

## HANDS ACROSS THE SEA.

Second Series.

*(See Frontispiece.)*

W. R. LESTER.

A Single Taxer has been defined as one who does something to help forward a Single Tax movement. Tested by this definition, none has greater claim to be called a Single Taxer than W. R. Lester, M. A. Mr. Lester, who is 48 years of age, graduated at Glasgow University in 1881. His university career over he took up the study of engineering, and spent three years in France and Germany, going through engineering works in those countries with a view of learning something of continental methods and conditions. These were three valuable years of education. Not only did he work both as engine fitter and draughtsman with a view to qualifying himself thoroughly for his profession, but he came into intimate association with the working classes of these countries, thus learning a great deal concerning their conditions and their aspirations. He has always regarded this experience as being of the greatest value, for he attained thereby a wider outlook upon the labor question than is possible to the untravelled Briton.

His interest in economic questions began in 1886. In that year he heard Henry George speak in Glasgow, and was induced to read "Progress and Poverty." Evidently the great book did not carry immediate conviction to him, for he turned to the study of the classical economists and then of Socialism, as expounded by such men as Karl Marx, Fredk. Engels, William Morris, H. M. Hyndman, and the writers of the Fabian Society publications. His reading, and the fact that he frequently came into contact with Socialists at this period had developed a bias in favor of Socialism. It was not until he came into touch with the Scottish League for the Taxation of Land Values in 1898 that he began to grasp the true cause of poverty and to recognize the cure. Even then he did not completely embrace the Single Tax faith. Anxious, as he has ever been, to be sure of the ground of his convictions, he fought a long intellectual battle in his own mind between Socialism and the Single Tax. "He fought his doubts and gathered strength, and eventually came

to realize that the Socialist did not correctly diagnose the social evil or go deep enough in his examination of economic forces, while Socialism, not being a truly radical remedy, could only result in side-tracking the car of reform. He recognized, on the other hand, that the Single Tax philosophy offers both a complete explanation and a really radical solution of the problem of poverty.

Since then he has spared no effort to preach the faith, and has rendered great service with tongue and pen. He is a close and logical reasoner, and his lectures and writings are lucid and attractive in style, and possess the quality that arouses thought and carries conviction. He is a frequent contributor to our *Land Values*, the organ of the English and Scottish Leagues for the Taxation of Land Values, and has written several pamphlets on the land question. He is a doughty champion against all and sundry opponents of the cause, and when Professor Smart ventured into print with a booklet against the Single Tax he subjected that gentleman's reasonings to such a criticism as must put to shame any scholastic professor other than a university lecturer on economics. In 1903 Mr. Lester stood as a candidate of the Glasgow Town Council in the Single Tax interest, and polled some 600 votes, but was defeated by a majority of about 400. He was president of the Scottish League for the Taxation of Land Values during the year 1904-5, and is now acting president of the English League. He also fills the office of treasurer of the United Committee of the League for the Taxation of Land Values, which was formed at 14 Barton Street, Westminster, on March 23d.

JOHN PAUL

Mr. John Paul has a long and honorable connection with the Single Tax movement. Glasgow has been spoken of sometimes by enthusiasts as the centre of the agitation. That this is an exaggeration need neither be admitted nor denied. What is undeniable is that Glasgow holds a unique place in the movement. Just as Manchester was the centre of the British Free Trade movement, so may Glasgow lay just claim to being the centre of the wider movement for real Free Trade. To establish this claim both men and circumstances must be taken into account. When taking account of the men one readily turns to the secretary of the