

## 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

local league. In the making of the history of the movement it is not surprising to find that he has taken a lion's share.

Mr. Paul was born in the east end of Glasgow and in his earlier years picked up such political education as was to be got in a working class quarter. He had the ordinary education of boys of his class. This was just in advance of the more highly organized system of education which has come with the school boards.

But Mr. Paul's education did not end with the school. Going out into the world with his eyes open he has learned many things which are not to be learned in school. He has been a careful student of political economy and his views have been extended and strengthened by the experience he has had in the industrial world.

He came from the timekeeper's office of a large shipbuilding concern to take up the duties of secretary and editor?

It was about the year 1884 that Mr. Paul began to feel that there were some proposals in the political field worth striving for. It was not the traditions of the past that tempted him to take part with the progressive party. Neither was it the idealism for the future, much as his mind bends towards that. There were beyond these considerations the necessities of the present. Should the people remain in poverty if there were means by which they could be raised above the poverty line?

It is natural to turn to politics with hope and enthusiasm when one lingers to realize that poverty is not necessary. It is not to be wondered at then that we find Mr. Paul drifting towards a movement for the abolition of poverty. Hearing of Henry George and his gospel, he sought the first opportunity of hearing the man himself and of studying his works.

He joined the Henry George Institute in 1889, and was appointed secretary the following year. He was present at the formation of the existing organization which was formally opened by Henry George in 1890. Both these organizations continued to exist together for some time, the Henry George Institute devoting itself to the promotion of Sunday evening lectures and the other organization undertaking the wider propaganda.

Later the Institute passed out of ex-

istence and the efforts of the Glasgow Single Taxers were concentrated on the work of the existing league. In this organization Mr. Paul held at first the position of convener of the Literature Committee. In 1894 the organization resolved to start a monthly paper called "The Single Tax" and Mr. Paul was appointed Editor. He continued to follow his ordinary occupation, having to rise early and work late. A year later the League felt warranted in offering him the appointment of Secretary. Since that time he has devoted himself exclusively to the service of the movement.

He has been in the thick of the fight. Like the Paul of another movement he has written a great many epistles. He is well known in political circles all over Scotland and beyond it as a lecturer. He has done a great deal along with others catering towards the Liberal Party on the question of land value taxation.

There were those who while none too sympathetic themselves suggested that this was mistaken effort. The Liberal leaders would not look at the question of taxing land values. Mr. Paul had a large faith and it has been justified. The leaders of the Liberal Party have looked at the question and the Solicitor General for Scotland is at present leading the question.

The Glasgow League as a League may soon lose the services of Mr. Paul as these are in demand elsewhere. He has been appointed Secretary of the Parliamentary Campaign Committee at Westminster. This is a committee of members of Parliament who are watching the interests of the movement. While the League will be pleased to see Mr. Paul's services transferred to where they will be most useful the members will be sorry to lose his presence in Glasgow.

Mr. Paul has an attractive personality, he is a good comrade and a staunch friend. He brightens the circle with his sense of humour and he can be relied on to make a sound judgment. In as far as the Single Tax movement is concerned he has given a good account of his talents. His efforts would count for much even were these not backed as they are by his earnestness and enthusiasm.

FREDERICK VERINDER,

Amongst the best known, as well as