

# **THE LAND AND LANDLORDISM**

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The Land and Landlordism by Humphry Sandwith

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**HUMPHRY SANDWITH**

**THE LAND AND  
LANDLORDISM**



[ SECOND EDITION. ]

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LAND AND LANDLORDISM

BY

HUMPHRY SANDWICH, C.B.

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"L'extrême corruption est lorsque les nobles deviennent  
héréditaires : l'aristocratie se change en oligarchie."

MONTESQUIEU.

LONDON:

KERBY AND ENDEAN, 190, OXFORD STREET.

1873.

## PREFACE.

ON the occasion of the late reinstatement of the Gladstone Ministry without any doubt the most able speech was that of Mr. D'Israeli; his final words were particularly remarkable, "We are now emerging from the fiscal period in which almost all the public men of this generation have been brought up. All questions of trade and navigation, the incidence of taxation and of public economy are settled. But there are other questions arising of not less importance, but of a deeper and higher reach and range—the attributes of a Constitutional Monarchy; the question whether the Aristocratic principle shall be recognized by our Constitution, and if so, in what form; whether the Commons of England shall remain a state of the realm, numerous but privileged and qualified, or whether they should degenerate into an indiscriminate multitude (laughter); whether a national church shall be maintained, and what should be its rights and what should be its duties; the functions of corporations, and the sacredness of endowments (cheers); the tenure of landed property

(renewed cheers), all these institutions and all these principles, which we believe have made this country free and famous and conspicuous for its union of order and liberty, are now impugned and in due course will become great and burning questions (loud cheers)."

Many persons will say that this country has now arrived at a period when the abovementioned institutions are about to be put on their trial: the question then will be, not whether they have done material service towards the past greatness of England, but whether they are fitted to the times in which we now live, or in other words, whether they are in accordance with what our German brothers call the *Zeitgeist*! Let us see how certain learned foreigners look on this question. Dr. L. Buchner, the talented author of "Force and Matter," and many other scientific works, forcibly remarks: "If in politics we have long since come to replace the old system of oppression and domination by the now generally-recognized principle of *equal rights* and *equal duties*, we must likewise socially replace the system of mutual plunder which has hitherto prevailed," and speaking of the question of property in land he observes, "such a restoration of the property in land to the community, moreover, even if we leave entirely out of the question, all social reasons, or scruples of justice, is an *economical or political necessity*, and must finally be done in spite of all opposition. For the more the population increases the more necessary it becomes to obtain from the soil the utmost produce, both in quantity and in quality. It can therefore, no longer be left to the individual possessor of land to decide what he will do with it, but how much it may be made to produce for the interests of the community; thus in England vast tracts of cultivable land are either left wholly unemployed

by their owners, or converted into grass, parks, race-courses, or vast gardens, &c., which serve only to gratify private interests without contributing at all to the general good, and this is a circumstance which is very general everywhere, although not to so great an extent as in England.\*

"The Land-question, it is well known, has assumed an immense importance latterly in England, that country of political freedom, on account of the peculiarities of its land tenure, and the agitation in favour of community in possession of land, or at least of a thorough-going reform of the existing state of things, has already made itself felt and obtained many adherents.

"According to Radenhausen (*Isis*, vol. iii., p. 354) *land slavery* in England has been one of the principal means of making the high nobility enormously rich, whilst, on the other hand, it has placed the greatest difficulties in the way of agricultural improvement of the soil which is so necessary.

"Ground rents appear to be most unjust when they are produced by simple increase in the population, and the augmented value of landed property caused thereby. This is most striking in and near large growing cities, where pieces of land, which were previously of little or no value, often become real gold fields within a short period. This kind of rent or augmentation of property is evidently produced without the assistance from the individual merely by the industry and activity of the community, but which, nevertheless, becomes the result of its industry to the individual owner of the property without any deduction. Here even *without* the introduction of communistic possession of the

\* The county of Sutherland contains more than a million acres of land belonging to TWO owners, out of which not more than 23,000 acres are under cultivation. The English lords prefer making sheep-runs, hunting ground, or enormous parks out of cultivable land.



soil, the community even now, by equitable taxation, might be made at least a joint proprietor of the benefit created by itself."

These views of educated and intelligent foreigners are of very high value, being the result of calm and dispassionate reflection, and may be accepted as an apt preface to the matters mooted in the present small brochure.

## THE LAND AND LANDLORDISM.

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**H**OW is it that the possession of Land is so coveted by gentlemen? Almost every other kind of property gives a better interest. Consols give as good a security with infinitely less trouble; still the ambition of a wealthy tradesman is to buy an estate only yielding, perhaps, three per cent., and costing enormously in the shape of an attorney's bill.

How does this happen?

Because the rags of Feudalism still cling to us. When William the Conqueror took possession of these islands his first thought was to secure his conquests, and so, with little ceremony, he parcelled out the country into large estates over which he placed his chief officers. *He did not give these estates in fee simple.* The land, (as in Asia now,) belonged to the Crown, that is, to the people as represented by the Crown, and these Dukes, Counts and Barons were

made *tenants* of the Crown. And what was the rent they paid? They paid all the military expenses, which, in these days, amount to twenty-seven millions, and are paid by the landless people—in other words they were bound to serve the King in time of war and to bring into the field a certain number of their tenants according to the extent of their possessions.

Thus we see that the principle of absolute private possession in land had not yet made its appearance, and the axiom "that property has its duties as well as its privileges," (the utterance of which by the late Mr. Drummond brought such opprobrium on his head) was then in active force.

The country in those ancient days was neither more nor less than an organized armed camp, these great nobles being the officers, their duties clear and defined as their rank, which was military. The Sovereign in those days did not bestow titles on mere money bags.

In order to stereotype this military class and to keep a great number of landlords in this position as military officers ready to be called out in time of war, primogeniture and entail were established so that the eldest son stepped into the place of the fallen sire inheriting his duties and his pay. If there were no sons, but daughters only, the King had always a favourite officer on whom to bestow the hand of the heiress.

In the middle ages when force was uppermost, this social and political system of feudalism was perhaps as good a scheme as a nation of warriors could invent. Like all other systems it was the product neither of one