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WASTE LANDS
CONSIDERED,
AND
THEIR SUITABLE IMPROVEMENT
SUGGESTED:

Extracted from the SECOND EDITION of

Mr. *Kent's* "Hints to Gentlemen of
Landed Property."

WASTE LANDS considered,

A N D

Their suitable Improvement suggested.

THOSE who have made observations upon the wealth of this country, have considered our extensive forests, chafes, and commons, as one of the greatest resources remaining to us; and have lamented, that such noble tracts of land should be suffered to lie in a neglected, unprofitable state, while lands, of a worse quality, are cultivated, in many unhealthy parts of America. The forests, and chafes alone, would be a treasure, under proper regulations; they are naturally the finest spots, the best nurseries this country affords, for the produce of *Timber*; and, if judiciously planted, and

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well protected, would hereafter furnish almost a sufficient quantity for all the purposes of the navy; but at present, there are so many different interests subsisting upon them, that in point of real value, they are little more than blanks in the kingdom. Time, it is to be hoped, may correct this defect, and render them of advantage to society.

Since the first edition of this book, a rumour prevails, that there is a scheme in agitation, for inclosing a considerable part of these valuable districts, under the sanction of Parliament.

If such should be the event, may success attend the project! may the crown derive that great advantage from it, which it is entitled to, and private happiness, and prosperity, go hand in hand with it! which it will certainly do, provided the business be conducted upon a liberal plan.

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As this subject is of considerable importance, I hope it may not appear presumptuous in me, if I make a few more remarks upon it; which I offer with great deference, being instigated merely by motives of public zeal.—The forests may be considered, as a rough jewel, of great value; but which will require much labour and skill to polish it, before it can appear with proper lustre. Under the idea of their being to be inclosed, and disposed of to individuals, they are no longer to be considered in the light of nurseries for timber, or resources for the use of the navy. They are now to be viewed, as a sort of new creation, auspiciously opening itself upon us, and inviting industrious hands to cultivate and raise from them corn, grass, and various other comforts of life; and I am strongly,

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and I hope not erroneously, of opinion, that the improvement of these lands, provided they are all comprized in this plan, will contribute as much to the produce, and population, of this country, as would the addition of another county, equal to those of moderate size.

The tenure, in the grant of these lands, is one material thing to be considered, and the portions they are to be granted in, another.—As I am wholly ignorant of the view of government, I cannot pretend to say, what sort of tenure, would, at present, best answer its purpose; but I humbly conceive, that the tenure which gives the greatest encouragement to the adventurers, will in the end be most beneficial to the crown—and where the object in view, is the increase of produce to the public, and population, and riches, to the state;

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state; good policy will suggest the most liberal conditions.—A judicious regulation of this business, will convey a blessing to this country; an improper one, will have the most pernicious effect.

If men of the first fortune, and great command, are suffered to monopolize large portions of this land, it will probably be sold for less than its value; be laid out in large farms; be badly, and slowly, improved; and population will receive no benefit from the inclosure, but rather a hurt. But if this land be divided, into a great number of small lots, and disposed of by public sale, without favour to any particular persons, it will bring a much greater sum to the crown, be better, and sooner, cultivated; and support, and employ, many more people, than it will, if disposed of in the gross.—If it should

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be alledged, that even these small portions will, by degrees, be re-sold, and get into a few hands, like other estates; this, I own, is a grievance which cannot well be guarded against. But tho' this might, in part, happen, it would never be general; and it would take some time to effect so considerable a change. In the mean while, the land would be better drained, and cultivated, and much more timber would be planted, by having it laid out in small inclosures; all which are very considerable objects.

If any other argument be wanting, to induce the persons, who may be concerned in this business, to prefer the plan of small, to great, allotments; humanity will add her entreaties for the adoption of it, and popularity will applaud the act.

Many

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Many other waste lands are at the disposal of individuals, and those I shall principally consider; but it will not be amiss to examine, first, the objections, which are often made against inclosures of this sort.

It is observed by the advocates for *commons*, that they are of great use to the poor; that a greater number of people are supported, by means of them, than would be without them; and that a vast number of young cattle are likewise bred upon them. These observations are generally made by well-meaning people; and there is something very humane, and specious in their conclusion. But on examination, it will appear, that cottagers who live at the sides of *commons*, generally neglect the advantage they have before them. There is not, perhaps, one out of six, upon an average, that keeps even a cow;

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cow; and, being generally tenants, and seldom owners, they rent these miserable habitations proportionably high, on account of their situation. It is the owner, therefore, and not the occupier of these cottages, who, in fact, gets what advantage there is to be had. The cottagers themselves are not, in any shape, more comfortable than those who live in parishes, where there are no commons; because if there be any advantage to be derived from their situation, they do not enjoy it without paying for it. But I am inclined to believe, that the precarious profits of a common sometimes disappoint them; and that constant, regular, labour is a better support; at least it would be, provided gentlemen of fortune would take the laborious poor more under their protection; for which I shall venture, in another place, to suggest a plan.

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As to the advantage which population is said to receive, it bears no proportion, to what it would do, if these commons were cultivated, and disposed into proper allotments. It may be asserted, that, within thirty miles of the *capital*, there are not less than 200,000 acres of waste land. These lands, in a proper state of cultivation, allowing fifty acres to a family, one with another, would find employment for, at least, four thousand families. It never can be said, with truth, that these wastes support, in themselves, without other help, half that number of people in their present state. Besides, these lands, when cultivated, would not only support the people employed upon them, but would be exceedingly useful in the support of others, who follow different employments.

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The argument made use of, relative to the advantage of raising young stock, has much less foundation to stand upon. Every one knows, that all commons are wholly neglected. No draining, or any improvement upon them, is ever undertaken; so that the produce is very trifling, compared to what might be expected from the same soil, if it were properly managed. Their being fed at all seasons, is another disadvantage which *commons* lie under; and as neither surface water, or springs, are ever led off, they frequently occasion the rot, and other distempers in cattle; and often destroy as many as they support.

Many parishes possess a right of common upon a thousand acres; which, if cultivated, would be worth from 500*l.* to 1000*l.* a year. In these, the poor-
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rates are, generally, higher, than where there is no common at all. To account for this, it is replied, that there is a greater number of inhabitants, than there is in a parish, of equal size, where there is no common. Very true; there may be more inhabitants, in proportion to the cultivated parts of the land, in the one parish, than in the other; but if the whole of the parish which has the common, was brought into the same state of cultivation as the other parish which has no common, the poor would find fuller employment; and as the proportion of profitable land would be greater, the rates, of course, would be eased; for admitting that there would be as much paid as before, there would be a greater quantity of land to furnish the supply; and, in this point of view, landed property must be better enabled to support its poor, where commons
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are inclosed, than where those commons remain unimproved.

It may be supposed, that two-thirds of all the commons in *England* will admit of improvement. Many parts, by judicious draining, would make good pasture-land, and dairy farms, which would be very useful, and profitable, and are everywhere wanted. Other parts, which now produce furze, would bear good corn. Even a great deal of heath-ground would produce turnips, light grain, and artificial grasses; especially where clay, marl, or chalk can be obtained. In *Norfolk* vast tracts of this land have been improved, to the mutual advantage of landlord, and tenant, and to the great benefit of the country.

To such gentlemen as have objects of this sort before them, the following hints may, perhaps, be acceptable.

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Where inclosures are made, which are designed for pasture, the fences should be contrived, to answer, as much as possible, the use of drains; and it will be advisable, to sink the ditches to a good depth at once. Having this double advantage in view, such new inclosures should be made more in parallelograms, than squares; the longest sides lying across the descent, as much as the ground will admit of. And as it is very material, to raise the fences as soon, and as cheap as possible, it is a good way to sow furze-seed, on the top, and at the back-side of the ditches. It has a quick growth, keeps the layer warm, and sheltered, makes a fence in a few years, and, in some particular parts, where people keep a watchful eye upon their cattle, will render the expence of posts and rails unnecessary.

Parts

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Parts designed for tillage, in the summer preceding their being broken up, should have the furze, goss, fern, or whatever is upon it, effectually cleared away, and the roots stubbed up. Early in the ensuing winter, the ground should be ploughed up, with a strong plough, and left in rough furrows, till a month after Candlemas, that the frost may penetrate, and chasten it. Then it should have a brisk cross-ploughing, and afterwards an harrowing. In the spring of the year, and all the ensuing summer, it should be fined, cleaned, and sweetened by frequent ploughings. The remaining roots, and rubbish, may be shaken out, and burnt. The next winter it should be laid up again in ridges, as high as the plough can lay them. In May following, two bushels of buck, or French wheat, may be sown upon an acre; or, if the ground

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be pretty good in quality, or strong in nature, it may answer better to sow it with cole-seed in July, or August following. The buck-wheat should be ploughed under for manure, when the sap, or milk, is in the stem, and the flower in full bloom, just before the seed begins to set; and this should remain under furrow, without disturbance, till a fortnight before Christmas. Buck-wheat generally thrives better than any thing else, on this sort of ground, as a first crop, and very often the crop is not contemptible.

The cole-seed, if it produce ever so light a crop, will be of vast advantage, as it will invite the sheep upon the land; and their treading, and manure, will be of great benefit. They may be kept on such parts, from the latter end of November, to the middle of April, in feed-

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ing off this crop. The next summer turnips should follow, according to the mode of cultivation I have described in another place. Upon this sort of land, the whole crop of turnips should be fed off, where they grow, contrary to the practice which I recommend upon an improved farm. Two sorts of stock will be proper for the consumption of the crop. The turnips should be hurdled off in small lots. The first parcel of cattle should be stock, designed for the butcher, and should have a fresh bait every day. The other parcel may be lean, or store-cattle, which will thrive well on the refuse. After these turnips, barley, with grass seeds, may be sown; and these grass seeds should be continued at least two years. When the land is broke up again, it will be fit for a regular course of husbandry. And about this time, it

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will be proper, to begin casting the clay, marl, or chalk, which-ever may be easiest come at. The land will want some such assistance, to finish its improvement; and it will be improper to lay it on before, as the ground ought to be first settled.

In the course of my practice, I have been instrumental in the improvement of considerable tracts of land, of this sort; and have generally found it answer extremely well; for if the soil be tolerably good, and the method of improving it prudently considered, it is very often an estate created, at a moderate expence. The best method of improving waste lands is, that which tends to the mutual advantage of landlord, and tenant. This may be easily done, by accommodating the latter with a lease of thirty years, and allowing him all the furze, fern, or

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whatever may be upon the land, at the time the improvement is begun, together with all he can grow upon it, during the first three years of the term, without requiring any advance of rent. In the mean while, the landlord should be at the expence, of erecting all necessary, new fences, gates, and buildings; and, at the end of the first three years, be at the farther expence of half the charge of marling, chalking, or claying; which half of the expence will be, from thirty shillings to three pounds an acre, according to the distance, and difficulty, in getting the manure. Here the landlord's whole expence ends. For the next three years, the tenant should pay five shillings an acre, yearly; for the next seven years, seven and six pence an acre; and for the remaining seventeen years of the demise, ten shillings an acre; which
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may be supposed to be the medium value of this sort of land when the cultivation is completed. Some, of course, will be of more, and some of less value. This method I have known to answer; but, where a gentleman has several farms, in the neighbourhood of any large waste, which he wants to improve, it will be best to divide the object among several tenants, as less expence will be required in buildings. Besides, where a man takes a large tract, sufficient for a farm of itself, he will be seven years in clearing, and breaking the whole of it up; and it is not reasonable, to expect that his lease of thirty years should commence, before the time of his clearing the last part. Upon these terms, there are industrious men enough to undertake such improvements. A few words, and figures, will shew the landlord's advantage

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rage in it. I will calculate upon 500 acres, under every disadvantage; supposing it worth two shillings an acre in its natural state, and ten shillings an acre when improved.

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64X13

l. s. d.

This quantity of land, at the end of the first thirteen years, valued at 10 s. an acre, and } 7500 00 0
thirty years purchase, will be worth ————

From which deduct

The expence of erecting buildings, for a complete farm of the beforemen- } 1140 00 0
tioned size ————

Allowance for fencing, supposing the inclosures to be about ten acres, upon }
an average. The quicksets, or layer, furze seeds and all included, 4600 } 460 00 0

poles, at 2 s. a pole ———— 35 00 0

Fifty gates, at 14 s. each ———— 150 00 0

Loss of the three first years rent, upon the whole quantity, at 2 s. an acre ———— 225 00 0

Interest upon the four preceding sums, for the first three years, at compound }
interest, reckoned at four per cent. ———— 1000 00 0

The moiety of the expence of chalking, marling, or claying, estimated at }
2 l. an acre. To be expended at the beginning of the fourth year ———— 1514 6 0

From the beginning of the fourth year, to the end of the thir- }
teenth, the six preceding sums would produce, at compound ————
interest, at the rate of four per cent. ————

But, from this last sum, must be subtracted

The ten years increased rent, over and above the old rent of 2 s. an }
acre, from the beginning of the fourth year, to the end of the } 1383 9 0
thirteenth, at compound interest, and four per cent. ————

Difference

Add, at the end of the thirteenth year, the original value of the whole quan- } 130 17 0
tity, at 2 s. an acre, and thirty years purchase ———— 1500 00 0

Deduct all these losses, expences, and original valuation ———— 4640 17 0
Net gain, upon the cultivation of the above quantity, at the end of the thirteenth year 2859 3 0

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This estimate is drawn, as though the whole of the 500 acres were broken up in the first year, and brought into condition, to receive the chalk, marl, or clay, the fourth year, as it shews the advantage of this improvement in a clearer manner, than it could otherwise have been done. The same scale of calculation may be applied, to a greater, or less, proportion of ground.

F I N I S.