by the Marquess of Bute. The estate embraced shopping centers, a large part of the docks, extensive agricultural lands around the city, parts of the town of Penarth, and a number of villages.

It was stated that the equities sold included ground rents secured on whole residential suburbs, commercial and factory areas. The rents were estimated to be £150,000 a year. Under this deal 20,000 homes, 1000 shops, 250 public-houses and several theaters and cinemas changed hands, and under it also went the exclusive privilege of collecting ground rents on the city's Shipping Exchange, on the huge steel works of Guest, Keen and Baldwins, and on the Mount Stewart Dry Dock. An estate agent estimated that the capital value of the property involved in this one transaction would be nearly £40,000,000.

The Marquess of Bute is reported to be the richest peer and the largest in-

dividual royalty owner in the British Isles. His estates in all parts of the country cover about 117,000 acres. According to evidence given before the Coal Mining Commission in 1919, his royalties at that time amounted to £109,277 per annum. He has eight homes, including Cardiff Castle, Castle Coch, near Cardiff, and Castle Guardacorte in Spain. Some of his Welsh property derived from an ancestor to whom it was given in 1547-1550 as a reward for raising an army and "quelling rebels in the western part of England."

Even Conservative papers at the time of the sale wanted to know what the marquis had put into the city of Cardiff to get such treasure out. Did he provide the foresight that planned the giant docks of Cardiff, or the hard, skilled labor that built the quays and wharfs, that loads the ships and steers their cargoes across the world? The *Daily Express* suggested that "the State should take its cut from that harvest," thus restoring publicly the created values to the public. But this is not being done.

Some years ago the important residential and commercial center of Bootle, near Liverpool, came into the market in the same way. The town of Bury, in Lancashire, was also sold about the same time. It is quite common to read notices like this in the press: "Lord Braybrooke has sold his Heydon estate, comprising 1400 acres, with a rent roll of £1300. The estate included several farms and most of the village of Heydon." In South Norfolk, the village of Garboldisham, with 14 farms and 300 acres of woodlands, was sold, the total acreage being 1838. The Bilsdale estate in Yorkshire, sold at auction, contained the whole of the picturesque Vale of Bilsdale and three villages. Its 12,325 acres included 105 farms.

Almost the whole village of Allingham, on the Lincoln-Nottingham borders, was sold when the Allington estate, covering 2334 acres, found a buyer last year. There was a village inn, about 30 cottages, numerous small holdings, and 12 good farms.

In Scotland the property containing the famous Loch Ness, with its elusive "monster"—a strange sea serpent reputed to have been seen there—was sold along with the whole of Glen Urquhart, with many farms and extensive woodlands, comprising 50,000 acres.

These are samples of the way in which rural Britain is changing hands under the impetus of war conditions. Not only the owners, but in many cases the tenant farmers as well, have been on the estates for long periods. In the Bilsdale estate, the tenantry

were of very old standing, the oldest family claiming unbroken occupancy of its farm for eight hundred years.

The Kininvie estate, Banffshire, had been held by the owner's family since 1521. This estate of 1660 acres has been sold by auction. Another sale in Lincolnshire included the stone-built church of St. Edith, erected in 1500. A Yorkshire estate put up for sale included the famous Malham Tarn, a body of water covering 153 acres and possessing the "best fishing in the whole earth," as Charles Kingsley said. Such was his affection for it that he made Malham Tarn the scene of the first chapter of his story, *The Water Babies*.

If it be asked, "Why are these old properties, with the business settlements associated with them, coming into the market just now?" the estate agents and valuers will supply the answer. Fixed prices for crops and subsidies from the Government have created a keen demand for land, and values are higher than pre-war by 30 to 40 per cent.

It must also be remembered that in Britain there is no local nor national taxation on the value of agricultural land. This situation encourages the "hoarding" of land by those who happen to possess it and makes it very difficult, if not impossible, for the growing generation to acquire homes or farms. Most of the purchases of land in recent years are said to be "for investment," but resales at higher prices show that the object very often has been the profit to be had from cashing in on inflated values.

This is not a promising state of affairs for the men returning from the war, with the desire for a footing on the soil. Whilst whole villages are being sold, the ex-soldier and ex-sailor will find that a happy rural existence

is as remote from him as it was before the war.

If an annual tax were placed on the location values of land, both used or unused, a different story might be told of opportunities in rural Britain.



Pomona's Pumpkin

◀ MAYBE you've never heard of Pomona, but if it hadn't been for her, pumpkins would be just pumpkins, even on Halloween.

In her time, Pomona was a mighty important little lady. As the Roman goddess of garden fruits, every year on October 31, homage was rendered to her. The pumpkin, because it was one of Pomona's favorite fruits, was held in great esteem and regarded as a lucky charm.

As the years went on, Pomona was forgotten but her holy date became the Christian Feast of All Saints. And the orange fruit never lost its "lucky" reputation. It was long centuries before people gave up the custom of carrying pumpkins on October 31, as charms against the evil spirits which everyone thought roamed the earth on that night.

Just who conceived the idea of making pumpkins into jack-o'-lanterns is not known. There is an old Irish legend which suggests a possible origin for the name. According to the tale, a miser named Jack was refused quarters in both Heaven and Hades. He was handed a lantern and told to walk the earth until Judgment Day. Thus he became "Jack with a lantern."

The Christian Feast of All Saints was originated to wipe out a number of pagan celebrations, but Pomona's pumpkins are still going strong.

Contributed by IDA M. PARDUE

Thanksgiving Day

Remember all the fuss when the date of Thanksgiving was changed a few years back? Well, it wasn't the first time this feast day had been pushed around on the calendar. Fact is, Thanksgiving was postponed a week in 1705—and you'd never guess the reason. It was because the city of Colchester, Connecticut, had run out of molasses. No molasses, no pumpkin pies—and who could dream of celebrating the day without this traditional dessert! Anyway, in those times Thanksgiving did not fall on the last Thursday in November. The regular observance was held on the first Thursday.