

HOW TO UNLOCK THE LAND.

A WORD TO THE LABOURER AND SMALL HOLDER.

By W. R. LESTER, M.A.

YOU ask why you can't get land, or why rents are so high when you do manage to get a little bit. I will tell you why, and show you that the remedy is in your own hands. I will show you that you can easily get all the land you want at a fair rent, without harming anyone, and that this will raise wages over the whole country-side so that you and yours may live in comfort at home without emigrating to other lands.

I am a member of the Co-operative Small Holdings Society. We have 150 members, and have managed to get holdings for eighty at rents of about 40s. per acre. But, though the County Council has done its best to help us, we have been unable to get any for the remaining seventy members.

One of the farms we got covers four hundred acres, and before our entry it only employed seven labourers. Fifty of our small holders now work on this very same land, and make a better living than the labourers did. So there we have found useful work for forty-three extra men. And, what is more, the wages of casual labour in the district have risen by 6d. a day, because so many men have now found steady work on their own account, not needing to hunt about for jobs as before.

But why can't we find land for the remaining members of the Society? The reason is simple. All round our holdings lie large farms, which rent at about 18s. per acre, and one of them, which extends to six hundred acres, only employs twelve men. For this farm our men would give 40s. an acre, and make it pay. But for reasons best known to the landlord we cannot get it. Possibly sport and game may have something to do with it. Maybe he wants pheasants and not peasants. How can we change matters so that peasants are preferred to pheasants? Let us see.

PEASANTS NOT PHEASANTS.

This farm is worth 40s. an acre, since that is what small holders are willing to pay for it. Why, then, should it not be rated and taxed at 40s. instead of only 18s., as it now is? Surely if it is worth 40s. it should pay rates on 40s., whether used as a farm or as small holdings. If this were done, how much longer do you think the landlord would be content to use it as a poorly cultivated farm which only yields him a rent of 18s.? You may be quite sure

[TURN OVER.]

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he would jump at the small holders and their 40s. rent, because in that way alone could he find enough money to pay his rates and taxes. Then, at last, pheasants would make way for peasants, and our seventy landless members would get to work.

KEY TO LABOUR PROBLEM.

Here is the key of the labour problem. Value all land, whether in town or country, at its *real worth*. Make owners pay rates and taxes on that value, and the land of England will soon be unlocked to the people of England. There will then be work in abundance for all, and wages will further rise, as they have already done wherever small holdings are plentiful.

Don't be deceived by the cry of those timid politicians who tell us that taxation of land values is only good for towns, and should not apply to agricultural land. The tax on land values will do more for the agricultural districts and people than anything else these politicians have to offer. Valuation of land must be the first step. Without it, Small Holding schemes, Land Banks, and Land Development Acts will only send up the price of land. At the very best they are but vain and ill-advised efforts to bring the labourer to the landlord, whereas the tax on land values, by making the landlord pay taxes on the true value of his land, whether used or unused, will bring the landlord to the labourer and farmer, beseeching them to work his land. Besides, it will correspondingly lower the burden of taxation now falling so heavily on improvements and wages.

Don't be deceived by the cry that it is the foreigner with his "dumped" goods who keeps you out of work and your wages down. That is all a sham. Unemployment and low wages are caused by our unjust system of rating land, which means its bad use or even shuts it to labour altogether.

Therefore, demand taxation of land values, which means the unlocking of land to labour, and "the making of England less a pleasure ground for the rich and more a treasure house for the people."

DO NOT BE MISLED.

TAX LAND VALUES—NOT FOOD.

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