

THE NEW DOMESDAY BOOK

Printed in Glasgow - 3 March 1876
The celebrated Domesday Book of William the Conqueror was compiled some 791 years ago. It contains a census of the land-owners of England, and is retained most sacredly as one of the most valuable documents in the English State Paper Office. The census thus recorded was made with great care and minuteness, and according to its returns the number of land-holders in England in 1085 was 54,813. It could scarcely be said that all these were land-owners. Very far from it. Some held by one tenure and some by another, but all had a more or less absolute interest in a greater or less portion of the soil.

No other land census has ever been made till within a few years ago. In 1872 Parliament ordered another, and the Commission appointed to take charge of the matter has lately issued as the result of its labours two quarto volumes of 1,800 pages of closely printed and tabulated matter. This second Domesday Book owes its origin to the persistent agitation of Reformers, who have continually protested against land

According to modern land reformers, the soil of England and Wales really belonged to 30,000 persons, while the total population was 22,712,266. In 1085 on the other hand, with a population of 2,000,000, there were 54,813 land-owners. It is to be premised that, leaving out of view the city of London, there are 34,000,000 of acres in England and Wales occupied, and 1,500,000 acres commons and waste. Now how does the new Domesday Book show that this land is owned? It would seem from the summary that there are 972,836 owners. This appears very satisfactory, and seems to tell a tale very different from what the opponents of land monopoly have been in the habit of setting forth. When, however, it is understood that of these 703,289 hold less than an acre, the extent of the mistake, if mistake there be, is seen to be much smaller than might at first be imagined. Of the remaining 269,547, about 7,000 may be deducted for double returns or for persons holding property in more than one county. This would leave 262,547 possessed of an acre and upwards, which might seem to point to an amount of distribution far above what had been generally supposed. But then, when the particulars are gone into still more carefully, a very different conclusion is reached. There are 100 persons who, among them, hold 3,852,000 acres, or more than one-ninth of the whole acreage of the kingdom. Three of these hold each 100,000 acres and upwards, while the lowest amount held by any one of them is 20,000 acres. Another fact tells its own story. Of the thirty-four millions of acres, 12,000 persons own 29,846,000. This leaves 4,164,000 acres to be owned by all the rest. As we have already said, 703,289 own less than an acre each, or say about 500,000 acres in all, leaving 3,664,000 to the other "land-owners." Of these, 250,000 will average holdings of from one to five acres, and 7,471 a good deal more. The twelve largest owners in England and Wales as regards area are the Duke of Northumberland, Duke of Devonshire, Duke of Cleveland, Sir W. W. Wynne, Duke of Bedford, Earl of Carlisle, Duke of Rutland, Earl of Lonsdale, Lord Leconfield, Earl Powis, Earl Browlow, and Earl of Derby.

The lands held by the Colleges of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge

amount to £411,564. of England city lands. sioners ho Duchies of 80,931.

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