

**STEIN AND HIS REFORMS IN PRUSSIA,
WITH REFERENCE TO THE LAND
QUESTION IN ENGLAND: AND AN
APPENDIX CONTAINING THE VIEWS OF
RICHARD COBDEN, AND J. S. MILL'S
ADVICE TO LAND REFORMERS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649712007

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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THE LAND QUESTION IN ENGLAND:

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RICHARD COBDEN,
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BY
COL. H. A. OUVRY, C.B.,
MEMBER OF THE COBDEN CLUB.



"Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be
no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth."—ISAIAH, v. 8.

LONDON:
KERBY AND ENDEAN, 190, OXFORD STREET.
1878.

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232. g. 194.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY KENNY AND MEYER,
100, OXFORD STREET.

PREFACE.

THE object of this small volume is to furnish a trustworthy account of the real nature of the Stein-Hardenberg Reforms, concerning which much misapprehension exists in England.

It is generally supposed that Stein took the part of the people against an oppressive aristocracy, but this is a great error. The truth is that he was essentially an aristocrat, and looked upon the people as (to use his own expression) the "swinish multitude" (Appendix A).

The reason why he worked for the emancipation of the Prussian peasant was simply because he wanted to make use of him as an instrument for the re-establishment of German independence. Had the Prussians been victorious

in their wars with the French, most certainly we never should have heard of the Stein Reforms.

The rising tide of democracy in England is now a great fact, and as the lords of the manors and large landed proprietors thought fit to deprive the body of the people of their just right to the soil in the great agrarian revolution at the commencement of the sixteenth century, when enclosures were first made (B), there is now no element of any sufficient weight to bar its course.

The question as to the best form of government has been ably discussed in a German work lately published (C); but whatever difference of opinion there may be among the several classes of politicians, one thing is very certain, that the old ecclesiastical and political system of tutelage, in which the power of the State was vested in one person, and having for its motto "everything for the people, but nothing by the people," has died a natural death, and can never be resuscitated.

PREFACE.

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The old faith in divine right has faded away before the new light of modern thought; unreasoning faith and blind acceptance of tradition has paled before the increased intelligence and discoveries of modern science, and henceforward the task of the legislator will be to fit and accommodate all old institutions so as to meet the new state of things which must in the near future rule in Europe; and with us in England the first and most important consideration will be, how the people are to be restored to the soil from which they were driven by cruel oppression in former times; for without a class of small proprietors firmly planted on the land there can be no guarantee for the stability and greatness of the nation. The food produce of the land has always proved to be much greater under small cultivation, but were this not so, that would be of secondary consideration, for the question is far less of the absolute quantity that the soil can be made to produce than of the far more important one of forming a sound,

healthy, and moral population. If it really can be proved that cultivation on a large scale is so far superior that it must be resorted to, then the system of co-operation may be brought into play, which would entirely meet the requirement, and at the same time give the people the benefit of small proprietorships and a stake in the country, by *property in the land*, and thus form them into a class of good *conservative* citizens, for when persons have no property they become dangerous to the State, as Schiller most justly observes :

"The man of property bereft
Will rush to murder and to theft."

Thinking men (who are not large landed proprietors) begin to see that there is a natural law by which the land of a country belongs to the State in trust for the good of the whole community, and should never be regarded as a mere chattel. These views are gaining ground universally, even in Australia, where a land reform league has been formed to prevent the

alienation of the land, and to repurchase all that has already become private property. The following are the views published at Melbourne in an Electoral address—*Argus*, Jan. 3rd, 1868:—

“ On the land question I am of opinion that the State should be the sole landlord, and that it is contrary to the soundest economic, social, and political principles for the State to alienate the land. I do not see any subject of political activity equal to this for thoroughly meeting the ‘ condition of the people ’ question, and aiding to solve the problem of what will enable the State to contribute its share towards helping the ‘ poor who are getting poorer,’ *not by degrading eleemosynary gifts*, but by offering to earnest and willing humanity the most favourable possible surroundings for its sphere of labour and utility.”

According to the doctrine of the great founder of the Median faith, no sooner does Ormuzd, the principle of beneficence, propose a new scheme