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**A BRIEF HISTORY  
OF  
LANDHOLDING  
IN  
ENGLAND**

**BY  
JOSEPH EDWARDS**

**TWO PENCE.**

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# A BRIEF HISTORY OF LANDHOLDING IN ENGLAND

By JOSEPH EDWARDS

Founder and First Editor of

*"The Labour Annual"* and *"The Reformers' Year Book"*

Editor of *"The Land Reformers' Handbook"*

[Reprinted, by permission, from "Land and Real Tariff Reform"  
—the first issue of "The Land Reformers' Handbook"]

"LAND VALUES" PUBLICATION DEPARTMENT  
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## FOREWORDS.

**N**EAR the window by which I write a great bull is tethered by a ring in his nose. Grazing round and round he has wound his rope about the stake until now he stands a close prisoner, tantalised by rich grass he cannot reach, unable even to toss his head to rid him of the flies that cluster on his shoulders. Now and again he struggles vainly, and then, after pitiful bellowings, relapses into silent misery.

"This bull, a very type of massive strength, who, because he has not wit enough to see how he might be free, suffers want in sight of plenty, and is helplessly preyed upon by weaker creatures, seems to me no unfit emblem of the working masses.

"In all lands, men whose toil creates abounding wealth are pinched with poverty, and, while advancing civilisation opens wider vistas and awakens new desires, are held down to brutish levels by animal needs. Bitterly conscious of injustice, feeling in their inmost souls that they were made for more than so narrow a life, they, too, spasmodically struggle and cry out. But until they trace effect to cause, until they see how they are fettered and how they may be freed, their struggles and outcries are as vain as those of the bull. Nay, they are vainer. I shall go out and drive the bull in the way that will untwist his rope. But who shall drive men into freedom? Till they use the reason with which they have been gifted, nothing can avail. For them there is no special providence.

"Under all forms of Government the ultimate power lies with the masses. It is not kings, nor aristocracies, nor landowners, nor capitalists, that anywhere really enslave the people. It is their own ignorance." (*The opening words of the Introductory Chapter of Henry George's Protection or Free Trade.*)

# A PEOPLE ROBBED AND ENSLAVED

## A BRIEF HISTORICAL OUTLINE OF THE RISE OF LANDHOLDING IN ENGLAND

THE source and growth of English Land usages is a subject, even to the earnest student of social conditions, intricate and uninviting in the extreme. It is one which usually requires years of special study, and even the legal fraternity, as a class, fight shy of the tortuous development of English Landholding. Few laymen, of course, have any intimate knowledge of its difficult and complex history. The mere outline which follows is an attempt to patch together from many ancient sources the main facts of a story as to which none other can possibly be so important to the liberty-loving Englishman of to-day. For upon our day and generation is laid the great burden first of knowing how mankind has become enslaved through the alienation of its birthright in the earth, and, next, of seeing and applying the simple and natural method of regaining freedom.

With further time and opportunity it is hoped, in later issues, and with the kindly help of many readers, to render this narrative more readable and continuous, and probably more minutely accurate. Help and suggestions will be gladly welcomed. Meanwhile indulgence is craved for all shortcomings.

Alike in Saxon and in Norman England all holders of land were bound to render service to the State. Principles of self-government were inculcated early in the Anglo-Saxon times. Alfred was "Great" inasmuch as he not only drove out the marauding Danes, who had sacked London and Canterbury so long before as A.D. 851, but had established a system of local government and public service of which we have not even yet achieved the equal. Shires, hundreds, wapentakes, tithings were marked out; and shire motes, burgh motes and witenagemote were established. Public defence and the administration of justice were essential parts of every man's duty. The responsibilities of land tenure were fixed long before the Norman feudalism of William the Conqueror. He in reality imposed on the nation a regal autocracy in place of the ancient forms of Saxon local government. The Witenagemote was revived by a disgusted people two centuries later under the new name of Parliament, but we are only now returning to the old powers of local government as represented by Municipal councils.

**William I.** It early became a fundamental maxim of law that all lands were held mediately or immediately of the Crown, in consideration of certain services to be rendered and of certain payments to be made by the tenants. In the feudal system all was shaped after the same model: the lord's obligation to perform services for the king being followed by a similar requirement of the lord from his tenants to perform services or make payments for lands held. Curiously however, when these lords or military tenants voted the abolition of all services and payments due from themselves to the king, they quite forgot to remit the services and

payments due to them from their own sub-tenants. Nor has this unequal treatment yet been adjusted. On the contrary the injustice has been much further increased, for, in addition to paying rents in lieu of services to the over-lord, the sub-tenants ever since have had to bear the bulk of the burdens, gradually piled up to near breaking-point, of all the indirect taxation of Excise and Customs, invented to replace the ancient charges on Land, in order to meet the immensely increased national expenditure. The result of this **utterly unjust transfer of public burdens** has been to relieve almost entirely the ruling and land-holding classes from contributing towards the necessary expenses of the state and to enable them to divert into their own private purses the equitable rent-charge legitimately due from land users towards the public revenues. All of which has been done so quietly and expertly that the majority of people do not yet even suspect what has gone wrong with them!

Non-performance of feudal services or duties was in itself a forfeiture of the fief. The over-lord, having the tenant thus completely in his power, could make the composition in lieu of service as large and oppressive as he pleased.

*Terra Regis*, the ancient demesnes of the Crown, were used for provisioning the King's household, and their tenants had special privileges. Some of these still remain, long after the duties attaching have fallen into disuse or been forgotten.

Justices' justice and judge-made law also rose into dominance and gradually almost nullified the more democratic assemblies.

After the **Conquest, 1066**, William allowed the Norman Clergy to attend law courts of their own and to hold land free of feudal obligations, thus establishing the dual authority of King's law and Common law which has been the source of so much discord. In **1071**, Hereward the Wake, last of the English, was defeated at Ely, the Norman conquest completed, and the Norman feudal system introduced.

**1081-6 First general survey of England**, including extent, proprietors, tenures, values, how cultivated, number of tenants, cottagers and slaves. This monumental task, called Domesday Book, is still extant. Allegiance for lands granted sworn at great Witenagemote at Salisbury, attended by 60,000 men. With privileges the Feudal system imposed duties. Some portions of land bore the entire burden of State expenses, others those of the Army, the Church, and the poor. A large proportion, the commons, was free to the people.

From **Domesday Book** it appears the Crown acquired the entire property of 1,422 manors, to which should be added, as showing the extent of the national property, 68 royal forests, 13 chases, and 781 parks, situated in different parts of the country. Fleta says: "Ancient manors or rights annexed to the crown it is unlawful for the king to alienate, and every king is bound to resume the alienated property of his crown" (bk. 1, ch. 8, par. 1). And again: "Nor will prescription of length of time avail the wrongful holder of this property: for length of time only in this case aggravates rather than lessens the injury; since it ought to be clear to all that such things by the law of nature and nations belong only to the crown" (bk. 3, ch. 6, par. 3).

Lands acquired by escheat or forfeiture were treated differently: these the king might alienate, and time ran against the king in regard to them as against any other person.

Henry 3 resumed crown lands granted by Stephen, and by his own mother, Matilda.



Succeeding kings however jumbled up their *hócland* (private estate) and the *folclands*, with the result that the national property has now been almost entirely granted away to private people. As Blackstone observes (*Comm.* I, 307) an attempt to stop this alienation was made too late, and after almost every valuable possession of the Crown had been granted away, either on very long leases or for ever. "If every gentleman in the kingdom was to be stripped of such of his lands as were formerly the property of the Crown; was to be again subject to the inconveniences of purveyance and pre-emption, the oppression of forest laws, and the slavery of feudal tenures; and was to resign into the king's hands all his royal franchises of waifs, wrecks, estrays, treasure-trove, mines, deodands, forfeitures and the like; he would find himself a greater loser than by paying his quota to such taxes as are necessary to the support of government." If all taxpayers were possessed of crown lands, as described, nothing could be more just than that each should pay his share of the common expenses of government. If!

During the first two centuries after the Norman Conquest the revenue of the country was mainly derived from crown lands, feudal tenures and commutations for military service (*scutages*), until the crown lands were wasted by the weakness and extravagance of Henry 3. Land taxes were occasionally levied by authority of the Crown. Till 1166 there was no tax levied on commodities or personal effects. In that year an "offering" of 6*d.* in the pound was raised to assist the Christians in the East. In 1188 a tax of one-tenth was imposed either on the personal effects of all not engaged in the crusade against Saladin, or on the entire property, real and personal, of the clergy, being non-combatants, and consequently called the *Saladin tithe*. Tenths and fifteenths were afterwards occasionally granted, assessed on a very low valuation on personal chattels.

1295 The appearance of a popular assembly—the House of Commons—quickly united, in opposition to it, the King, the Lords, and the Church. The Crown office of *Lord Chancellor* gradually rose into importance. Being usually a high Church dignitary his predilections were strongly ecclesiastical. Among other things he had charge of the great seal, the king's conscience and the public accounts and records, and presided over the Lords as king's deputy. The Chancery, with unchecked power, polluted justice, became a political bureaucracy, received bribes and helped both the Crown and Lords to evade their responsibilities to the nation. Many and tortuous devices were used to treat public lands as private property.

1297 Enacted that the King should take no aids or tasks except by the common assent of the realm. Blackstone says "*scutage* could not be levied but by consent of Parliament; *scutages* being indeed the ground-work of all succeeding subsidies, and the land-tax of later times." Edward I., to increase his revenue, resorted to various illegal exactions on the Jews and the Church, and to the imposition of *customs duties*. He also obtained from Parliament a grant of the customs on export of wool and hides. These customs duties were abolished as unconstitutional in 1311.

Besides *scutage*, seven incidents or consequences were inseparably attached to the *tenure of knight service*: (1) *Aids*, to ransom the lord, to knight his eldest son and dower his eldest daughter. (2) *Relief*, a fine when feuds became hereditary, fixed at about 25 per cent. of annual value of lands held. (3) *Primer Seisin* (applicable only to king's tenants), the king's right to a year's or half year's profits on the passing of an estate

by death. (4) **Wardship**, the over-lord's custody of body and lands of heirs, if male till 21, if female till 16. The "inquisitio post mortem" was an enquiry, instituted on the death of every landholder, as to the value of his estate, its tenure, and his rightful heir, so as to ascertain the extent of the Crown's prerogatives (see Record Commrs.' *Inquisitiones*). In place of this inquisition and fine, which fell entirely on landholders, was substituted later the modern Excise taxation, the oppressive incidence of which falls chiefly on non-landholders. (5) **Maritagium**, the disposing of female wards in marriage, and frequently the forfeiture of the estates of such wards, often of immense value. Thus Mandeville paid Henry 3 20,000 marks, estimated by Hume as equal to nearly £400,000 of our money, that he might have to wife Isabell of Gloucester, with all her lands and knights' fees. (6) **Fines for Alienation**, payments for the license and consent of the lord to sell; and (7) **Escheat**, by lack of heirs, or by treason or felony; the reversion of lands to the lord or to the Crown; forfeitures depending on ancient Saxon Law. Escheators were appointed who so abused their powers that their very name has crystallised into our modern "cheat."

Such were the strict conditions on which feudal tenures were held, and they were sufficiently uncertain, oppressive and liable to abuse to make it very desirable for tenants to exchange them on opportunity for others less objectionable. Lord Coke in his *Institutes* (v. 4, pp. 202-3) describes in full how, in 1620, King James expressed his willingness to substitute his feudal rights for an annual rent-charge of £200,000, a sum equal to nearly half the country's entire revenue at that time.

Whereat "amongst certain old Parliament men" thirteen considerations were scheduled as to the incidence and benefits of such substitution and are duly set out by Coke. "Which motion and considerations, though not carried, we thought good to remember, hoping that so good a motion, tending to the honour and profit of the King and his Crown for ever, and the freedom and the quiet of his subjects and their posterities, will some time or other (by the Grace of God) by authority of Parliament one way or other take effect and be established."

The oppressive incidence of the feudal tenures is forcibly described by Sir Thomas Smith, one of the principal secretaries of state to Edward 6 and Elizabeth. In the 5th chap. of 3rd book of his *Commonwealth*, he writes: "When the father is dead, who hath the natural care of his child, not the mother, nor the uncle, nor the next of kin, who for all reason would have most natural care for the bringing up of the infant and minor, but the lord of whom he holdeth his land in the knight-service, be it the King or Queen, Duke, Marquis, or any other, hath the government of his body and marriage, or else who that bought him at the first, second, or third hand. The Prince, as having so many, must needs give or sell his wards away to other, and so he doth. Other do but seek which way they may make most advantage of him, as of an ox or other beast. These all (say they) have no natural care of the infant, but of their own gain, and especially the buyer will not suffer his ward to take any great pains, either in study, or in any other hardness, lest he should be sick and die, before he hath married his daughter, sister, or cousin, for whose sake he bought him, and then all his money which he paid for him should be lost. So he who had a father which kept a good house, and had all things in good order to maintain it, shall come to his own, after he is out of wardship, woods decayed, houses fallen down, stock wasted and gone, lands let forth, and ploughed to be barren, and, to make amends, shall

pay yet one year's rent, for relief, and sue *ouster le maine*, besides other charges, so that not of many years, and peradventure never, he shall be able to recover, and come to the estate where his father left it."

Justice Blackstone's summing up of the matter is also worth reproducing. In support of the fact that the amount received by the lord would be an entirely inadequate measure of the total amount paid or lost by the tenant he says: "Besides the scutages to which they were liable in defect of personal attendance, which, however, were assessed by themselves in parliament, they might be called upon by the king or lord paramount for aids, whenever his eldest son was to be knighted, or his eldest daughter married; not to forget the ransom of his own person. The heir, on the death of his ancestor, if of full age, was plundered of the first emoluments arising from his inheritance, by way of relief and primer seisin; and if under age of the whole of his estate during infancy. And then . . . to make amends he was yet to pay . . . the price or value of his marriage, if he refused such wife as his lord and guardian had bartered for, and imposed upon him; or twice that value if he married another woman. Add to this the untimely and expensive honour of knighthood, to make his poverty more completely splendid. And when, by these deductions, his fortune was so shattered and ruined, that perhaps he was obliged to sell his patrimony, he had not even that poor privilege allowed him, without paying an exorbitant fine for a license of alienation."

1468 Edward 4, following the example of Henry 2, resumes much Crown land, as a method of increasing revenues, by escheats, forfeitures and other resumpcions. The ordinary expenses of government from this time on were also contributed to by customs duties on the import of wine and other goods, and on the export of agricultural produce. Extraordinary expenses until the Rebellion, 1640, were met by tenths and fifteenths on property and by subsidies on lands.

1495 "A peasant could provision his family for a year by 15 weeks ordinary work, an artisan in 10 weeks." (Thorold Rogers.) The end of the 15th century was the **Golden Age of English labour**. Wages had risen considerably, while food was extraordinarily low. Wheat was 14d. a bushel, eggs 25 to 40 a penny, beer ½d. a gallon, meat ¼d. a pound, and pigs only 4d. each. Housing was poor, but the people were independent and free.

1510 Landholders, to supply wool, had been **enclosing** lands for sheep runs, and had got rid of unwelcome tenants by seizing their lands. In 1517 a Commission reports wholesale **depopulation**, waste houses and departed population, churches falling into ruin, and villages breaking up by reason of the spread of sheep farming. Parliament provides under heavy penalties that no person was to keep more than 2,000 sheep. Thus began the alienation of the people from the land. Iniquitous methods were resorted to for driving the people off the land. Farmers were got rid of by force or fraud, or, after repeated wrongs, persuaded into parting with their property at ruinous prices. So, without knowing where to go, the poor wretches wandered homeless around, to beg or steal, often to be thrown into prison as vagabonds. In 1534 Parliament legislated against these increasing evils, enacting that 20 acres of land should go with each farmhouse and that the owner keep it in repair. Later on penalties were imposed on all who "convert tillage into pasturage," for, where formerly 200 persons lived by their lawful labour, now only 2 or 3 herdsmen were employed.

1520 To pay for royal extravagances the currency was debased by reducing the worth of silver in a shilling by degrees from elevenpence to

threepence. Goods naturally went up in price when paid for in this debased coinage, goods formerly costing 10*d.* now costing 30*d.* Wages too went up, but only by 50%, so that there was a reduction in real wages of 50%. Bishop Latimer tells how during his time rents, formerly £3 or £4 a year, had gone up to £16—an increase of 400% in a generation! The tenants are unable thereafter “to do anything for the King, nor for their own children, nor even to give a cup of drink to the poor.” Thus were our yeomanry reduced to slavery.

1536 Crown (Henry 8) resumes possession of smaller **monasteries** and their lands, 3 years later of the larger monasteries, and again 10 years later of the **Guild lands**. Instead however of being retained and their revenues used for expenses of Government, they were granted to parasites who proved much more rapacious than the previous holders. The results were that small holders gradually disappeared, **wage service** became common; prices went up and wages went down; severe laws enacted against begging and destitution. The closing of monasteries robbed the poor of their only friends, and the army of landless lusty beggars wandered up and down, begging or stealing their daily food. In the confiscation of Guild lands (Edward 6) the **London City Guilds** proved strong enough to protect their own interests—laying the foundation of their present opulence. Even the common Londoners at this time prevented the enclosure of their playing-fields by cutting down the hedges and filling in the ditches whenever attempts were made to make them private.

1549 With the depreciated currency food and all other goods rapidly rose in price. That is, the purchasing power of money had gone down to only one-third of what it was previously. “Within these 30 years I could buy the best pig or goose that I could lay my hand on at 4*d.*, which now costeth 12*d.*”

Duke of Somerset, Protector of young Edward 6, pitied peasantry, so shamefully despoiled, and demanded by proclamation “that they who had enclosed any lands, accustomed to lie open, should under penalty before a day assigned lay them open again.” He also appointed a Commission to inquire into the questions of—decayed towns; farmhouses despoiled through enclosures; excessive fines and raising of rents; tillage turned into pasture, etc. But the landholders (despoilers) were too much even for him. He was indicted and executed for defending the poor. Bills introduced into Parliament to curtail the power of landholders were, naturally, rejected. As John Hales said, “the sheep were entrusted to the care of the wolf.”

All these expropriated labourers and their families were dealt with very harshly, as though they themselves were responsible for their own oppression. Here are some of the provisions of the **Act against idleness** and vagabondry, passed under a Protestant King, 360 years ago: “If any man or woman, able to work, shall refuse to labour and shall live idly for 3 days, he or she shall be branded with a red-hot iron on the breast with the letter V, and be adjudged for 2 years the slave of any person who shall inform against such idler.” Masters were empowered to feed their slaves on bread and water, to beat and chain them, to sell, bequeath, or hire out, and to put a ring of iron about the neck, arm or leg for the more knowledge or better surety of keeping them. An escaped slave was to be branded on the cheek, and become a slave for life. On a second escape he “was to suffer pains of death, as other felons ought to do.”

1552 Ordinary historians denounce our old freedom-loving countrymen who revolted against the unjust tyrannies of the landholders as traitors

and scoundrels. Yet even in those days many men recognised the iniquitous nature of these oppressions, and pleaded in high places the cause of the poor. Bernard Gilpin, preaching before Edward 6, said of the envious large landholders: "Such boldness have the covetous cormorants that now their robberies, extortion and open oppression, have no end or limits. No banks can keep in their violence. As for turning poor men out of their holdings they take it for no offence, but say their land is their own, and they turn them out of their shrouds like mice. Thousands in England, through such, now beg from door to door, which once kept honest houses." In similar strain was the official "Prayer for Landlords" which all may read in Edward 6's Private Prayerbook (1553).

**1560** Elizabeth encouraged the better use of land and the employment of more labourers. At least 4 acres of ground were to be assigned to every cottage built, in the penalty of "a fine of 40s. per month the cottage is so continued." There were at this time gangs of "broken men" and "sturdy beggars" holding whole tracts of country in terror. Repression and wholesale massacre of these dispossessed tenants however went pitilessly on. The capture and hanging of 50 of these outcasts at a time was a sport indulged in by the "gentry." They even complained bitterly to the Government of the needless delay in waiting till the Assizes before they could enjoy seeing 50 others hanging beside them!

**1563** Better methods of agriculture were being introduced, needing more men and greatly increasing the yield. English commerce, seafaring, and fishing absorbed many others divorced from the land. Domestic manufactures, as hand-spinning, weaving, fulling, dyeing, iron and coal mining, earthenware making and many others, were now being commenced and employed more and more labourers. Industry was regulated, methods of work and amount of charges were arranged. **Statute of Apprentices** (1563), which was only repealed in 1813, made labour compulsory, fixed wages, required an apprenticeship of 7 years to any trade, fixed working hours as 12 in summer and all daylight in winter, and fixed engagements by the year, with 6 months' notice of change on either side.

**1580** Proclamation against building new houses within 3 miles of any of the gates of London City and against "letting or setting any more families than one only to be placed in any one house." Even in those days miserable accommodation and overcrowding dogged the footsteps of the disinherited. Evicted from the country "great multitudes of the people" crowded to the towns, making slums naturally. London had at this time 160,000 inhabitants. In 1595 there were 4,132 "poor householders" in London, probably 4,132 families of poor.

**1653** Duty of 8d. charged on every gallon of tea made for sale. For 600 yrs. after the Conquest a **free import trade** was undoubtedly the constitutional policy of England. **Customs duties** were then imposed and have since formed a constantly increasing source of revenue. In the 17th century the annual average receipts rose rapidly from £170,000 to over a million, and this had risen to £1,985,376 in 1759. In 1790 £3,777,152 was raised; in 1798 £10,342,757; in 1815 £14,648,729, and in 1841 £19,485,217. The Customs revenue for 1908 was £32,490,000.

**Excise.** No **excise duties** were levied in England until 1640. They were first levied on liquors only, but afterwards on other articles. It was solemnly declared that, after the Civil War, all excise duties should be abolished. During the Commonwealth all such taxes were declared to be unconstitutional, but at the Restoration yielded £300,000. In 1700 the Excise yielded over a million; in 1789 7 millions; in 1815

£30,107,084; while the yield in 1908 was £62,760,000 (Excise, Estate duties and stamps).

The proportion of the national expenses which the land has borne at various stages during the past 1,000 years forms a very striking commentary on legislation by landholders. Right up to the time of cutting off King Charles I.'s head in 1640 land contributed much the greater part of the taxes imposed. When the feudal tenures were abolished the percentage dropped to 31; the average of George I. was 23%; in 1770 it was 15%; in 1798 it had further dropped to 6%; in 1837 to 4%; to-day it is 1%.

The total revenue, which previous to 1660 was less than a million, increased to nearly 6 millions in 1706; to 12 millions in 1780; to 71 millions in 1815 (the time of the French war and so abnormally high); and at the present time (1908) amounts to £137,317,044.

**Crown property** was nearly all granted away or leased to those connected with the government shortly after the Revolution (1689) on the pretence of rendering the Crown dependent on Parliament. These leases were renewed on merely nominal fines, when under proper management they would have yielded a considerable revenue. So that the Crown property has contributed very insufficiently to public expenses, at present a little over half a million.

**1656** The assessments for national expenses were raised monthly, according to the exigencies of the day, and varied from £35,000 to £100,000 per month, the proportion payable by England being 70 per cent., Ireland 18 per cent., and Scotland 12 per cent. From a copy of the enactment for 1656, preserved by Scobell, it is to be noted that the revenue required for carrying on the Government was raised by a pound rate on both real and personal property or "on all lands, tenements, hereditaments, annuities, rents, profits, parks, warrens, goods, chattels, stock (farm), merchandises, offices, or any other real or personal estate whatsoever, according to the value thereof; that is to say, so much upon every 20s. rent or yearly value of land, and real estate, and so much upon money, stock, and other personal estate, by an equal rate, wherein every £20 in money, stock, or other personal estate, shall bear the like charge as shall be laid on every 20s. yearly rent, or yearly value of land, as will raise the monthly sum or sums charged on the respective counties, cities, towns, and places aforesaid." The average amount thus raised during 19 years of the Commonwealth was £4,385,850—an enormous amount as money went then. Half of this was contributed in various forms by land.

**1660** On the Restoration it is clear from such evidence that Parliament intended to re-establish as quickly as possible all the feudal incidents connected with the monarchy. But a very strong movement for shifting the national burdens from the land had already begun. On April 25, 1660, during the Convention Parliament, the question was debated whether, to supply the growing needs of the country, and in view of the partial abolition of the feudal duties, an excise duty of 1s. 3d. per barrel on beer and a proportionate sum on other liquors which were sold in the kingdom should be levied, or whether a right and proper equivalent for the feudal services, in the form of an annual rent-charge on lands bearing a fixed proportion to the true yearly value thereof, and liable to increase in times of war or stress, should be levied. The Excise tax was estimated, with profits of wine licenses, to produce from £200,000 to £300,000 per year. As home-brewed ale was to be exempt this excise tax would touch scarcely one of those who were asked to vote for its imposition. This question, so vital to the future well-being and happiness of the kingdom, was warmly

debated. On November 13, 1660, several members moved to raise money by a land-tax; on the 19th many others spoke strongly against the Excise saying that it was the land that should pay and not poor people by way of Excise. On the 21st, on the motion to raise taxation by Excise "one half to be settled for the King's life and the other half for ever on the Crown," it was urged that to make every man who earns his bread by the sweat of his brow pay excise would be to excuse the Court of Wards, and would constitute a greater grievance on all than the Court of Wards was to a few. Other points urged were: that it was not right to make all householders hold *in capite* and to free the nobility (*i.e.* the poor have still to pay rent and the rich to escape); that an everlasting excise was unjust, if lands held of the King escaped; that there would be some strange commotions by the common people about it; that an army must be kept up to support its imposition; and that the rebellion in Naples came from impositions and excises, etc., etc. On the question being called the House divided, **151 voting in favour of the imposition of Excise duties and 149 against.** Thus by so small a majority as 2 was the entire future history of the kingdom changed, the people bound in shackles and in miseries, and enslaved.

It was then resolved "That the moiety of the excise of beer, ale, cyder, perry, and strong waters, at the rate it is now levied, shall be settled on the King's majesty, his heirs and successors, in full recompense and satisfaction for all tenures *in capite*, and by knight-service; and of the Court of Wards and liveries; and all emoluments thereby accruing, and in full satisfaction of all purveyance." So the Act was passed (12 Car. 2, c. 24), with some loopholes however which conferred further benefits on the large landholders. Those who held land of lords of manors were still held liable to them in services or rent, even though their superiors had been relieved from such services to the over-lord, the King.

Though the proportion of taxation formerly falling on land was considerable, the increased taxation yielded considerably more—about £294,950 at first, an amount which has progressively increased ever since, while the revenue from land has been almost stationary.

This Act completely altered the **fundamental Constitution** of the kingdom. Previously the Government was a **feudal monarchy**, the public expenses, both in peace and war, being defrayed by the various feudatories, any deficiency being provided out of the public property vested in the King for the time being, and by taxes and subsidies on land and personal property granted by Parliament.

But the Act gave the feudatories a complete discharge, as lawyers correctly word it, from "the oppressive fruits and incidents" of their tenure. While discharging their obligations it confirmed their rights, and created the moral and legal anomaly of **rights without obligations.** Such an anomaly is a legal and logical absurdity, and a moral fraud.

**Charles 2.** Ordinary revenue was £1,200,000 a year, equal to the 12 monthly assessments fixed by the Commonwealth. There were, in addition, assessments on property, borne almost entirely by landholders, to **build ships and support troops** in times of war. It is to be remarked that when the landholders thus defrayed expenses of army and navy they were always most desirous of ending any wars entered into as quickly as possible; whereas, in subsequent reigns, when these expenses were defrayed out of the general revenues, these same landholders were zealous supporters of wars of long duration. [Nor is this danger yet past. Very watchful eyes

must be kept in the immediate future on the landholding and dependent classes and their supporters in the press lest they again arouse the latent jingo spirit of the landless and ignorant masses in a mad clamour for war so as to swamp again the rising desire for permanent radical land and social reform. It must be made very clear, therefore, that, to meet the vast expenses of any future struggles which may be precipitated, the ancient principles of taxation should be reverted to, and every penny of the direct and indirect costs be charged on landholders.] Subsidies had become so unproductive that they were discontinued, the last being levied in 1673.

Complaints now arise as to **excessive taxation**. It was hoped that at the Revolution of 1689 times would be easier. The obnoxious hearth-money duty was abolished. An assessment of 1s. in the pound on the full true yearly value of all personal estate, on all lands and holdings and on offices and employments (army and navy excepted) was imposed. The exact wording of the Statute (1 W. & M. c. 20) may be worth remembering. The assessment of 1s. in the pound on manors, messuages, lands, tenements, hereditaments, etc., was to be made on what "the premises are now worth, to be leased, if the same were truly and *bonâ fide* leased or demised, at a rack-rent, and according to the full true yearly value thereof, without any respect had to the present rents reserved for the same, if such rents have been reserved upon such leases or estates made, for which any fine or income hath been paid or secured, and without any respect had to any former rates or taxes thereupon imposed." Also, as to methods, the Commissioners appointed to enforce the Act were directed to appoint at least two assessors in each parish of the rates and duties imposed. The assessors were instructed "to ascertain and inform themselves, by all lawful ways and means they could, of the true and full rate and valuation of the true yearly rents and profits of all manors, messuages, lands, tenements, as also all quarries, mines of coal, tin or lead, all iron works and salt works, allom mines or works, parks, chases, warrens, woods, underwoods and coppices, fishings, tithes, tolls, and other hereditaments, of what nature or kind soever, situate, lying and being, happening and arising within the limits of those places with which they should be charged; and being thereof so ascertained, they were to assess all and every the said manors" etc. at 1s. in the pound on the yearly value, "as the same were let for, or were worth to be let for, at the time of the assessing thereof as aforesaid."

**1689-90** For this year three separate aids, respectively of 1s., 2s., and 1s. were granted in the same terms as above quoted. This amounted to 4s. in the pound on the annual value of real property. Personal property (except debts, stock on land—now exempted for first time by exertions of landed interest—and household goods) was placed on the same footing. Legal interest was then £6 per cent.; 4s. per pound on £6 equals 24s., the amount of the assessment fixed on every £100 value of personal property. The total amount thus produced was £2,018,704.

**1691-2** Aids were granted on same terms in each year, amounting to £1,651,702 18s. The reduction is caused by the manipulation of the land-tax by landholders who endeavoured to make, and finally succeeded in making, the amount raised on real estate a fixed sum instead of, as so plainly indicated in the wording of the Act quoted, a growing sum based on the real annual value.

We thus see how the landholders, having first exempted themselves from their feudal obligations, now succeeded in stereotyping their contribu-



tion to the national expenses at the entirely inadequate amount forced out of them as payment in commutation of feudal dues.

1697 A poll tax first imposed of 4s. 4d. on all persons "of what estate, degree, age, sex or condition soever" not in receipt of parish relief, and other taxes on personal estate.

Fixed sum of £1,484,015 1s. 11<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d. voted and ordered by Parliament to be raised in precisely the same manner. Land escaped its rightful share of taxes, no fresh valuation being taken. So from 1697 onwards for 102 years, to 1798, no increase was made in the amount levied, though naturally the land and property values had enormously increased in the interval. In 1798 the amount then levied was made "perpetual"! and real estate onwards for many years was only assessed for £1,997,763. Of this sum, since 1706, Scotland's quota has been £48,000. Though called a Land Tax it was really a general property tax, a special income tax, and the residue of the amount a tax on real estate. Gradually personal property was allowed to escape assessment, partly because of the great difficulties in locating and valuing personal belongings, and receipts dwindled down to between £5,000 and £6,000 till in 1833 personal estates were altogether exempted.

In 1836 a select Committee on Agricultural Distress made some instructive enquiries as to the regulations and practice, which widely differed, concerning assessments of personalty. Examination and comparison of statutes show clearly that the original tax, misnamed land-tax, was levied in an illegal manner; and its perpetuation, being based on such erroneous construction, even on this ground alone, apart from other urgent reasons, requires immediate revision. The levying of the tax would probably better be described as inequitable and unconstitutional. There still exists therefore a constitutional right to a reopening of the whole question, and the setting upon a just and equitable basis the whole fabric of both national and local taxation throughout the kingdom.

1710 Endeavours made, bill passing Commons, to value lands and grants made by Crown since 13 Feb. 1688, with view to resumption, to meet public needs. Rejected by Lords. Resolution of Commons to tax Crown grants since 6 Feb. 1684 4s. in £ was evaded—"the leading men in both Houses," says Sinclair ("History of Revenue"), "being too deeply interested in grants of that nature to suffer such a bill to pass into a law." Enclosure Acts legalised (by a landholders' Parliament). While previous enclosures of common lands, millions of acres in extent, had been made by the strong hand of might, the 'legal' enclosure of the remaining commons was facilitated and hastened. Acts were easily obtained from a land-owning Parliament. In 1801, to make the process easier still, a general Act was passed. Within 158 years, 1710-1867, 7,660,439 acres or nearly one-third of the cultivated area was also enclosed; in 118 yrs. 1385 separate Enclosure Acts were passed. In some instances labourers were compensated by a few acres, the vast majority suffered heavily; now even the tradition of free land has almost died out.

Ancient law held that landholders were annually in debt to the nation which protected their tenure and gave value to the land. By the device of the fraudulent debtor, however, landholders evaded their responsibilities, they became perpetual cheats; the courts of Chancery and Equity jurisprudence supported the fraudulent device, and enabled landlords to take to their own use debts due to the nation, and even to put the nation every year in debt to the landlords. Thus rose the system of taxation of

commodities, and the piling up of that vast national debt which still hangs like a millstone round the necks of present taxpayers.

When one considers the dreary desolation of English, Scottish and Irish villages, the horrible congestion and death-dealing surroundings of city slums, the great hardships and undeserved penury of all who work or unsuccessfully try to get work, and then turns to the misappropriated wealth and power and the luxurious surroundings of the idle, selfish and vicious landowning classes, it is not surprising that doubts arise whether the legal decisions which are at the back of these vast differences, were conceived, as claimed, in a high and overruling spirit of mercy and justice for which the Common law is too mean and base. It is usual for members of **great landed families** to speak as if they derived their lands and privileges from the valour of their ancestors. Do not novelists and playwrights support the pretence? The baronial house, the mail-clad men, the patrols of retainers all afford good copy for an ignorant and debased generation. The golden calf set up for our worship and respectful admiration must be ground to pieces. **British Lordism** was not set up by the valour of brave men! War is terrible, but its tyranny is not so terrible as that of cruel, debauching lies. The **British Aristocracy**—referred to once by Disraeli as an “organised hypocrisy”—is set up for our reverence, and is allowed to superintend and usually to hinder our every effort to raise the weak and support the suffering. The evil lies in the economic power they possess as landowners. So long as wealth is showered on idleness and lies, honest hard work is doomed to hardship and want. All who see this evil and its root causes must needs denounce it.

**1746** How **enclosure** affected rent and wages is well seen in the accounts of a parish carefully kept before and after the commons were enclosed: In 1746—Rent paid £1,138, Wages and profits to 82 families of farmers and cottagers £2,963; total £4,101. Receipts from sale of corn, wool, live stock, and dairy produce £4,101. In 1786—Rent was £1,801, Wages and profits to 4 larger farmers and perhaps 20 hands £859. Receipts, mainly from stock and dairy, £2,660.—Note that one-third less of wealth was produced, that 60 per cent. more of rent had to be paid for the privilege of producing it, and that over 70 families were driven out of the parish to seek work in the towns, or become vagabonds and idlers.

**1750** The present **Scottish Crofter System** is an abnormal growth which followed the Stuart rising of 1745. Chiefs formerly held their land in trust for the whole clan. The land was not for the personal enjoyment and profit of the chief, he was responsible for the military service and the good government of his tenants, the clansmen. Unscrupulous chiefs however now began to register the land in their own names as private owners without consulting the clan. Naturally there followed the division into owners and tenants; later into “landlords,” “factors” and “crofters,” terms unknown in Gaelic. The dispossessed, of course, got no compensation. They forgot to ask for it 160 years ago, and have not had sufficient spirit to put in an effective demand.

**1786** **Enclosure Act** described by a farmer in tract written in 1786. “To obtain an Act of Parliament to enclose a common field two witnesses are produced to swear that the lands in their present state are not worth occupying, though at the same time they are lands of the best soil in the kingdom, and can produce corn in the greatest abundance and of the best quality. And by enclosing such lands they are generally prevented from producing any corn at all, as the landowner converts twenty small

farms into four large ones. The tenants are tied down in their leases not to plough. . . . It is no uncommon thing for one of these new created farmers to spend ten or twelve pounds at one entertainment, and to wash down delicate food with the most expensive wines" etc.

**1790-1820** Steam power is introduced by Watt, Boulton, and Roebuck, applied to factories, mines, railways and many other purposes. Its chief result in multiplying production was to raise rents enormously, and further depress the spending power of wages.

Taxation increased rapidly; wars by means of borrowed money (leaving the future to pay the instalments) were frequent, even necessary to withdraw attention from social evils at home. The American "Revolution" cost 100 millions and lost us our Colonies; the French wars, to crush popular liberty in France and prevent any attempt to upset unjust privileges of "aristocracy" here, cost us 831 millions, and the poor paid for all.

Everything rose in price through the artificial scarcity, the usual increases being from 200 to 300 per cent. Duties were imposed and increased: home-brewed ale paid 4*d.* a gallon, tea 3*s.* 6*d.* a lb., leather 3*d.* a lb. (the skins of home-killed beasts when tanned having also to pay); salt, bricks, tiles, windows all paid toll; soap paid 3½*d.* a lb., candles 1*d.* a lb., clothing in all its stages paid—raw cotton, colours, oils, machinery, etc. So the children went barefoot, the people in rags and their houses to rack and ruin: all to save the landlords from paying their just share of taxation, and to help preserve their ill-gotten wealth.

**1818** Driven by landlord greed and oppression from the land, **agricultural labourers** were glad to accept work for their children in the new factories under most appalling conditions. Parochial authorities also sold their young charges wholesale, and the lives of the little white slaves were used up remorselessly. Children of 6 were forced to work 15 or 16 hours daily; they were propped up, paced and driven; many thousands perished, others grew up grossly ignorant and depraved, with sickly and deformed bodies. House of Lords increased hours from 10 to 12 daily for children 9 years old in a Commons bill to limit age and hours.—14 years' more agitation was necessary to make children under 13 half-timers, and to limit hours of those over 13 to 69 weekly. All the while the land was closed to the people, prohibitive prices being charged for permission to use. Richard Oastler describes the condition of the labourers, deprived of access to land, crowding to the factory towns, living in slums horrible beyond description, with no sanitation or ventilation, and little even of light and air, dying faster than they were born. Though themselves unable to get work of any kind, they found occupation in getting their young children to work to eke out a miserable dog's life: "I saw full-grown athletic men whose only labour was to carry their little ones to the mill long before the sun was risen, and to bring them home at night long after it had set. I heard the curses of these broken-hearted fathers, loud and deep and registered never to be forgotten." In such manner was laid the foundation of this country's greatness. The **factory system**, though of course vastly improved, is still with us, and is even yet admired.

**1823** Inhuman fines and punishments were inflicted for non-observance of masters' regulations in factories: spinners dirty at work, fined 1*s.*; if found washing, 1*s.*; heard whistling, 1*s.*; 5 minutes late, 2*s.*; sick and no acceptable substitute, 6*s.* daily for steam, etc. Rent of hovels, 2*s.* 6*d.*—3*s.* 6*d.* weekly, deducted from wages; food to be bought at specified shops, where masters were allowed commission up to 15 per cent.; unregulated

and one-sided competition the order of the day. "Blanketeers," "bread or blood" marches, Luddites, Hampden Clubs, local riots and insurrections, war on power-looms and machinery, illegal trade unions, rick-burnings, hangings, and Corn Laws the order of the day. Repressive legislation was the answer of Government to the popular discontent.

**1832-49** Birmingham National Convention of "Chartists" draws up Great Charter. So blind, however, had the people now become to the cause of their miseries that the land question was almost universally overlooked. Political reforms were demanded, petitions drawn up, and torchlight meetings held, but no practicable reforms resulted for many years. Feargus O'Connor, however, renewed the agitation, suggested by Spence earlier in the century, for popular access to the land, while Robert Owen busily advocated co-operative agricultural colonies. **Corn Laws** were passed in 1814 to keep up price of corn, and the rentals of landlords. Cheaper foreign corn was kept out by excessive taxation, and bread went up to 5*d.* per pound. In 1838 Richard Cobden and John Bright formed the Anti-Corn Law League, holding meetings and distributing large quantities of literature all over the country. Sir R. Peel was at last converted and the Corn Duties were abolished 60 years ago—in February, 1849. That **Cobden** himself realised the insufficiency of the abolition of the Corn Laws in removing poverty is evidenced by the agitation that was continued to combat the evils of landlordism. Speaking at Derby, on Dec. 10, 1841, he said: "When I look into the question of the land-tax from its origin to the present time, I am bound to exclaim that it exhibits an instance of selfish legislation secondary only in audacity to the corn law and provision monopolies. Would you believe that the land-tax, in its origin, was nothing but a commutation rent-charge to be paid to the State by the landowners, in consideration of the Crown giving up all the feudal tenures and services by which they held the land? Yes, exactly 149 years ago, when the landed aristocracy got possession of the throne in the person of King William, at our glorious revolution they got rid of all the old feudal tenures and services . . . which yielded the whole revenue of the State; and besides which the land had to find soldiers and maintain them. These incumbrances were given up for a *bona-fide* rent-charge upon the land of 4*s.* in the pound; and the land was valued and assessed, 149 years ago, at nine million a year; and upon that valuation the land-tax is still laid.

"Now, you gentlemen of the middle classes, whose windows are counted, and who have a schedule sent you every year, in which you are required to state the number of your dogs and horses; and you who have not window and dog duty to pay, but who consume sugar, and coffee, and tea, and who pay a tax for every pound you consume—I say to you, remember that the landowners have never had their land revalued from 1696 to the present time. Yes, the landowners are now paying upon a valuation made just 149 years ago. The collector who comes to you to count the apertures through which Heaven's light enters your dwellings, who leaves you a schedule in which to enter your dogs, horses, and carriages, passes over the landowner, leaves no schedule there in which to enter last year's rent roll under certain penalties; but he takes out his old valuation, dated 1696, and gives the landlord a receipt in full, dated 1841, upon the valuation made a century and a half ago.

"I exhort the middle classes to look to it. It is a war of the pockets that is being carried on; and I hope to see societies formed calling upon the legislature to revalue the land, and put a taxation upon it in proportion

to that of other countries, and in proportion to the wants of the State. I hope I shall see petitions calling upon them to revalue the land, and that the agitation will go on collaterally with the agitation for the total and immediate repeal of the corn laws, and I shall contribute my mite for such a purpose. There must be a total abolition of all taxes upon food, and we should raise at least £20,000,000 a year upon the land, and then the owners would be richer than any landed proprietary in the world."

It is not pretended that any fresh conquest of the country has been made since the time of William I.; consequently, every acre of land in these kingdoms is held under a title derived from William the Conqueror. The very complicated, as well as dry and uninviting nature of the subject, involving at once legal subtleties and financial calculations, must be viewed as the cause why a change in the Constitution of this country (by which a class of its inhabitants, at the expense of all the other classes, secured to themselves advantages such as might have been supposed attainable only by the sword of a conqueror) was at first permitted, and has been so long endured by a nation of men who have shown, on many occasions, such capacity to redress grievances and to rid themselves of oppression. In a certain sense the Restoration of 1660, and the Revolution of 1688, may be viewed as conquests. For an act by which certain valuable immunities, which had been secured to one class of British subjects, by a course of settled law that had continued for 600 years, were at once, without compensation, taken from them and conferred upon another class, though it may not have the name, has all the operation of a conquest. If the landholders can make out, to the satisfaction of their fellow-countrymen, that they conquered the island of Great Britain, and acquired the same to *them and their heirs for ever, discharged of all conditions*, at the Revolution of 1688, my constitutional argument falls to the ground. If they fail to establish that conquest and acquisition, free from any conditions, then all the consequences, for which land reformers contend, inevitably follow.

To recapitulate: Land in this country was held on certain well-defined conditions, which conditions formed in the strictest sense the purchase-money of that land. This purchase-money may be very accurately described to have been made payable as a perpetual annuity to the State, *increasing in value as the land increased in value*, the feudal profits bearing a fixed proportion to the annual value at the time payment became due. But in 1660 a body of individuals, holders of a considerable portion of the land, calling themselves a Convention Parliament representing the whole nation, voted, or rather, two more than half of them voted, that they should be totally exonerated from payment in future of this perpetual annuity, which was the purchase-money of their estates; and that the said annuity or purchase-money should in future be paid by other people, who had no share in the land for which they were thus made to pay. However, about 30 years after, Parliament laid a tax on land, which served at first as some equivalent for the perpetual and variable annuity, payment of which had been transferred by the landholders from their own shoulders to those of the landless and poor. This land-tax was at the rate of 4s. in the pound on the actual yearly value of land at the time of assessing thereof, and was consequently like the perpetual and variable annuity of which it may be considered as intended to be the substitute and representative, to increase with the increasing value of the land. In 1697, however, they contrived so to frame the tax that it should not be an annuity increasing with, and in proportion to the increasing value of the

land, but a fixed annuity that should not increase in value. The consequence of this is that the said annuity remains at the amount at which it was when the value of a large proportion of the land was only a very small fraction of what it is at present. Another consequence is the great inequality in the apportionment of the sum actually levied: some parishes paying at nearly the full amount of 4s. in the £, others at less than  $\frac{1}{4}d$ .

The fact that the imposition of a property and land-tax, to be levied by a pound rate on the true value of property, was the first fiscal act after the Revolution—and that it was annually voted and levied on that principle for several years—proves that property, according to its *full* value, was recognised by the Constitution as a fit subject for taxation.

After the abolition of the feudal tenures in Scotland the prevailing practice was that 4s. in the £ on the true yearly value was the *minimum*, and 8s. in the £ the *maximum* assessment during the Commonwealth. It is difficult to estimate with exactness the burden of the feudal tenures on landholders: but, as it is not found that the rates of 8s. and 4s. in the £, imposed by the Commonwealth on the land rentals of the feudal landholders of Scotland, were complained of, those rates may be taken to have been considered as a favourable commutation for military service and the feudal profits.

From the time that the assessment was treated as a fixed amount instead of as a variable rent-charge the State has been defrauded of the growing revenue which it had precisely the same right to collect under the laws of England that a landholder had to receive an increased rent from his tenants. This principle, so clearly laid down in the statutes, has not been acted on; the Commissioners appointed to carry the acts into effect have acted in a manner not authorised by the acts, nor by any law recognised in England, and consequently they have exercised their powers in an illegal manner. The whole of the present land-tax machinery is grounded therefore upon proceedings not only **unconstitutional**, but also, in the strictest sense, **illegal**.

In this brief scamper through national history, it is seen how for the last four hundred years there has been a constant stream of labourers driven from the country into the towns by the avarice and greed of so-called landowners. During the second hundred years the stream was partially absorbed by the commencement of hand manufactures and of seafaring and commerce as occupations for labour. Then as these occupations became fully staffed, so that they could take no more of the land-starved labourers, destitution rapidly increased. Another hundred years, however, and there came the discovery of steam power and the marvellous development of machine manufacture, which revolutionised industry and for a time took up the surplus displaced agricultural labour. So during the last hundred years two tendencies have been manifest: agriculture tending to employ fewer and fewer men upon the land; landowners replacing labourers with bailiffs and gamekeepers. To what extent this has been the case through the century will never be known, but in the twenty years, 1881—1900, there left the country for the town no less than 1,432 farmers and graziers, and 294,627 labourers. During those years two million acres of arable land passed out of cultivation, and 6,319 extra farm bailiffs, foremen and shepherds were employed. It would therefore appear likely that during the last century more than one million country-born English folk reluctantly forsook their native soil.

During part of the last century, machine manufacture, requiring more

and more hands, has staved off disaster and revolution by receiving into city slums the victims of the landowners' greed. This absorption could not go on for ever, and during this generation machine manufacture has become glutted with cheap labour. Still labour comes pouring from the country into the towns, driving out of employ the weakest and feeblest of the town labouring class.

Thus came the unemployed; the direct result of the English system of landownership; the bitter fruit of the tree of landlordism. These descendants of free-born Englishmen, of whom their rulers were not worthy, were cheated out of house and home to make room for sheep and deer, pheasants and partridges.

The perusal of the story of England Lost may give rise to thoughts of how it may become England Regained. It is becoming increasingly realised that the ancient maxim is still good law as well as good gospel, that landowners ought to bear the whole taxation of the country. Labour, industry and intelligence must be freed, and landowning, being a privilege granted to certain persons by their fellow men, must pay all national expenditure by taxation upon its present ransom value.

The story of the struggles and trials of the labouring classes shows that the State has been too long the tool of the rich and the weapon of the strong. The resources of Government have often been used by the wealthy to crush the legitimate aspirations of the poor. Slowly, but surely, the belief is growing that the function of Government is the protection of the weak against the strong. Not as an arbitrary taskmaster, but as a great-hearted watchful friend, the State should help labour to its full and due recompense and reward. The final judgment must pass, not according to individual wealth, average wealth or collective wealth, but according to the wealth or poverty of the lowest and the poorest of its sons and daughters.

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### A CHRONOLOGICAL RECORD OF ROBBERY BY LEGISLATION AND TAXATION

**991** **Danegeld** was imposed on landholders to raise money to buy off the Danes, and 27 years afterwards the tax was producing about £82,000 yearly.

**1158** Pope Adrian 4 (Nicolas Breakspear, the only Englishman who ever was Pope) issues Bull to Henry 2 for conquest of **Ireland**, many chieftains afterwards submitting to his rule.

**1204** English "possessions" in France except Channel Isles, etc., lost by John.

**1215** **Magna Charta** signed by John at Runnymede, 15 June. All taxation prior was either in service or kind, really rent for lands held. Nobles and freemen now partners in Government.

**1235** Lords, lay and ecclesiastical, enacted **Statute of Merton** allowing landlords to enclose at will any "waste" land attached to manors provided "sufficient" pasture was left to commoners, and that means of access were ensured. Aggrieved commoners could appeal to a jury, a safeguard which however soon disappeared.

**1279** **Statute of Mortmain**—the "dead hand." It re-enacted the clause in **Magna Charta** forbidding a feudal tenant to alienate his land to the Church on condition of again receiving it to hold as a vassal of the Church and free of National obligations. The Church already held about one-fourth of the land, and had introduced many abuses, as of 999 years' leases.

**1283** Edward 1 overruns Wales, and his son, Edward, becomes first Prince of Wales, 1284.

**1314** **Scotland** freed from English suzerainty by Bruce the younger at Bannockburn.

**1334** A **valuation** was made of every district in England, and a tenth and fifteenth of the whole fixed at £29,000, which was not afterwards varied. As an expedient to transfer part of the taxes from those who had property to others who had little or none, poll-taxes were imposed. These led later on to insurrections, and were discontinued in the 16th century.

**1341** **Commons** first meet separately from the Lords.

**1349** **Black Death**, a fearful plague which carried off about half the then total population of 4 or 5 millions. Men were thereafter scarce, harvests rotted, fields went untilled. "Landless men" took to wandering about in search of work and readily commanded twice or thrice their former wages, much to employers' disgust.

**1351** **Statute of Labourers**, making it a penal offence to be out of work, and fixing wages at the low rate obtaining in 1347—haymaking 2d. per day, mowing 5d. per acre, or 5d. per day, etc. Proving insufficient, sterner measures were adopted; and men, for trying to get higher wages, were branded, hunted, and kept in stocks or filthy prisons.

**1353** Taxes of about 3s. per tun on wine (**tunnage**) and 1s. in the pound (**poundage**) on goods were imposed by Parliament, continuing till the Commonwealth.

**1361** Year of Pestilence.

**1362** "**Piers the Plowman**," a stirring poem by William Langland, priest, on the social conditions of the time, first published.

**1366** **John Ball** censured for his social preaching at Colchester. He, with other "poor" priests, organises labourers' clubs throughout the country, and suffers imprisonment.

**1369** Reappearance of the Pestilence.

**1376** **John Wycliff** publishes "**De Dominio Divino**"—teaching that property and power belong only to the godly, and that the wicked could not claim obedience from men.

**1379** Graduated poll-tax levied on all over 14 years of age.

**1380** Poll-tax of 1s. per head levied on all over 15 years. Commission appointed to enforce payment provokes general revolt.

**1381** **John Ball** again imprisoned, after 20 years' social preaching. Great uprising of the peasants against poll-tax and villeinage. **Wat Tyler** leads 30,000 men of Kent on London. **John Ball** liberated by the peasants. **Tyler** interviews **Richard 2** at Mile End and demands (1) general pardon; (2) total abolition of all villeinage and serfdom; (3) fixity of tenure for peasant landholders at 4d. an acre. Royal charters granted by the king agreeing to these terms. **Tyler** slain next day by Mayor of London at Smithfield. Revolt ended. King and Parliament repudiate charters. **John Ball** and other popular leaders hanged; 1,000 peasants put to death. But poll-tax never reimposed, and villeinage gradually becomes extinct.

**1400** Wages continued to rise, reaching 5 or 6 times the cost of subsistence. Goods also went up in price. Many of the villeins had bought their freedom, and with access to land, were rapidly growing independent, even successfully competing in commodities with the Manorial lords.

**1414** **Henry 5** resumes revenues of alien priories (held conditionally) to get funds for French war.

**1450** General rising in Kent, Sussex, and Surrey of gentry and peasants, led by **Jack Cade** ("Mortimer"), against political and judicial corruption. **Cade** defeats royal forces at Sevenoaks, and on flight of **Henry 6** occupies London. Movement collapses on promise of general pardon, and consideration of grievances. **Cade** slain in Sussex, and declared a "traitor" by the Government.

**1461-85** **Wars of the Roses**, by destroying the power of the nobles, leave the Crown immensely stronger.

**1487** Act of Parliament passed by **Henry 7** against enclosures of land. But the enclosures continued and lasted from 1485 to 1550. The landholders found the price of wool made sheep runs more profitable than agriculture.

**1512** 72,000 "great and petty thieves" were put to death during **Henry 8**. There were over 60,000 prisoners for debt in the wretched gaols throughout the kingdom. Begging was punished by "grievous whipping," and burning through the gristle of the right ear.

**1516** **Thomas More's "Utopia"** published—attacking social and political ills in England.

**1536** Bill for the manumission of serfs, called "bondmen," rejected by the House of Lords.

Dissolution of lesser monasteries by the Crown and first confiscation of abbey lands.

**1537** The Pilgrimage of Grace, a popular rising in the north, consequent on the suppression of the monasteries.

**1539** Suppression and confiscation of greater abbeys.

**1547** Confiscation of endowments of guilds.

**1549** Agrarian revolts took place in Somerset, Lincoln, Kent, Essex, and Wilts, and a great anti-Protestant revolt in Devonshire. At Norwich, 20,000 labourers gathered under **Robert Kett** (himself a landholder), and formed a camp, levelling fences and hedges, and destroying enclosures in surrounding country. This Norfolk rising lasted for more than a month, and was finally suppressed by German mercenaries. Kett and his brother were hanged in chains, and more than 10,000 country folk were put to death that year.

**1562** Hawkins begins the English slave trade between Africa and America.

**1589** Wm. Lee, curate, Calverton, makes a practical **knitting machine** and originated the domestic manufacture of lace and hosiery in the Midlands.

**1594** Great rising in Ireland under O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, against English rule.

**1600** Further great **dilapidations of Crown lands** were made to raise money. In 1600 Commissioners were appointed to confirm possession of Crown lands to those holding by titles liable to be disputed. Following year grants and alienations were ratified, though, adds Sinclair, these grants were stated to contain "the proviso that in default of issue male the estates were to revert to the Crown, a clause of which the public at this time might probably avail itself." The total rental value now was about 6 millions.

**1601** **The rise of the Poor Law** in Edward 6 and Elizabeth was gradual, being first dependent on voluntary contributions and then on a forced rate. Those who did not give were "denounced" to the Bishop, but this proving an insufficient inducement, imprisonment was empowered. Several Acts asserted the liability of the rich for the maintenance of the poor, the parish being the unit. Houses of Correction were bought or hired "to bring up youths in labour, and not to grow idle rogues." Materials for work were supplied to others and their labour thus paid for. The care of the poor was formerly borne out of Church lands. The Poor Law of 1601 henceforth saddled the burden upon the community, and chiefly upon the backs of the poor themselves.

**1607** After confiscation of lands of conspirators of Gunpowder Plot fresh enclosures began. Great assemblages of common people, men, women and children, attempted to recover ancient rights in land by levelling hedges, etc. "Rebels" defeated; John Reynolds, the leader, being hanged, drawn and quartered.

**1630** Crown's feudal rights more strictly insisted on and the **ancient forest laws** again attempted. "Time does not run against the king," and the resumption of royal forests, without compensation, made great havoc with private property. This renewed the desire for commutation, one of the methods recommended in Roy's "Rights of the Crown" for increasing Crown revenues. During the struggle between the king and parliament assessments were made on all property, real and personal, to defray military and other expenses. In this way knight service was gradually abolished, though wardship, fines and other prerogatives of the Crown were continued, and collected throughout the period of the Commonwealth, to 1660. John Hampden in 1637 refused to pay "ship-money."

**1640** Landlordism gradually crushing the people. "Hundreds of

thousands" have food in summer but little or none in winter; a third of the people in most parishes needing relief; many near London "have no other sustenance but beer meals"; labour cheaper, food twice as dear as before.

**1649** Lt.-Col. John Lilburne, well known as a leader of the **Levellers**. They wanted, not to steal other people's lands, but the restoration of their own rights of common pasture and tillage. "England is not free till the poor have a free allowance to dig and labour the commons, and so live as comfortably as the landlords in their enclosures." Gerrard Winstanley, "the digger," led the Levellers to waste lands in Surrey, where they sang as they dug: "Stand up now, diggers all; the gentry are all around, their wisdoms so profound to cheat us of our ground. The clergy they come in, and say it is a sin, that we should now begin, our freedom for to win," etc. As usual the diggers were shot down; Lilburne was sent to the Tower, and Protector Cromwell piously thanked God for a great deliverance.

**1653** "The crying sin of England in not caring for the poor," a pamphlet by Minister Moore of Knaptoft, Leicestershire, one of many issued during the so-called "Commonwealth." He writes: "How great a shame for a Gospel magistracy not to suppress make-beggars, in countries, cities and towns. I mean the unsociable, covetous, cruel brood of those wretches that by their enclosure do unpeople towns, and uncorn fields. 'Alas, master,' says the beggar who with his wife and children goes from door to door, 'we were forced out of such a town when it was enclosed, and since then have continued a generation of beggars.' The excuse given by the rich is that, unless they enclose, the poor, like flies and lice, will eat them up. They usually, on enclosure, treble the price of their land, and this they get by flaying the skin off the poor."

Among the land grabbers, in an age given over to superstition, there was a strong belief that the third generation of robbers died out. So fearful were they of the vengeance of God that, in signing an agreement to enclose, they signed in a circle in order that no man might appear to sign first.

**1662** **Law of Settlement** empowered two Justices to remove poor folk, in search of better work, to the parish where they were last legally settled. Labourers were terrorised into remaining with their old masters and being content with the barest pittance.

**1679** **Habeas Corpus Act**, providing that prisoners must be tried as soon as possible after arrest.

**1693** Commencement of **National Debt**, and (1694) founding of the Bank of England.

**1711** Parliament imposes a qualification of £600 a year in land for county members and £200 a year in land for borough members.

**1722** **Workhouses** erected in England.

**1728** Publication of parliamentary debates declared a breach of privilege.

**1730** Townshend begins the Norfolk or four-course system of husbandry, improves marling and cultivates clover and turnips.

**1738** Kay's flying-shuttle enables weavers to produce double the quantity of calico.

**1741** **Highway Act** imposes tolls, and is followed by great improvement in English roads.

**1745** Bakewell, a Leicestershire farmer, begins to reform stock-breeding, and gradually doubles the weight of sheep.

**1760** Whereas in 1500 a week's wages would keep an agricultural labourer and his family in decency for a month, in 1600 it would last only for 14 days and in 1760 for 9 days. That is, as "civilisation" progressed, or rather as land became monopolised, men had to work harder and longer for the necessities of life.

**1767** On the land-tax bill ministers were left in a minority in House of Commons; the first instance of the kind on a money bill since the Revolution. Tea-tax first imposed in America.

**1772** Arthur Young, who travelled all over the country, continually urged landowners to raise rents, in order to force tenants to use improved methods of culture so as to get better yields. Agriculture was becoming a fashionable hobby.

**1773** 340 chests tea destroyed at Boston and 17 chests at New York to evade duties, leading ultimately to the loss of our American Colonies and of much blood and treasure and to a vast increase in the amount of National Debt.

**1775** Thomas Spence issues, at Newcastle, a pamphlet "On the Mode of Administering the Landed Estate of the Nation as a Joint Stock Property in Parochial Partnerships by Dividing the Rent." Spence subsequently removed to London, and a society was formed for effecting Land Nationalisation on "Spence's Plan."

**1776** Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations" published.

**1777** Men servants taxed, and tax increased in 1781 (1785 female servants taxed, repealed 1792). In 1830 the tax produced about £250,000, but dropped within 50 years to £200,000, and now only yields what it did 35 years ago—about £170,000.

Under the old Poor Law parish relief was given proportionately to the price of bread and the size of the family, varying from 3s. to 20s. a week. Naturally wages were reduced that the labourer could claim more from the parish. Pensions now are taken advantage of, in the same way.

**Poor Law Relief** rose within 100 years from £730,000 to £7,000,000. Poor rates were not infrequently 19s. and 20s. in the £. In Cholesbury, Bucks, rates rose in 30 years from £10 11s. to £367 and 104 of its 139 inhabitants were paupers. Landlords renounced rent, farmers their farms, clergy their glebe and tithes, and it was proposed to give the village to the poor, and levy on other villages for its support.

**Factory system** gradually introduced through inventions of Hargreaves, Arkwright, Crompton and Cartwright (1784—power loom). Landowners wanting investments joined the spinners and weavers and lent capital to erect mills and machinery.

**1782** Essay on "Rights of Property in Land," by Professor Ogilvie, of Aberdeen, suggests taxation of land values. Gilbert's Poor-Law Act supplements wages from the rates, and out-door relief for the able-bodied becomes common.

**1784** June. Windows taxed when tea duty was reduced from 50 to 12½ %.

**1801** First General Inclosure Act passed, which "materially lessened the expense and difficulty formerly incurred in obtaining Parliamentary powers for extinguishing rights of Common."

**1808** Board of Agriculture's Report: Nothing increased in Gloucestershire but the poor, 8 farmhouses filled with them. Poor deprived of their ability to keep cows, and suffer from loss of hogs. Maintained largely by parish. "Inclosures make fat beasts and lean poor

people"; "Horn and thorn make England forlorn": two old English proverbs.

**1819** Land allotments, called *Pauper Gardens*, and New Village established experimentally in Essex by Lord Braybrooke, saving £200 yearly on the parish poor-rates.

**1828** Real Property Commission, appointed to enquire into great cost and delay attendant on land transfer, recommend a general register of deeds.

**1833** Abolition of chattel slavery throughout British Empire. Twenty millions compensation paid to "owners."

**1834** Basis of present Poor Law system laid, grouping parishes into unions, confining relief to destitute cases, and forbidding outdoor relief to able-bodied.

**1836** Ecclesiastical Commissioners appointed; duties include management and administration of episcopal estates and revenues, etc. Their revenue now considerably exceeds £250,000 yearly.

**1836** Irish Tithe Act, substituting a land-charge for direct tithes, passed by Commons, but only got through Lords 1838.

**1839** Budget contains provision for establishment of Penny Post, to come into operation 1840.

**1840** Formal abolition of the rating of personal property, which however had long fallen into disuse.

**1845** Sir Robert Peel declares for "Free" Trade, limited, and takes duties off 430 articles, but continues to raise the revenues from industry. For the repeal of the Corn Laws the voting was 339 (227 L. and 112 C.) for, and 242 (11 L. and 231 C.) against.

**1847** Ten Hours Act (Children) passed for factories.

**1848** Cholera epidemic. Excise department located at Somerset House, Strand, until April 1909, when amalgamated with Customs Department with headquarters at Custom House, Lower Thames-st., E.C.

**1850** Tea duty, at about 2s. lb., brought in 5½ millions, only slightly less than at present.

**1851** Tax on windows (£1,130,000) abolished. House Duty Tax substituted.

**1853** Gladstone's Budget, continuing a policy of freer trade by abolishing duties on articles in common use to extent of five millions and extending Succession duties to real estate. Soap duty (reduced by half in 1833) was abolished, remitting £1,126,000 of taxes. Tea duty, at 2s. 2d. lb.

**1854** Abolition of Usury laws, which severely punished money-lenders exacting exorbitant interest.

**1856** Newspaper stamps abolished (£458,000).

**1858** Irish "Landed Estates Court" established to facilitate sale and transfer of land.

**1860** Abolition of paper duty thwarted by Lords, but in 1861 abolition secured (£1,350,000) and rights of Commons established, by embodying financial proposals in one bill. Clean sweep made of Tariff on almost all necessities, but spirit duties increased. Mines Regulation Act provides for appointment of check weighers.

**1862** Land Registry opened, for transfers of land; reported by a commission in 1870 to be a failure. Tea duty reduced to 1s. lb., and in 1865 to 6d. lb.

**1867** Reform Bill of 1832 extended and strengthened, virtually transferring government from the aristocracy to middle classes. Again extended 1884-5.

**1870** Irish Land Act legalising tenant-right customs and giving compensation for improvements and disturbance. System of National Elementary Education established.

**1871** May 15. John Stuart Mill took chair at first meeting of Land Tenure Reform League.

**1872** Ballot Act passed (rejected by Lords previous year). Last remaining *is.* duty on corn abolished.

**1874** Aug. 7. Rating Act passed abolishing exemptions from Poor Law Act 1601 and providing for rating of woods, mines, rights of fowling, fishing, etc. Income tax at *2d.* in *£.*

**1880** Owners in E. and W. (except metropolis) : less than 1 ac., 703,289, more than 1 ac.—269,547. Estimated value £124,000,000, and of tithes £5,000,000. Malt tax abolished. Balloon Society founded, also Topographical Society of London. Ground Game Act protecting farmers from depredations of hares and rabbits.

**1881** Irish Land Act gives tenant the right to retain his land so long as he pays rent, to sell his rights, to obtain more compensation, and to have a fair rent fixed by law. Accomplished a very radical change in the Irish Land system. Conveyancing Act revolutionises practice of "conveying" land, and considerably shortens form of mortgage deeds.

**1882** Trades Union Congress advocates Nationalisation of land ; but negatives same, 90 to 34, the next year at Nottingham. Enclosure, Copyhold, and Tithes Commissions amalgamated.

**1885** April 24. Dukes and earls found a National Land Co. to sell land in small holdings. Aug. 14. Irish Land Purchase Act passed, by Lord Ashbourne. "Three Acres and a Cow" the popular cry. Allotments and Small Holdings Association founded.

**1891** Aug. 5. Balfour's Land Purchase Bill passed ; Land Commission made permanent, and Congested Districts Board created. Free Education Act gave another upward fillip to rent and to land values.

**1894** Parish Councils Act gives extensive powers of local self-government. Finance Act equalises and graduates death duties on real and personal property and abolishes one of the many privileges of landed "proprietors."

**1896** Agricultural Rating Act relieves English country landholders of half the rates, imposing them on the general taxation of the country. Estimated to put £2,000,000 per annum into the pockets of landholders. Renewed in 1901 and 1905. Is it to be again renewed in 1910 ?

**1897** May 6. Royal Commission on Local Taxation first meets under Lord Balfour of Burleigh, and reports issued 4 years later. Voluntary Schools Act relieves subscribers to Voluntary Schools (who were mainly country landholders) of £616,000 yearly, cleverly placing another burden on the backs of the general taxpayers.

**1899** Tithe Rent-Charge Act.

**1901** Edward 7, in accordance with the custom of successive sovereigns, surrenders his hereditary revenues to the Commons in exchange for a Civil List of £470,000 a year—household salaries and expenses taking the major portion, with £120,000 to the Privy Purse.

**1902** June 13. Land Valuation Amendment Act (Scot.) passed.

**1903** Inauguration of Tariff Reform League, to draw the scent from the landholders and confuse the issues of progress and poverty.

**1907** Lords reject Scottish Land Values Bill ; wreck Scottish Small Holdings Bill ; mutilate Evicted Tenants Bill ; but pass, after sixty-one attempts at alteration, the English Small Holdings Bill.

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