

IS LAND A MONOPOLY?

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Everyone knows that the bulk of the land of the United Kingdom is held by a comparative handful of the population. It is impossible for any apologist of the existing system to get over this awkward fact. Yet we find that the thing is often attempted. Fortunately, although it is not a perfectly satisfactory one, there is an authoritative record of the number of landholders, and the extent of their properties. It is unquestionably sufficient for a fairly accurate view of the general position.

THE NEW DOMESDAY BOOK OF 1876.

In the occupation returns of the census of 1861 only 30,766 persons described themselves as land proprietors, and in their criticisms of the landlord system it was only natural that John Stuart Mill, John Bright and other land reformers should cite those figures. But Lord Derby gave it as his opinion that there were at least "ten times as many," and on February 19th, 1872, he asked for a Return. The Government agreed, the Local Government Board took it in hand, and four years later it was published. For some reason the metropolis was excluded from its scope, and only 72,119,961 acres were dealt with out of the total area of 77,793,793 acres. Only "approximate accuracy" was claimed for it, and the examination shows that it contains many errors. Leaseholders are counted as if they were land owners if their leases are 99 years or more, and many individuals appear over and over again to swell the total. The Duke of Buccleuch counts as 14, and four other dukes as 11 each. Every clergyman counts as if he were the actual owner of the glebe land, although he is merely the life tenant of it. All woods (except saleable underwoods) were excluded, and as they generally belong to the great estates their omission is to be kept in mind. Moreover, no distinction was drawn between copyholds and freeholds, or between house property and land, and there were 14,367 separate entries for land belonging to churches, charities, and public authorities, all of which tends to make it appear that land is much more widely distributed than it really is.

GENERAL SUMMARY (FROM THE RETURN OF 1876.)

Holders of	No.	Acreage
Less than one acre	852,438	188,413
One to 100 acres	252,725	4,910,723
100 to 1,000 acres	51,090	15,133,057
1,000 acres and upwards	10,888	51,885,118
No stated acreage	6,459	—
No stated rental	124	2,570
	1,173,724	72,119,881

Even if we take the return as it stands we see that the imposing total of "over one million land holders" is chiefly composed of small landlords whose average property is only a little more than a fifth of an acre each. The Duke of Sutherland has seven times as much as the whole of the 852,438 holders of less than one acre. Now add the first two classes together.

1,105,163 landlords hold	5,099,136 acres
61,978 " "	67,018,175 acres

The average holding in the first case is a trifle less than five acres, and in the second case it is 1,100 acres.

THE HOUSE OF LORDS AND THE LAND. (FROM THE RETURN OF 1876)

	Separate Estates.	Acreage.
28 Dukes	158	3,991,811
33 Marquises	121	1,567,227
194 Earls	634	5,862,118
270 Viscounts and Barons	680	3,780,009

Mr. Shaw Lefevre (now Lord Eversley) shows from the return itself that there are no more than 166,000 owners of more than one acre, and that 2,250 persons own nearly half the enclosed land of England and Wales. Nine-tenths of Scotland are owned by 1,700 persons, and two-thirds of Ireland by 1,942 persons.

The overwhelming majority of the people do not possess a square inch of the soil of their native country, and are simply tenants-at-will and residents on sufferance, and not by right. It is surely impossible that such a fundamental inequality as this state of affairs indicates should much longer remain unaltered.

GREETINGS FROM A CONSERVATIVE STATESMAN OF REPUTE—MR. THOMAS GIBSON BOWLES—AND OTHERS.

(For the Review)

By **WILLIAM REID.**

Although Mr. Bowles is not of us, he, like a good many other "orthodox" people, has said a good deal in justification of our principles. In a speech delivered before the Liverpool Reform Club on April 27th, he detailed step by step the facts regarding taxation and land tenure in Britain which he had gleaned from history. He told his audience that "In Anglo-Saxon times the law of promotion was that any man who had five hides of land, that is five hundred acres, became what was called thaneworthy—he ceased to be a churl. If he had forty hides of land he became an earl, which was the highest rank in the country."