



THE FABIAN SOCIETY,

17, OSWALDSTON STREET, REGENT'S PARK.

FABIAN TRACTS, No. 3.

TO PROVIDENT LANDLORDS AND CAPITALISTS.



A Suggestion and a Warning.

“If you can consistently with sound economic doctrines increase the number of those who hold a direct interest in property, it will undoubtedly be an unmixed good to the community; and your position will be immeasurably fortified in your opposition to the promptings of certain voices which openly preach Socialism on the other side of the Atlantic, and which find a vulgar and feeble echo at home.”

MR. G. W. E. RUSSELL, M.P., to *The Small Farm and Labourers Land Company (Limited)*. Mansion House, 30th June, 1885.

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NOTE.—Great care should be taken to keep this tract out of the hands of radical workmen, socialist demagogues, and the like, as they are but too apt to conclude that schemes favourable to landlords cannot be permanently advantageous to the labouring class.



TO PROVIDENT LANDLORDS AND CAPITALISTS.

A Suggestion and a Warning.

THE FABIAN SOCIETY, having in view the advance of Socialism in England, and the threatened subversion of the powers hitherto exercised by private proprietors of the national land and capital, ventures plainly to warn all such proprietors that the establishment of Socialism in England means nothing less than the compulsion of all members of the upper class, without regard to sex or condition, to work for their own living. In such a state of things, not even noble or royal birth would enable a delicately nurtured lady to obtain the most menial service from a vulgar person without suffering the humiliation of rendering an equivalent service in exchange. The Fabian Society, assuming that the proprietary classes are willing to leave nothing undone that may tend to avert conditions so frightful and unnatural to them, beg to recommend to their earnest support all undertakings having for their object the parcelling out of waste or inferior lands among the labouring class, and the attachment to the soil of a numerous body of peasant proprietors. A bare statement of the probable results of such a reform will sufficiently recommend it to proprietors.

I. It will provide purchasers for land hitherto unsaleable ; and the purchase-money will be guaranteed by opulent joint stock companies.

II. If its effect be to enlarge the total area already under cultivation by the addition of inferior land, it will, according to a well known economic law, increase the amount of paid labour that ultimately determines the value of farm produce. The consequent rise in the price of wheat will enable the farmers of all

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land now under cultivation to pay higher rents, whereby the landlords will be enriched.

III. The enrichment of the landlords will enable them to employ more of our starving poor as domestic servants, as well as to purchase more of the products of artists and traders, and so greatly ameliorate the condition of the destitute, and stimulate Commerce and the Fine Arts.

IV. Those habits of idleness which are the bane of our national prosperity will be effectually checked in the peasant proprietors by the competition of capitalist farmers at home and abroad using improved machinery to cultivate large tracts of superior land with an economy unattainable by the small farmer, whose time will be so completely occupied by the excessive labour imposed on him by this competition, and whose mind will be so full of anxiety, that he will have neither time to attend Socialist meetings, nor leisure to consider the justice of schemes of Land Nationalization that menace the very existence of the Landlord class.

V. THE PEASANT PROPRIETOR, HAVING A STAKE IN THE COUNTRY, WILL, UNLIKE THE LANDLESS LABOURER OF TO-DAY, HAVE A COMMON INTEREST WITH THE LANDLORD IN RESISTING REVOLUTIONARY PROPOSALS.

VI. Rent, which cannot be abolished, will continue to support the class that is, in its own opinion, most deserving of it. For, to quote one of the most celebrated prose writers of the present century (Thomas De Quincey): "*Rents are themselves inevitable consequences, bound up with the necessities of the case. As inevitable results, these increments on land import no blame to landlords, seeing that under any system of civil interests, and any administration of those interests, such increments eternally arising must be enjoyed by somebody. Having thus reduced the question to a simple case of comparison between country gentlemen (as the most ordinary class of rent-receivers) and any other assignable receivers, Ricardo was too conscientious to pretend that this class was not, amongst us, one of our noblest. If we have led Europe in political counsels since 1624: if we first founded a representative government—by whom else than our country gentlemen, in Parliament assembled, were we ourselves guided?*"

