

## The Saturday "News" Special Foreign Service.



### BIG LANDLORDS' UNTAXED WEALTH

Campaign by Duke of Norfolk Leads to Exposure of Debt Evading System.

HIMSELF GREAT BENEFICIARY.

London's Aristocratic Ground Landlords Own Nearly All Real Estate and Escape Taxes.

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE.**  
LONDON, March 1.—His grace, the Duke of Norfolk, Earl of Arundel, Surrey and Norfolk, Baron Fitz-Alan, Clun, Oswestrie and Maltravers, earl marshal, hereditary grand marshal and hereditary chief butler of England, K. G., P. G., G. C. V. O., has come out in a new role, that of the champion of the oppressed ratepayers. With a rent roll of \$750,000 a year derived from his 50,000 broad acres, and nobody knows how much more from his enormously valuable London property, the premier duke of England isn't worried by the tax collector. But he feels sorry for those who are.

As president of the Municipal society, he has issued a flamboyant manifesto to the London ratepayers denouncing the "progressive" members of the London county council for taxing their money and appealing to them to vote for the candidates of his party—the "Moderates" as they are termed—at the forthcoming county election, as the only means of getting the burden of the rates reduced. The Moderates are opposed to municipal ownership, and the Duke of Norfolk is reduced by turning the streetcar lines and other public utilities over to private corporations to make money out of instead of turning them for the benefit and profit of the community. It isn't clear to everybody. However, that is a debatable question. The duke's intrusion in the campaign has caused the limelight to be turned on him as a shining example of a great London ground landlord who profits enormously by "uneared increment" and pays practically no local rates. Whereby the argument is forced home that the best way to lighten the burden of taxation under which the London ratepayers are staggering is to put a fair share of it on the backs of the Duke of Norfolk and other of his ilk.

#### INCREASING REVENUE.

The bulk of the Duke's London property in Norfolk, Howard, Surrey, and Arundel street, Strand, is situated on the site of his ancestor's town house which was leased to speculative builders after the great London fire of 1666. The original 80 years' leases expired in the eighteenth century and the houses which other men had built became the property of the Duke of Norfolk. The duke went on letting them on 20 and 30 years' leases, getting a premium for renewal every time, and increasing the rent whenever they were released.

The building of the Thames embankment resulted in a tremendous increase in the value of the dukal property. This enormously costly work was paid for by the ratepayers. The duke contributed nothing to it. He merely profited by it by doubling and trebling his rentals. The rent of a private hotel in Norfolk street was raised from \$450 a year to \$1,125. The Conservative Land society, which occupied premises in Norfolk street and had expended \$15,000 in improving it, had their rent raised from \$750 to \$2,750 a year—an increase of considerably over 200 per cent. That was because their own improvements had added considerably to the value of the property over and above what it derived from public improvements. Thus did the duke increase the poor ratepayers' burdens when he got the chance.

#### SUBJECT OF INQUIRY.

These matters and others of a kindred character were made the subject of an inquiry at the time. Of course the duke did not appear before it in person. His agents attended to the raising and collecting of his rents. To the agent who represented him this question was put:

"You consider, as I understand, that the ground landlord has the right to all the improved value that may accrue

to his property from the increase of the town, and so on, without making any special contribution to the rate for the benefit of the community.

And the agent, as the mouthpiece of the champion of the oppressed ratepayers, answered, "I do."

#### ERECTED BY OTHERS.

Very few people in London know even the names of the owners of the land on which they live, yet nearly the whole of London is the monopoly of a few families who draw enormous revenues under the London leasehold system. They hardly ever sell any of their property outright. They seldom build themselves.

The vast majority of the buildings which stand on their estates, as in the case of the Duke of Norfolk, have been erected by others. They grant leases, varying from 20 to 30 years upwards, at the expiration of which time the property with all its improvements that have in the meantime been wrought upon it becomes theirs again outright. A great ground landlord will, for instance, lease a property for building purposes. At the end of 20, 30, or 40 years, he or his family gets it all back, transformed into fine residences, business offices or shops. In the meantime he has been extracting a handsome ground rental from the property and the occupants of the buildings have paid the rates.

#### ADVANCED RATES.

The rates in London have increased during the last 30 years from \$20,000,000 to \$45,000,000 per annum, or 150 per cent, but no part of this increase has been borne by the owners of the land, the value of which has increased in the same time. The owners of the \$1,000,000,000 representing the value of the buildings of London, pay rates amounting to \$45,000,000, whereas the owners of the \$2,000,000,000 representing the separate value of the land contribute to the state only some \$2,500,000. In other words, the Duke of Norfolk, who owns \$5,000,000, \$200,000 is paid, while on land worth \$5,000,000 the payment is only about \$5,000.

#### WILL NEVER PASS.

A bill is to be introduced in parliament for the taxation of site values as apart from the buildings standing on them. Of course a bill to lighten the burden of the ratepayers by taxing this source of enormous wealth, which is shared mainly among aristocratic families, will never pass as long as there is a house of lords which, as one Conservative speaker the other day devoutly thanked God for, "has not the fear of the electors before his eyes." But a radical house of commons is pledged to put that fear into it, and then things are likely to happen which may cause his grace of Norfolk to feel a more genuine sympathy for the ratepayer.

Financially the Norfolk Howards are a lucky lot for hanging on to whatever they could get or holding it only for a good price. Thomas, Duke of Norfolk, led the English fleet to Flodden Field when the king of Scotland was slain. For that he was granted the "augmentation" to his coat of arms of a demi-lion pierced through the mouth by an arrow, and \$25 a week. The duke dropped the half of the Scottish lion long ago but the \$25 was regularly collected until a few years ago when the duke compounded with the government by accepting a lump sum.

#### HAVE CRIMINAL RECORDS.

In their day, the Howards have figured in some terribly bloody records. Scarcely a generation of the early branches of the family failed to supply either a victim to the headsman, or a wretched prisoner to the tower dungeons. They have gambled for the crown and paid the penalty. Three times the dukedom has been under attainder, but they have always managed to get it back. Sometimes they have balanced matters by removing lesser fry. "Will your grace take wine with me?" asked a gentleman of a former Duke of Norfolk, with whom he sat at dinner, and added, "There is a connection between our families." "With great pleasure," sir answered the duke, "though I do not know what the connection is." "Why," he was answered, "your ancestor Lord William Howard, hung up three-and-twenty out of 27 of my family, and you must own that was a tie!"

#### GAINED BY MARRYING.

The Howards have gained far more by marrying than by fighting. For centuries they have mated with the richest and noblest women of their times, as is sufficiently attested by many castles of high estate. Their exalted hereditary positions are now practically

### "New Life" Ruined Archduke's Bliss.

The Queerest of Its Kind in Existence is the Swiss Sect of "Nature's Children," Whose Primitive Manner of Life and Scanty Attire, Have Proved So Attractive to Nobleman's Wife That She Refuses to Give Them Up.

#### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE.

LONDON, March 1.—Through the divorce proceedings recently begun by Herr Leopold Wolfli—formerly the Archduke Leopold Ferdinand—against his wife, the one-time concert singer Wilhelmina Adamovics, the colony of "New Men" or "Nature's Children" on the shores of Lake Maggiore, has been brought into unexpected prominence.

Surprisingly little has found its way into print, however, about the members of this sect—which is surely one of the freest in existence—and its queer history, despite the world-wide attention that was attracted by the earlier stages of the trouble which Frau Wolfli's wholesale adoption of the "New Life" principles made between her and her aristocratic husband. I am glad, therefore, to be able to send what is likely to be the first account published in America regarding the "Children of Nature," their leader and their record up to date, as well as to send some particularly interesting photographs of the community of which Frau Wolfli is now so zealous a member. In one of these photographs, by the way, the former Wilhelmina Adamovics is shown in the scanty costume prescribed for the followers of the "new, free life."

#### "MOTHER EVE" NOTION.

Meantime, as Americans will have heard, the former Archduke Leopold has learned that in Europe, at least, a man cannot get a divorce from his wife because she chooses to model her life after that of Mother Eve before the fall. As a concert-hall singer in Vienna, it may be remembered, Mlle. Adamovics was famous for her good looks, if not for the quality of her voice, and in order to make her wife the archduke sacrificed his rank and all his august titles and settled down as Leopold Wolfli, a plain citizen of the Swiss republic.

Apparently, too, the strangely assorted couple got along about as well as most married folk do after the honeymoon is over, and all might have been well had it not been that on one evil day Leopold, accompanied by his wife, went to pay a visit to the colony of "New Men," which the lady particularly was highly curious to see.

To tired and weary souls whom the world often unkindly calls "cranks," Switzerland seems to offer a most delightful refuge. There is solitude to be had for the asking in the mountainous

cantons, and especially in that of Tessin, which borders on Lake Maggiore. Half an hour from Locarno, in a most beautiful situation, is Ascona, near which village on Monte Verita—the "Mount of Truth"—the "New Men" have founded their home. The "Mount of Truth" is 500 feet above sea level, and here are gathered some 25 men and women who make up the settlement.

A primitive board fence broken down in many places, surrounds the settlement, to which visitors can gain admittance for two francs. Inside one finds a few small, brown, wooden huts containing very little in the way of household goods and chattels, especially so far as cooking utensils are concerned. The male members of the colony have long, flowing hair and a band of ribbon across their foreheads with mystic characters inscribed upon it. A coarse shirt is the main feature of their wearing apparel, and their general appearance rather resembles that of the shopkeepers of the Mount of Truth. And each week has 10 days, a testimony to the business acumen of the founder.

#### HEAD OF COLONY.

A former Belgian consul named Legouve is the real head and founder of the colony, his authority being largely due to his knowledge of foreign languages, in which he makes the most dominating speeches against flesh eating, the use of salt and the wearing of superfluous clothing. He also deplores in most alluring terms the beauty of the climate of Monte Verita and the joys of the "New Men" life. Clad only in his coarse shirt, the former consul used to go to the neighboring market with a donkey cart until the scandalized authorities caused him to be arrested for appearing in public in such a guise. So he now wears a long velvet dressing gown over this undergarment and a band of orange-colored silk bound across his forehead.

Some wonderful cures are reported in the colony, though the only remedies provided are sunshine and moist clay, supplemented by a diet of apples and nuts. If the seeker after health does not become strong and well on this fare the colonists calmly explain that it is because he is not yet ripe for the

"new life." With some persons, however, it seems to agree remarkably well. Last year a famous Parisian critic arrived in a deplorably low state, and left a month afterward in robust condition. Visitors come from all countries to try the cure, but most of them give it up after a brief trial.

Not all the members live in the same manner. Some prefer a hut in a sheltered nook in the forest, while others choose the steep hillside. On an almost inaccessible rock one finds a lonely hut inhabited by a bachelor. He has long hair and a long beard, both unkempt and uncurled, and his only shirt hangs outside waiting for a shower of rain to launder it. This seclusion is not for the purpose of a future state without toil or care. When he feels hungry he seeks berries in the woods, or desiring something more appetizing, goes to a comrade for provisions.

#### HOME AMID RUINS.

Another hermit has chosen an uncovered ruin for his home, where he tries to live entirely at one with nature. His only effort after comfort is shown on the tottering walls, which he has papered with dry leaves from a neighboring wood.

The married members of the colony for the most part live in more comfort. Their houses are almost pretty and their gardens are better cultivated. But all profess themselves eager to lead the new free life. Some engage in literary work, some in art, but most of them try to do nothing with more or less success.

Not every new convert can stand the life. Many break down from exposure to the weather and the meagerly insufficient nourishment and go back to civilization and plenty. Others find the life insupportably dull and are irresistibly called back to the outside world and its distractions. Only a few persevere and at present there are no signs of the "New Men" ever becoming very numerous.

#### DIDN'T "COTTON" TO IT.

Leopold didn't cotton to the idea very much. He had a healthy but decidedly carnal appetite, which refused to be satisfied with a diet of fruit and bread, and he has an aristocratic aversion to the use of his feet in anything but the most elegant of shoes. But finding that Mrs. Wolfli was not to be dissuaded, he gave in, thinking that a brief trial of the "new life" would suffice to cure his wife of her infatuation for it. So they both joined the strange sect which seeks to regain paradise on earth by means of another Garden of Eden.

To Leopold's astonishment and dismay, his wife, after living the "new life" for a week, instead of growing

disgusted with it, became more enamored of it than ever. She went the limit in the practice of its tenets. She discarded all her pretty gowns and adopted the single garment style of dress, sans shoes and stockings. She gave up using her toothbrush and threw away all her hairpins. As beauty unadorned she was not a success. Leopold, in fact, made slighting comments on her personal appearance, for the lack of "Nature's Children" has had effect on the temper of an unregenerate man. Finally, he told her flatly that she would have to choose between him and the "new life." And she chose the "new life," expressing a devout hope that the time would come when he, too, would be ripe for it.

#### CONSULTED LAWYER.

The archduke consulted a lawyer, with the result that, as has doubtless already been cabled to America, he filed a petition with the Geneva court for a divorce from his wife. But the Swiss divorce laws are not so elastic as those of some of the American States. The judges decided that the fact that Mrs. Wolfli was "living a life consonant with nature" did not constitute sufficient ground for divorcing the nuptials that bound her to the archduke.

Then Leopold set about negotiations for a life separation by mutual consent. It turned out that although the "Nature's Children," and as such had remained all the pomp and vanities of this world, she still retained a very worldly appreciation of the value of money. She demanded a big price before she would consent to the separation, and by the aid of Leopold's aristocratic relations she got it.

#### AUSTRIAN ROMANCES.

Romances have caused quite a slump among Austrian archdukes of late years. They seem to be for the most part an ill-balanced lot, and when they fall in love they lose their heads. Leopold Ferdinand's friends attribute his erratic conduct to an unfortunate love affair which he had 11 years ago, when he was 25. He fell in love with Donna Elvira, the daughter of Don Carlos, and was secretly betrothed to her. His parents, for political reasons, would not sanction the match, and the Duke Leopold Ferdinand's friends attribute his erratic conduct to an unfortunate love affair which he had 11 years ago, when he was 25. He fell in love with Donna Elvira, the daughter of Don Carlos, and was secretly betrothed to her. His parents, for political reasons, would not sanction the match, and the Duke Leopold Ferdinand's friends attribute his erratic conduct to an unfortunate love affair which he had 11 years ago, when he was 25. 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