

THE LAND AND THE LABOURERS

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The land and the labourers by C. W. Stubbs

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C. W. STUBBS

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PRESS NOTICES.

"Of true answers to Mr. George there is but one; and they alone can give it who are inspired by the same sympathy with the poor as Mr. George, but have a firmer hold of the facts and principles concerned—who have the like hopefulness and determination to introduce a better state of things, combined with a clearer conception of the real conditions of success. A praiseworthy example of this is found in Mr. Stubbs' book."—*Academy*.

"An extremely valuable contribution to current discussion on the land question. Full of interesting facts, and should be widely read by politicians of both parties."—*Western Mercury*.

"Mr. Stubbs has something to tell about small culture and about co-operative agriculture. It is of the former especially that he writes of his own knowledge. He has let portions of his glebe to labourers in his parish, has had his rent duly paid (and not a small rent either, 66s. per acre), has seen his tenants get a good profit, and has made a good profit himself."—*Spectator*.

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE two quotations which I have placed on the back of the title-page of this book—one from an address by the Bishop of Durham to the Co-operative Congress at Newcastle, and the other from a letter by the Prime Minister to Mr. Joseph Arch—sufficiently indicate, I think, the purpose which I have mainly in view in the publication of the following pages.

In the prospect of early Land Legislation, this expression of Mr. Gladstone's opinion with regard to the merits of Small Farming in England is most important, and is indeed likely to meet with frequent quotation, during the discussions of the next Parliamentary sessions, by those Land Reformers, to whom, like myself, a radical revision of the English Land Laws seems mainly desirable in the interest of the labouring population, whose gradual divorce from the soil and consequent pauperisation during the last century and a half has been the parent of some of the most lamentable and mischievous of existing social evils.

It will be evident, however, that the following pages are not intended to support the view of those who anticipate as a result of such legislation the general establishment of a system of Peasant Proprietary in England, much less of those who are now advocating with so much vigour and enthusiasm what is termed

Land Nationalisation, without sufficient care, however, as it appears to me, to define accurately which of the three utterly antagonistic schemes—(1) Compensatory, (2) Confiscatory, or even (3) Collectivist—they understand by that very high-sounding phrase. A radical revolution in the English Land System I do without doubt most earnestly desire to see; but I trust that it will be a revolution such as that anticipated by Bishop Lightfoot, “beneficent, social, and economic,” by which, among other good results, the rural labourer and cottage farmer shall in adopting co-operative institutions be able to secure for himself all the advantages of Peasant Proprietary without any of its corresponding evils.

GRANBOROUGH VICARAGE, BUCKS,

January, 1884.

❧ PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION.

I HAVE added to this Edition, in the form of Notes and Appendices, certain material which seemed necessary to give the book completeness, both as a record of experiments in co-operative agriculture, and also with a view to bring the history of the Allotment movement up to date.

The lately issued Parliamentary Return of Small Holdings in England, which shows a greatly increased acreage devoted to Allotment farming during the last few years, is, as I have pointed out in the text, most encouraging as an evidence, not so much perhaps of the practical value of the Allotment Acts of 1882 and 1887, as of the salutary influence which the public expression of opinion on the subject has exerted upon

the Landlord class in persuading them to grant increased facilities for landholding by labouring tenants.

I am still as firmly convinced as I was six years ago—my last two years' pastoral experience in a great Northern town has only deepened my conviction—that the key to the solution of most of the social problems of our great towns in reality lies in the country, that there are few of these problems whose solution is not largely dependent upon such a revision of the English Land System, as shall make it once more economically advisable to increase the amount of English Labour applied to English Land, and concurrently with that to raise permanently "the standard of living" of the English Agricultural Labourer.

Within the last few days a new hope for the future of co-operative industry in the rural districts has been given to social reformers by the vast scheme propounded by General Booth, involving as it does the establishment of large farm communities, and Labour Colonies, as an integral part of his plan for "the salvation of society".

"*Back to the Land!*" is a cry to which, in former days, I have been little disposed to listen. Nearly twenty years close intimacy with the conditions, social and economic, of rural life, have taught me that success in agriculture, even on a small scale, demands qualities of head and hand and heart, which, to say the least, it is quite idle to expect from a merely miscellaneous company of the loafers and slummers and labour-failures of town life. It is too often forgotten by the glib Land Reformers of our city debating clubs, that the efficient agricultural labourer is not in reality the dull

chaw-bacon sort of person of a *Punch* cartoon, but one of the most highly skilled of English workmen. To expect, therefore, that the town labourer who has failed can be readily transformed into the rural labourer who will succeed, is to expect miracles.

But, then, General Booth, at least so it is claimed on his behalf, has already worked miracles, and can perhaps do so again. At anyrate, in answer to my current objection, one of his chief advisers writes to me that "the 'General' can guarantee absolute loyalty, implicit obedience, and a wonderful spirit of self-denying love and comradeship among his people". These are new data, I confess, for the solution of the problem. All the co-operative experiments of which I have given a record in the following pages have failed, when they have failed, owing to deficiency of moral qualities and defects of character.

If General Booth succeeds—as I heartily pray to God he may—in the social revolution which he projects, he will only add force to my long conviction of the truth expressed in these two maxims which I will beg my readers now to ponder, and to read once again as they close the pages of this little book—"The best ultimate success often comes of noble failure. Undying hope is the secret of social vision." "Great social transformations never have been, and never will be, other than the application of a religious principle—of a moral development—of a strong and active common faith."

CHARLES W. STUBBS.

WAVERTREE RECTORY, LIVERPOOL,
November, 1890.