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FREEHOLD LAND SOCIETIES: THEIR HISTORY, PRESENT POSITION, AND CLAIMS.

BY

J. EWING RITCHIE.

"The laws of this country recognise nothing more sacred than the Forty-shilling Freehold Franchise; and a vote for the county obtained by these means is both constitutional and laudable."—LORD CHIEF-JUSTICE TINDAL.

"What he had heard from hon. members told him nothing more than this, that the working population could easily, under the old system, acquire the right of voting; and that every man who owned forty shillings a-year could entitle himself to vote. Were they to be told that the people of England were so degraded, so besotted, so dead to all sense of their true interests, that they could make no efforts to possess themselves of the franchise?"—MR. DISRAELI.

LONDON:
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ADVERTISEMENT.

The following pages are reprinted from the "WEEKLY NEWS AND CHRONICLE"—the only Paper that aims to be the organ of the Freehold Land Movement. They are now published in the hope that they may win for that movement a wider support and a heartier sympathy than it has already secured. It is a child—it will be a giant ere long.

3, Clifford's Inn.

FREEHOLD LAND SOCIETIES: THEIR HISTORY, PRESENT POSITION, AND CLAIMS.

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The Freehold Land Movement is the great fact of the age. We propose to consider it in its origin, its present position as a means of investment for the middle and working-classes, and in its political and social and moral bearings. We propose to tell what it has done, and what it seeks to do. Born of a working-man, it especially aims at the elevation of working-men. It comes to them, and offers them independence, wealth, and political power. Conceived in a provincial town, its ramifications now extend through the land. It demands no mean place in the consideration of the influences now at work for realising a future brighter and better than the past. The philosopher, the political economist, and the philanthropist must alike, then, deem it worthy of serious regard. On the part of a people, the absence of recklessness and waste is a great good; but the formation of industrial and economical habits is a still greater good. From such plain, unpoetical traits of national character are born the arts and the graces, and all that is civilised and refined in life. A rich people is not less virtuous, and is certainly far happier, than a poor one. Therefore we say, let the Freehold Movement have wide support, for it is a schoolmaster, teaching the path leading the people of this country to wealth, and to the power and independence which wealth alone can give. Thus much by way of introduction. That our readers may fully understand the subject, we shall begin at the beginning, and explain.

I.—THE CONSTITUTION OF A FREEHOLD LAND SOCIETY.

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Some time back the *Times* asked scornfully, as Pilate of old did concerning truth, what was a Freehold Land Society. We reply, viewed in a business light, it is simply a society for the purchase of land. It involves two commercial principles well understood—that purchasers should buy in the cheapest market, and that societies can do what individuals cannot. Till the movement originated, the purchaser of a small plot of ground had to pay in lawyer's expenses connected with the purchase frequently as much as he paid for the plot itself. A society buys a large piece of ground. They make roads through it; they drain it; they turn it into valuable building-land; they thus raise its value; and they divide it amongst their members, not at the price at which each allotment is worth, but at the price which each allotment has cost. Being also registered under the Friendly Societies Act, the conveyance costs the purchaser generally from 25s. to 30s.; and thus a plot worth £50 is often put into the fortunate allottee's hands for half that sum. Of course, different societies have different rules, but they all aim at the same end, and effect that end in pretty nearly a similar manner. Thus a member generally, if he subscribes for a share of £30, pays a shilling a-week, and a trifling sum a-quarter for expenses. With the money thus raised an estate is purchased. It is then cut up into allotments, and balloted for. If the subscriber has paid up, he, of course, takes the land, and there is an end of the matter. If he has not, the society gives him his allotment, but saddled with a mortgage. In some societies the members are served by rotation, and "first come" are "first served." The more generally-adopted plan, however, is division by ballot. There has been some doubt as to the legality of the ballot; the Conservative Society have taken the opinion of eminent counsel upon this matter, and their opinion is, that the ballot is perfectly legal. The rotation societies offer no inducements to new members to join them; so division by ballot has come to be almost the universal rule. In the National, for instance, there was a ballot daily for all subscribers of three months' standing. This has recently been altered. A ballot takes place every day, to which all are eligible whose subscriptions are paid up. If you join the National, you may go to the ballot immediately.

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As the National is the largest of the existing Freehold Land Societies—last year its receipts being £190,070—we will briefly allude to its prospectus as a still further illustration of what a Freehold Land Society is. The especial objects of this Society are described as "to facilitate the acquisition of freehold land, and the erection of houses thereon; to enable such of its members as are eligible to obtain the county franchise, and to afford to all of them a secure and profitable investment for money." In the National, all the expenses are defrayed out of a common fund; consequently, there are no extra charges, and the net profits, after payment of interest on subscriptions in advance and on completed shares, are annually divided amongst the holders of uncompleted shares. In this way last year the National divided £3,161. 19s. 3d., and the directors credited each unadvanced share with profit at the rate of £10. 16s. 8d. per cent. per annum. We only add, as a still further explanation of the societies in general, that they are all conducted on the most perfectly democratic principles. Vote by ballot and universal suffrage are the rule with them. The members elect their own officers. In all the societies, also, provision is made for casualties, such as sickness or death. In case of death, the subscriber's widow or heirs take his place. If he be unable, from sickness or poverty, to continue his subscription, he is not fined, but is allowed to wait for better times. If he wishes his money back, he can have it returned, with a slight reduction for the working expenses of the Society. Juniors may be members. Actually these societies so far practically admit woman's rights as to offer to the ladies the same desirable investments they offer to the sterner sex. In short, the Freehold Land Movement appeals to all ranks and conditions of the community. It may be said of a Freehold Land Society what has often been said of the London Tavern, that it is open to all—who can pay.

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II. ORIGIN AND PRESENT POSITION OF THE MOVEMENT.

Primarily the movement was political, and was established for the purpose of giving the people of this country the political power which they at present lack. Originally the forty-shilling freehold was established to put down universal suffrage. As a part and parcel of the British constitution it has been religiously preserved to the present time, and threatens to be an excellent substitute for what it was originally intended to destroy. During the Anti-Corn-Law agitation Mr. Cobden had put the free-traders up to the idea of purchasing forty-shilling freeholds, but it was reserved to Mr. James Taylor, of Birmingham, to give to the idea of Mr. Cobden a universality of which the latter never dreamed; Mr. Taylor had been a purchaser of land more than once, and with the purchase he got an abstract, a legal document, which when he came to understand it, showed him that he had paid to the vendor much more than it cost him. The idea then struck him that as the wholesale price of land was much greater than the retail, if the working men could be got to subscribe together a large sum for the purchase of land, they could thus have, at a wholesale price, a stake in the country and a vote, and when the general election came and excitement was created, Mr. Taylor felt that the time for action was arrived. Accordingly, when he went to tender his vote, he said to a friend who accompanied him, "here's a lot of fellows, and all that they can do is to grin and yawn when I go in to poll; I have a strong notion that I can get them into the booth." This friend said, "How?" The answer was, "Meet me to night in the Temperance Hotel." That same evening Mr. Taylor and his friend drew up an advertisement, stating that "it is expedient that a Freehold Land Society be formed for the purpose of obtaining freehold property at a most reasonable cost to, and to get country votes for, the working men." Simultaneously with the advertisement in the local paper appeared a leader from the editor, recognising the immense importance of the movement thus commenced. Thus pledged to go on, Mr. Taylor threw his heart and soul into the cause. Within a week a committee was formed, and the support of the principal men in the town secured. December, 1849 is the legal date of the Freehold Land Movement, although the Birmingham Society had been in existence nearly two years previous. In that month the rules of the society were certified, and the glorious idea of Mr. Taylor had a legal habitation and a name. At the end of the first year the Birmingham society reported that it had established six independent societies, in which more than two thousand members had subscribed for three thousand shares; that in Birmingham alone the subscriptions amounted to £500 per month, and that it had already given allotments to nearly two hundred of its members. Before the termination of the second year a great conference was held in Birmingham in order to organise a plan of general union and co-operation amongst the various societies. Delegates from all parts of the country were present. In Birmingham it appeared £13,000 had been subscribed and four estates purchased, two thousand five hundred shares being taken up by one thousand eight hundred subscribers. Wolverhampton, Leicester, Stourbridge, had all co-operated zealously in the movement. Nor was the metropolis behind. The National had started with seven hundred and fifty members subscribing for one thousand five hundred shares, and already had £1,900 paid up. In Marylebone eight hundred shares had been taken since the previous July. This conference was attended by Messrs. Cobden, Bright, G. Thompson, Scholefield, Bass, and Sir Joshua Walmsley. This conference, of course, attracted the notice of the press. The coldly, critical *Spectator* termed it a "middle-class movement." *Tait* so far forgot himself as to characterise it as "political swindling." The *Times* said the working-classes were being deluded by it. For once the *Standard* agreed with the *Times* and said ditto. However the conference did its work, and started the *Freeholder*, which appeared on the 1st of January, 1850. A second conference was held at Birmingham in November, 1850. The report, as usual, was encouraging. Eighty societies, many of them with branches, were reported as existing. The number of members was thirty thousand subscribing for forty thousand shares. The amount of paid-up contributions was £170,000. A third conference was held in London in November, 1851. The report then stated there were one hundred societies with forty-five thousand members subscribing for sixty-five thousand shares. One hundred and fifty estates had been purchased, twelve thousand allotments made, £400,000 had actually been received, and two millions of pounds sterling was actually being subscribed for. At the fourth conference, held in 1852, it appeared still greater progress had been made. One hundred and thirty societies, with eighty-five thousand members subscribing for a hundred and twenty thousand shares, were in existence, three hundred and ten estates had been purchased, nineteen thousand five hundred allotments had been made, and £790,000 had been received. Estimating the shares at the average of £30 per share, the total amount subscribed for was three millions six hundred thousand pounds. Such, then, is the movement at the present time. It has been obscured by no cloud. Its progress has been unchecked. No disappointment has retarded its onward way. Forward to victory has been its march. All classes and sects have railed round it. For churchmen there exists a Church of England Society. The Conservatives have formed a large and flourishing society for the manufacture of Conservative votes. The movement sneered at, derided, misrepresented, declared unconstitutional, a swindle like a celebrated land scheme popular with the Chartists, has now come to be admitted by all as the greatest fact of the age: to aid it, grave and reverend churchmen, statesmen of all shades of political options, combine; even coronetted lords now rejoice to lend it their sanction, and the weight of their illustrious names. Truly the mustard seed has branched out into a giant oak. A little leaven has leavened the whole lump.

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III.—OF ITS FOUNDER.

We must tell our readers something of the founder of this movement. James Taylor, junior, of Birmingham, deserves a passing notice at our hands. He was born in that town in 1814, and is

consequently now in the prime of his life, rather young considering the greatness he has already achieved. His father is a tradesman of the same town, where he has acquired a limited competency by his honest industry, and where he still carries on business for the benefit of the younger branches of his family. Like all other Birmingham boys James was put to work at an early age, and became an apprentice in one of the fancy trades for which Birmingham is so well known. There his industrious habits soon acquired for him the approbation of his master, who gave up Taylor his indentures in consequence of his retiring from business before the latter was of age. About this time Taylor, earning good wages, and not having the fear of Malthus before his eyes, got married, and lived happily till troubles came and the demon of strong drink cast its fatal spell upon his domestic hearth. After years of utter misery and degradation Taylor, in a happy hour for himself and society, signed the Temperance pledge, and became a new man, and to the pledge, fortunately, he remained faithful, in spite of ridicule and reproach from the boon companions with whom he had thoughtlessly squandered so much of happiness, and health, and money, and time. No temptation ever led him back. Nor was he satisfied with his own reform alone. He was anxious that others should be rescued from degradation as he had already been. For this purpose he identified himself with the Temperance cause, and was Honorary Secretary to the Birmingham Temperance Society till he became the Apostle of the Freehold Land Movement. Since then his life and labours have become public. No man has worked harder than Mr. Taylor. Our readers would be astonished if they knew the number of miles Mr. Taylor travels, and of public meetings he attends in the course of the year connected with the movement; sometimes the exertion has been too great, and his health has given way for a time. Those who have heard him once will never forget him. Those who have not heard him, if such there be, have indeed a treat in store. With but few or no adventitious aids—without even “little Latin and less Greek”—an unassuming plain working man, in spite of all this, so fascinating is his unadorned eloquence that no one can listen to him without admiring his earnestness and moral worth—without feeling that England has no worthier son than the originator of the Freehold Land Movement—without feeling that time alone can tell what he has done for the political, and social, and moral emancipation of her toiling race. We may also add here that Mr. Taylor has been at times a contributor to the press as well as a platform orator—that he has been twice married—that he resides at Temperance Cottage, Birmingham, in the enjoyment of a domestic felicity which we trust will attend him to a green old age. It may be said of Taylor what has been said of many infinitely less useful men, that—

“He is a man, take him for all in all,
We ne’er shall look upon his like again.”

This feeling has become common wherever Mr. Taylor has been known. From far and near have reached him testimonials of respect and esteem. At an early stage of its existence the Wolverhampton Society acknowledged its sense of Mr. Taylor’s services by presenting him with a valuable gold watch; and at the last Annual Conference of the friends of the Movement, held in December, 1852, it was unanimously resolved that “as it appeared that various sums of money have been from time to time subscribed with a view of offering some suitable recognition of the valuable and disinterested services of Mr. James Taylor, it is desirable that a committee be appointed to suggest the most suitable testimonial to that gentleman, and to take such steps as may seem to them most desirable in furtherance of the object.” In pursuance of this resolution a committee was formed to receive subscriptions, of which Mr. Scholefield, M.P. for Birmingham, is Treasurer. This committee consists of most of the gentlemen connected with the London societies, and it is to be hoped that they are giving the subject the importance it really deserves. A prophet should be honoured in his own age and country. In their lifetime the world’s benefactors should reap their reward.

Having thus explained the nature of Freehold Land Societies, and detailed their rise and progress and present position, we propose to consider their effects. For this purpose we shall examine the Movement as offering

IV.—AN INVESTMENT FOR THE MIDDLE AND WORKING CLASSES.

This, of course, is the principal point of view. By their merits as investments alone must Freehold Land Societies stand or fall. If they pay, they will flourish; if they do not, they cannot exist, whatever may be the social, and moral, and political arguments advanced in their favour. Now, let us just see what means of investment are within the reach of the Working man. There is the savings bank—not always safe, as recent examples have shown, and offering so small a rate of interest as to be but little inducement to the classes to whom it appeals, to save. Then there are the benefit societies, which hold out such fine promises, which thus have won a support to which they have no claim, and have excited hopes which they can never realise. Of two thousand of these societies, the accounts of which were submitted to one gentleman in Liverpool a few years ago, *all* were insolvent. Much of the money belonging to them is wasted in drink, in foolish show and mummery; but the societies are based upon wrong principles, and can never become right. Two radical defects taint them all—the contributions have been much too small in proportion to the proposed benefits, and an almost indiscriminate regard to diversities in age has caused persons differing as widely as from eighteen to thirty-five, forty, forty-five, and even fifty years of age, to be admitted upon equal, or nearly equal, terms. One of the chief of these friendly societies is that known as the Manchester Unity. In 1848 there was an inquiry into the subject before the House of Lords, when it was stated by Mr. Neison, the eminent actuary, “that it would take *three millions of money* to bring the Manchester Unity of Odd Fellows out of their present

difficulties; and if they went on at their present rates of contribution, no less than *ten millions* would be required to fulfil all their engagements." So much for friendly societies, which are, indeed, a delusion and a snare, and have always failed when the hour of trial has come. What the savings banks are we have already seen; yet, actually, till the Freehold Land Movement originated, these were the only investments within the reach of the working man. A Select Committee of the House of Commons has twice reported "that the great change in the social position of multitudes, arising from the growth of large towns and crowded districts, renders it more necessary that corresponding changes in the law should take place, both to improve their condition and contentment, and to give additional facilities to investments of the capital which their industry and enterprise are constantly creating and augmenting;" and "that they doubt not ultimate benefit will ensue from any measures which the Legislature may be enabled to devise for simplifying the operation of the law and unfettering the energies of trade." But at present nothing has been done, and the Laws of Partnership fetter the working man who would usefully employ what little capital he has. Clearly, then, the Freehold Land Movement offers him an eligible means of investment. Land cannot run away. So long as England exists, it will always be worth its price. Nay, it will become more valuable every year, for by no effort of human ingenuity can it be increased.

At Birmingham several of the allotments have realised premiums as high as £20 or £30. On the East Moulsey estate of the Westminster Society allotments, costing £23, have been let at a chief rent of £3 and £3. 10s. per annum. The Ross Society, in one of its annual reports, stated that, out of thirty allotments made by the Society during the past year, ten exchanged hands at premiums varying from £3. 10s. to £5., and ten working men each received £10 premium. At Ledbury several allotments, costing £25 each had realised premiums of £15 each. On the Stoke Newington estate, belonging to the National, premiums of £30 and even of £40 have been realised. At the Gospel Oak estate, belonging to the St. Pancras Society, allotments which cost £20 each have been let off on building leases of 50s. per annum each. Greater sums have been made—but we would rather understate than overstate our case.

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We have inspected returns from one hundred and twenty societies, and in every case the allotments have realised a handsome premium. Yet, in the face of all this, articles have recently appeared in *Chambers's Journal* and the *Edinburgh Review*, deprecating these societies as investments. The *Edinburgh Reviewer* says:—"Notwithstanding this rapid popularity however; notwithstanding, also, the high authorities which have pronounced in their behalf, we cannot look upon these associations with unmixed favour; and we shall be surprised if any long time elapses without well-grounded disappointment and discontent arising among their members. However it may be desirable for a peasant or an artisan to be possessor of the garden which he cultivates, and of the house he dwells in—however clear and great the gain to him in this case—it is by no means equally certain that he can derive any adequate pecuniary advantages from the possession of a plot of ground which is too far from his daily work for him either to erect a dwelling on it, or to cultivate it as an allotment, and which, from its diminutive size, he will find it very difficult for him to let for any sufficient remuneration. In many cases a barren site will be his only reward for £50 of savings; and however he may value this in times of excitement, it will, in three elections out of four, be of little real interest or moment to him." Of course we do not affirm that a badly-conducted society will pay in spite of mismanagement. We believe it will do nothing of the kind, and that discontent will arise; but facts show that the reviewer is wrong; that the allotments cost less than he supposes; that thus they offer a better return for his money than the allottee can get in any other way. Numerous as these societies are, multitudinous as are their members, extensive as have been their dealings—no one yet has found fault with them as a means of investment. Indeed, every day they have come to be more and more regarded in this light alone. Where, we ask, can a man make more by his shilling a-week than by putting it in a Freehold Land Society? This is the question which every man should ask himself; and if he does this, we can await with satisfaction the result. It is easy to imagine difficulties, but we turn to the testimony of facts. That is unanimously in its favour. The present time is void of all political interest. There are no great struggles, and no great hopes and aims. England seems satisfied with coalitions. Yet this precisely is the time when the Freehold Land Movement finds most favour with the public. The reason is obvious. The times are good. The public has money to invest, and the public finds no such desirable investments as those offered by the Movement; hence it is the societies flourish; hence it is they gain the hearty support of all who can only spare a little, but who would put a little by against a rainy day.

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V.—MOVEMENT CONSIDERED POLITICALLY.

But we may be told, politically the movement has been a failure. Our answer is, it has been nothing of the kind. It is true, and we state the fact more in sorrow than in anger, that Messrs. Newdegate and Spooner still represent North Warwickshire; but it is also clear that whilst at the election previous to the last Mr. Spooner had, in the Birmingham district, a majority of 196, at the last election, in consequence of the operation of the Freehold Land Societies of that district, he was actually in a minority of 395. But let us look nearer home. At the recent election for Middlesex, Bernal Osborne was returned, after a severe struggle, by a majority of 195. Now, when we recollect that the National alone has purchased 152 acres in Middlesex, and that each acre is capable, on an average, on subdivision, of making five votes—when we also remember that the remaining London societies have purchased between them another hundred acres in the same county—it is impossible not to feel, even supposing all the allotments have not been taken up, that out of the 250 acres thus cut up into allotments came the majority which returned Bernal

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Osborne as the champion of Liberalism and Free Trade. We repeat, it is impossible not to feel that if it had not been for the Freehold Land Societies, to the disgrace and shame of the county, Lord Maidstone would have misrepresented Middlesex. Then we remember that Mr. Locke King was but 400 ahead of Mr. Antrobus at the Surrey election last summer—we must also feel that that gentleman has some reason for thankfulness to Freehold Land Societies. If we pass to Herts, we shall feel that it sadly failed in its duty by returning three pledged Protectionists; but when we recollect that the National has purchased 300 acres in that county, we cannot but be persuaded that there is “a good time coming” for our friend Mr. Lattimore and the Herts Reformers. At the last election, the lowest of the Protectionist candidates—the quondam Reformer, Sir Bulwer Lytton—had 2,190 votes: the highest of the Liberals had 2,043. It is thus as clear as anything can be that a very little effort will make Hertfordshire for ever safe. It is in the power of any two hundred persons desirous of a good investment to do so at once. Essex, the home of Sir J. Tyrrel and the delight of W. B., we regret to write, is not so easily liberalised. North Essex at present is impregnable. Its squires, as Barry Cornwall ironically writes,

“With brains made clear
By the irresistible strength of beer,”

are beyond salvation: there is no hope for this generation of them. But South Essex is not so hopelessly lost to the people’s cause. It is true that last summer it did unseat Sir E. N. Buxton, and return Sir W. B. Smijth by a majority of 600; but the National has purchased 242 acres in that county, and out of that number can create 1,210 electors. Evidently, then, there is hope for Essex yet. But we need not continue this scrutiny. The people have placed within their hands the very privilege they so much desire. They need not wait for Government to emancipate them; they can emancipate themselves. For instance, the National will put any person desirous of the same in possession of a county qualification for North or South Essex, East or West Kent, Hertfordshire, West Sussex, North Hants, North Lancashire, or Middlesex. If, as some of the knowing ones maintain, we shall soon have a general election, of course the sooner one is put on the register the better. If not, the purchaser can take no harm: he will have his *quid pro quo*; he will have placed his money in that best of all banks, the land, and will have become one of that important class appealed to on certain occasions as the “Electors of the United Kingdom.” Heaven helps those who help themselves. Instead of the people waiting for Government to extend the franchise, they can boldly help themselves. No man deserves the electoral privilege who cannot purchase it by his own industry and self-denial. At the present time, when provisions are cheap, when work is abundant, when wages are high and labour scarce, there is not a man in our streets who may not win the franchise if he has the will. Half the men who brawled in low pot-houses, while their wives and children were starving, over their beer, for the Charter, and nothing but the Charter, if they had stopped at home, and worked and saved their money, might, by this time, have realised the manhood suffrage of which they so idly dreamed; and if, at the next election, the men of progress are beaten, and the friends of class legislation and injustice prevail, it will be because the people were not true to themselves—because they had not enough of self-denial, enough of earnestness and independence, to avail themselves of the advantages offered by the Freehold Land Movement, and thus to have a representation that shall be real, and not a sham. By means of the Freehold Land Movement, every county in England may be won. To the very natural suggestion that that is a game that two can play at, the answer is very obvious. In such a contest numbers will tell. A qualification that may be had for £30 will fall into very different hands to what it would were its price £1,000. For one aristocratic voter thus made, the people will have ten. An appeal to the masses can have but one result. Human nature must be changed before it can be otherwise. Be this as it may, the political result is undoubtedly good—the emancipation of all who have the wit, and will, and worth to win the franchise for themselves.

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VI. THE MORAL AND SOCIAL ADVANTAGES OF THE MOVEMENT.

Anything offering a man inducement to save must be attended with beneficial results. As society is constituted, a spendthrift is a nuisance and a curse; the charge hitherto against the working classes of this country has been, that they have been reckless and improvident—that they are beggars one day and spendthrifts the next—that the money gained with such difficulty is squandered away with a wicked wastefulness, such as can be paralleled in no other part of the world. The English lower orders have always been thus improvident. During the late war the sailors, when on shore, would resort to every absurdity to get rid of their money. Colonel Landman tells us of one who had just received prize money to the amount of £500, and, being allowed only one week in which to get rid of it, had, to do so more effectually, hired a carriage and four for himself, another for his hat, and another for his cudgel, in which style he travelled to London. A common sight at Plymouth was that of sailors sitting on the ground breaking watches to pieces for a glass of grog, for which they had previously paid £5 each; one hard-hearted captain having refused leave to a sailor to go on shore, the man, in the bitterness of his disappointment, filled a pint pot with guineas and threw them overboard, as he could not immediately derive enjoyment from their use. It is true a great change has been effected in this respect, and society has reaped the benefit. A man who saves money is not a drain upon his friend; is not a dissipated man; costs society less, and does more for it than another man. The self-imposed taxation of the working classes has been set down by Mr. Porter at fifty millions a-year. In reality it is much more: there is loss of time—there is sickness induced by intemperance—there are the gaols, and police-stations, and police, which would be much less expensive were the intemperance of the country less. Thus, if you change a nation of spendthrifts into a nation of economical men, you bring about a great and glorious result. Such a nation never can be poor.

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It will always have capital, and capital is the fund out of which labour is maintained, out of which the arts that humanise and bless mankind spring—out of which the soft humanities of life arise. Thus, then, the Freehold Land Movement is attended with great moral and social good. Viewed politically, also, it must be considered to have had the same result. It is something to have made a man an independent voter—to have made him feel that he has won his political rights for himself—that he has no need to cringe and beg—to have taught him that—

“Man who man would be
Must rule the empire of himself.”

Such a man will infuse fresh blood into the constituency. He will not give a vote like a browbeaten tradesman or a dependent tenant-farmer. His landlord will not be able to drive him to the polling-booth like a sheep. On the contrary, he will go there erect and free—a man, and not a slave. In every point of view, indeed, the benefits of the movement are immense. In the neighbourhood of all our large towns estates are being built on, where the members of the different societies living on their own freeholds enjoy the blessings of pure air, and light, and water, of which otherwise they would have been deprived. In Birmingham the mortality amongst children has been already lessened 2½ per cent. in consequence of this very fact. If it be true that we cannot get the healthy mind without the healthy body, this is something gained; but when we further remember that the money thus profitably invested would most of it have been squandered in reckless enjoyment—in body and soul destroying drink—it is clear nothing more need be said. It was calculated that out of £25,000 received by the Birmingham Society, £20,000 have been saved from those sinks of poison, the dram-shop and the beer-house. Mr. James Taylor tells us, “Our working men are beginning to ponder the often-quoted saying that every time they swallow a glass of ale they swallow a portion of land. From calculations which have been made, it appears that the average price of land is 5½d. per yard, and therefore every time a man drinks a quart of ale he engulphs at the same time a yard of solid earth.” Nor is Mr. Taylor alone in his testimony. A correspondent of the *Freeholder* at Leominster stated, that instead of money being spent in drink it was devoted to the society there. In a late report of the Committee of the Coventry Society we read that “one of the most pleasing results of the society’s operations is the improved moral habits of many of its members.” The North and East Riding Society also reported “The society’s operations produce the best effects on the habits of its poorer members by encouraging them to save money from the public house.” Similar testimony was also borne by the Newcastle Committee, and at Darlington we learn that the society has been the means of converting many of its members into steady members of society, and instead of finding them at the ale-bench, wrote a correspondent, a few months since, “you may now see them at our Mechanics’ Institution, gaining all the information they can.” Thus, then, the Freehold Movement is creating everywhere a great moral revolution. It teaches the drunkard to be sober and the spendthrift to save. It comes to man in his degradation and strikes away the chain and sets him free. To the cause of Temperance it has been a most invaluable ally. For the money saved from the public-house it has been the most suitable investment. No wonder, then, that most of the leading men connected with the movement are also connected with the Temperance societies, or that it originated with them. It was born in a Temperance Hotel. Its founder was the Secretary of a Temperance society. Did the Temperance societies effect no other good, for this one fact alone would they deserve lasting honour in the land.

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VII.—HINTS FOR THE FORMATION OF FREEHOLD LAND SOCIETIES.

There are many counties yet to which the movement has not extended. For the sake of those who may wish to extend it to them, we state that the first step to be taken is to procure a copy of the rules of some society already in operation. For this purpose, the Birmingham, the National and the Westminster Societies’ rules, which have been prepared with care, and under the management of practical men, should be procured. They are virtually the same as the rules of an ordinary building society, and are certified by Mr. Tidd Pratt. The next step is the appointment of trustees, directors, solicitor and secretary. This is very important. The greater part of the failures which take place in working men’s associations arise from the incapacity or dishonesty of the directors or their officers. Men of character and substance should be chosen for trustees, and for directors men experienced in business, of persevering habits, and of unquestionable integrity. The solicitor and secretary ought to be favourably disposed to the objects of the society. The offices for business ought in no case to be connected either with a public-house or a Temperance coffee-house. Eating and drinking are bad adjuncts to business. As every society must incur expenses, it is not desirable to form societies in small towns or villages, but to connect them with a large society. The National, for instance, has agents to receive subscriptions in every part of the country. Indeed, many of the local societies have become merged in it. In consequence of its excellent business arrangements, and of its immense capital it can do what local societies cannot. Already the Herts and Beds Society, the Bristol Society and the Cardiff Society, have become incorporated with it, and the arrangement has been found satisfactory to all parties concerned, the National having the power to purchase an estate, when a local society with its limited funds would be utterly unable to do so. The same can be said of the Conservative and other larger societies. Local societies have, however, this in their favour. The managers are well known men. Confidence is felt in them; they appeal to local sympathies, and they will have local support.

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VIII.—A LIST OF EXISTING SOCIETIES.

It has been suggested that we give a list of the societies at present in operation. We do so here, though aware that the list is necessarily very imperfect. The *Freeholder* aimed to give a list, but it never could give a correct one. We see Mr. Brooks in his Building Societies Directory has also made a similar attempt, and in an equally unsuccessful manner. The societies are so numerous that it is impossible to do more than chronicle the existence of the more active ones. These are:—1. The Arundel, 38, Arundel-street, Strand; Manager, Mr. J. Carpenter. 2. The Birkbeck, Mechanics' Institution, Southampton-buildings, Chancery-lane; Secretary, Mr. F. Ravenscroft. 3. The British, 3, Ivy-lane; Secretary, Mr. H. Brooks. 4. The Britannia; Secretary, Mr. D. W. Ruffy, 1a, Great George-street, New-road. 4. The Church of England, 22, John-street, Adelphi; Secretary, Mr. Campbell. 5. The Conservative, 33, Norfolk-street, Strand; Secretary, Mr. Gruneisen. 6. The Chelsea, Cheyne-row. 7. The Finsbury, Featherstone-buildings; Secretary, Mr. Scott. 8. The Home Counties, Chatham-place, Blackfriars-bridge; Secretary, Mr. Knight. 9. The Lambeth, 90 Blackman-street, Borough; Secretary, Mr. W. Banks. 10. London District, 10, Leadenhall-street; Secretary, Mr. F. Redfern. 11. The London and Suburban; Secretary, Mr. Weale. 12. The Metropolitan, 24, East-cheap; Secretary, Mr. D. R. White. 13. The Marylebone, Great Portland-street; Secretary, Mr. J. W. Knight. 14. The Middle Class, Peele's Coffee House, Fleet-street; Secretary, Mr. W. Peacock. 15. The National, 14, Moorgate-street; Secretary, Mr. Whittingham. 16. The North London, British School Room, Denmark-terrace, Pentonville; Secretary, Mr. Bernard. 17. The St. Pancras; Secretary, Mr. Spring. 18. The Union. 19. The Westminster, 4, Beaufort-buildings, Strand; Secretary, Mr. G. Hugget. Most of these societies are in full operation, and have purchased valuable estates. The probable number of Freehold Land Societies in the country is 130. In some parts societies have not flourished, in consequence of their being confounded with O'Connor's Land Scheme; in others, more especially in the North, there has been an utter impossibility in the way of getting freehold property; in others, the management has been languid, and the societies have decayed. But the number is, we believe, that which we have stated; or at any rate is as near the truth as it is possible for us to be.

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IX.—CONCLUSION.

We have thus gone through our self-appointed task. We have considered the Freehold Land Movement in its origin and effects. We have shown them to be good. We have shown the movement itself to be well worthy the support of every philanthropic man. It has now grown, and become strong. It is now doing what Parliament dare not, providing for the political emancipation of the people. It has put the franchise in the hands of honest men. It has given a new character to political agitation. It has shown how, without resorting to intimidation, or without the frantic appeal of the demagogue, the working men of England may enfranchise themselves. Parliament may refuse to legislate on the matter—one Reform Bill after another may be prepared, and then thrown by—one party combination after another may be driven from the Treasury benches, but the movement is gradually working its way, which is to reform Parliament, to put down W. B. and his man Frail—to root out the demoralisation of which St. Albans is a type, and to give to the people a perfect representation in the peopled house. It is time the present state of things was altered. For this purpose, the Freehold Land Movement exists.

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We thus make our appeal to the friends of political progress. We aim at the advocacy of the movement which has for its end what you profess to desire. That movement we believe destined to be the salvation of our country, and we ask you to rally round it. It is true Free-trade is not in danger, but Parliamentary Reform is. A large party headed by Lord Derby take their stand by the Bill of '31, and maintain that concession has reached its limits—that class legislation is still to prevail—that the people are still to be ignored—that inside the constitution are still to be the privileged few, and outside of it the unprivileged many. Against this mockery we ask England's manhood to protest—not by crowded assemblies or inflammatory harangues, but in the constitutional manner pointed out by Freehold Land Societies. We want not voices but votes. In the House of Commons, the thoughts that breathe and words that burn avail not, but votes are omnipotent. No member can disregard or despise his constituents; their will to him must be law.

But we stop not here. We seek a still wider support. The Freehold Land Movement has done wonders, it has removed the reproach cast upon the working man, that he is reckless and improvident. It has shown that he can save when a proper object is offered. In a speech a year or two since, in the House of Commons, by Mr. Sotheron, M.P. for Wiltshire, it was stated that the total number of friendly societies was not less than 33,232, and the aggregate of the members which they included amounted to 3,032,000. The annual revenue of these societies was £4,980,000, and the accumulated capital from the savings of these poor persons was no less a sum than £11,360,000. Faulty as most of these societies were, so desirous of saving was the working man, that he had actually entrusted them with the enormous sum we have just named. If these things were done by Friendly Societies, what will not be done when the advantages of Freehold Land Societies are well and widely understood? At this time there is much maudlin sympathy expressed on behalf of the working classes. They need it not. They are stout enough and strong enough to take care of themselves. The Freehold Land Movement has given them an investment, and they have become saving men. The money that would formerly have been spent in the public-house has given many a man a freehold and a stake in the country, such as even a revising barrister must admit. The present system of revision of votes by barristers is bad. Members of Freehold Land Societies have been much wronged in consequence. One worthy disfranchised several claimants last summer, on the ground that the forty-shilling franchise, in all cases, should cost £50. It ought to be in the power of no man to arrive at such a decision. The question should be left to a jury—not to a barrister, eager of promotion, and for that purpose

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desirous to please the powers that be. But still a man may thus obtain wealth and a vote. And the man thus taught self-denial and providence will not be contented with remaining merely a freeholder; he cannot make himself that without becoming intellectually and morally a better man. He will be a better father of a family, a better citizen, better in his public and private life. Workmen of England, Ireland and Wales, we call upon you to rally round the Freehold Land Societies. They exist for your benefit alone. They will give you all that you require—desirable investments for your savings—habits of economy and political influence. You have no need to cringe and beg. All that you want, you have it in your power to obtain. Never was there a more favourable time for you to avail yourselves of the Freehold Land Societies now springing up in your midst. You have now money you can put by. When the Corn Laws cursed the land, it would have been mockery to have asked you to do so then. Now the case is altered, and you must each one of you seek to elevate yourselves. As Mr. Cobden aptly remarked, half the money annually spent in gin would give the people the entire county representation, and thus also provide desirable investments for the money that you are morally bound to lay by against a rainy day. The man who refuses to make provision for the future cannot expect to prosper. Not to do so when a man can is a folly and a crime. Now then is the time to support the Freehold Land Societies. Thus when sickness or old age or bad times come, you will have something you can call your own. Habits of economy will thus grow and strengthen, and the reward will be sure. Of all luxuries, that of independence is the sweetest, and that these societies put within your reach. Their failure is impossible. They are the societies for the age: they will parcel out the English ground amongst English men: their triumph will be the emancipation of the working man from the misery and wrongs and degradation of the past.

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We appeal also to men who aim at the moral reformation of our race—who care little about politics—who believe that in a world of knaves it is difficult to get a good government at all, and we claim their support. The mission of the Freehold Land Movement is the same with theirs. The philanthropist labouring to remove the degradation, which compels to a life little better than that of the beasts that perish, men made in the image of their Maker—the advocate of Temperance aiming at the destruction of a vice which has slain its thousands, and which, like a destroying pestilence, still walks the land—the Christian seeking to permeate our age with a living faith—all these we claim as co-workers. The movement, besides its direct bearings, tends to bring about the results they desire. Not merely has political emancipation been the result of the movement—moral emancipation has invariably followed in its train.

We thus make our appeal for the support of the cause which is yet in its infancy, and which has a thousand trophies yet in store. Peacefully does it conduct the people to power, and give practical utterance to the spirit of the age. The doom of whatever keeps man in subjection to another has long been sealed. The proud patrician of Imperial Rome—the feudal baron of the Middle Ages, have passed away. Even Oxford abandons the faith at one time it armed to defend, and no longer acknowledges the

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“Right divine of kings to govern wrong.”

Onward to victory is the people’s march. The decree has gone forth, they must be free. For this consummation we have ever hoped and striven. From the contentions of party we have ever turned to advocate whatever gives to the people moral dignity and political power; to others we leave the cause of the privileged classes—the advocacy of existing wrongs—the preservation of existing abuses. We plead the cause of the unenfranchised, but of the unenfranchised who have faith and energy and self-denial enough to win the franchise for themselves. We conjure them to bestir themselves, to give their support to the Freehold Land Movement, to quit themselves like men. We need at the polling booths independent voters, not men who can be bullied or bribed—to make such is our aim, for such England needs, ay, and needs more than ever now.

THE END.

Woodfall and Kinder, Printers, Angel-court, Skinner-street.

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