

**PEASANT RENTS: BEING THE FIRST
HALF OF AN ESSAY ON THE
DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH AND
ON THE SOURCES OF TAXATION;
1831**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649391028

Peasant rents: being the first half of an essay on the distribution of wealth and on the sources of taxation; 1831 by Richard Jones

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Cover @ 2017

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RICHARD JONES

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California



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BEING THE FIRST HALF OF

AN ESSAY ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH
AND ON THE SOURCES OF TAXATION

BY

RICHARD JONES

1831



New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

LONDON: MACMILLAN & CO., LTD.

1914

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1897

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Set up and electrotyped July, 1895. Reprinted August,
1897; January, 1914.

THE
UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO PRESS

Noticed Press
J. S. Cushing & Co. — Berwick & Smith
Norwood Mass. U.S.A.

RICHARD JONES, the son of a solicitor at Tunbridge Wells, was born in 1790. He entered Caius College, Cambridge, in 1812, and after receiving his degree in 1816 he took Holy Orders, and was curate successively at various places in Sussex. In 1831 he published *Part I.—Rent, of An Essay on the Distribution of Wealth and on the Sources of Taxation*. Shortly afterwards he was appointed to the Professorship of Political Economy at the newly established King's College, London, and took occasion in his *Introductory Lecture* (Feb. 27, 1833) to explain his attitude towards contemporary economic speculation. In 1835 he succeeded Malthus as Professor of Political Economy and History at the East India College at Haileybury. Meanwhile he had greatly interested himself in proposals for the Commutation of Tithe, and in 1836 he took a large share in the preparation and defence of the bill finally passed by the government of Lord John Russell. Accordingly he was appointed in that year one of the three Commissioners to whom the execution of the act was intrusted, an office which he retained until the separate existence of the Tithe Commission came to an end in 1851. During these years his energies were mainly engaged in the work of the Commission, involving, besides the routine of administration, the decision of many intricate questions of practice and law. In 1851 he became Secretary to the Capitulat Commission,

and afterwards one of the Charity Commissioners. He died in the College at Haileybury in 1855. His *Text Book of Lectures at Haileybury*, an article on *Primitive Political Economy in England* (originally contributed to the *Edinburgh Review* for April, 1847), and some other miscellaneous writings, were brought together in a volume of *Literary Remains* by his friend and admirer Dr. Whewell in 1859, with a *Prefatory Notice* which has been freely drawn upon for the biographical facts stated above.

As Dr. Ingram (*History of Political Economy*, p. 142) has justly remarked, Jones was "the most systematic and thorough-going of the earlier critics of the Ricardian system," and "much of what has been preached by the German historical school is found distinctly indicated in his writings." The present reprint limits itself, however, to his account of Peasant Rents. This was described by John Stuart Mill as "a copious repertory of valuable facts on the landed tenures of different countries," and it was one of the main sources from which he drew his material for the chapters on land tenure in his *Political Economy*.

Its republication seems peculiarly appropriate at this time. In recent years much attention has been paid to the economic structure of mediæval England. Yet it has not been sufficiently noticed how abundant is the light cast upon it by the history, even in the present century, of serfdom in Central and Eastern Europe. When Jones was gathering his material, serfdom was there still but slowly passing away; and he commented upon the facts before him with the insight of an economist and the practical knowledge of a sagacious agriculturist.