

Notes [Jun, 1889]

Freedom Press (London)

June, 1889

Mr. W. H. S. Alexander has been good enough to present the English people with the necessary funds to establish a National Portrait Gallery in which the public will be able occasionally to see the counterfeit presentiments of the living and dead mediocrities who have honored this country by being born in it. By occasionally we mean about four times a year, on bank holidays, for of course the show will not be on view on Sundays and will probably be closed pretty early in the evenings, after the fashion of the National Picture Gallery. Mr. Alexander is the son of a solicitor who "made" the one hundred thousand pounds which constitute the gift, and a good deal more, by speculating in house property and land in the metropolitan suburbs. So that in reality this picture gallery has been squeezed out of certain of the London workers in the form of rent by this estimable eccentric's father and his gang.

Last winter this man distinguished himself in another direction. There were many people out of work at Andover, near which he lives and owns very many acres of land; and he benevolently set gangs of men 11 to shave off the tops of the hills," as he put it. What a satire On our civilization for those whose eyes are not shut. Here is a man with a quantity of land which he does not use, and whose ideas are certainly very limited if he believes in there being any inherent virtue in toil, forcing a number of his fellows to do a useless task before he will give them the food to which they are rightfully entitled. On the Other hand there are a number of men, restrained by ignorance, prejudice, and government from using this land in a useful manner to supply their wants, degrading themselves by doing unproductive work. Just imagine the Alexandrian system applied all over the country and all the unemployed engaged in doing useless work in order to live: what a grand ideal!

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Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Socialism, Vol. 3, No. 31, online source RevoltLib.com,
retrieved on April 14, 2020.

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