

WHY THERE IS AN IRISH LAND QUESTION

AND AN

IRISH LAND LEAGUE:

BY

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Published for the Irish National Land League

“Tenant-right is landlord wrong” (!)—*Lord Palmerston.*

DUBLIN:

M.H. GILL & SON, SACKVILLE-STREET

1881

Two or three weeks ago the representatives of the Traversers in the present State Trials asked for a short history of the Irish Land Question to be briefed to the Counsel for the Defence. Having been asked to prepare it, I hastily put together the present account, in the short time available, drawing largely upon the stores accumulated in the works of Mr. Prendergast, Mr. Godkin, Mr. Butt, Father Lavelle, Mr. Barry O'Brien, and others. There being originally no intention of publication, only sufficient copies were printed before the opening of the Trials to supply the Counsel for the Defence. The Executive of the Land League, however, having since considered that it would be of service if a wider publicity were given to the pamphlet, it is now reissued, principally to provide the press of these countries, the Continent, and America, as well as the members of the Legislature, with some of the facts bearing on the Irish Land Question, from the point of view of the Irish National Land League.

Prepared for a special purpose, it pretends to nothing more than to present these facts, and with them the arguments of well-known writers and statesmen, on the Irish Land Question, in the briefest possible manner.

T.M.H.

Dublin, 31st December, 1880.

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CHAPTER I. Elizabeth To Cromwell

The earliest existing records of Ireland, as well as of all other countries, relate to disputes concerning land ; of a less important character, between individual members of the same community'; on a larger and grander scale when opposing nations came into conflict. All the great invasions of history, from those which closed the wanderings of the Jewish tribes towards the Promised Land, to the latest British annexation—the incursions of the Vandals, Goths, and Huns, the invasions of the Saracens, the Moors, and nearer home those of the Saxons, the Danes, and the Normans —had as a motive not merely a lust for conquest or the desire for extended sovereignty—their direct and principal object was to gain possession of the land of the conquered country.

This is peculiarly the case with regard to Ireland ; and accordingly we find that the original Norman invaders, their lust for spoil once satisfied by the plunder of large estates from the original inhabitants, did not seek to perpetuate the distinction between conquered and conqueror by isolating themselves from the native race. On the contrary, they speedily fused with the conquered inhabitants, adopted their customs, their language, and their dress, and after a little lapse of time we find the English Parliament, in a vain attempt to check this process of assimilation, inaugurating the long and dreary series of Irish Coercion Acts by a penal statute directed at the descendants of the original invaders, now become: “ more Irish than the Irish themselves.” But it was not until the reigns of Henry VIII. And Elizabeth that any general attempt was made, as a matter of state policy, by the English executive to establish in Ireland English ways, English customs, and English tenures, in place of those existing from time immemorial throughout this island. Before the introduction of the feudal English system of tenure, the lands of Ireland belonged to the clans of Ireland. The chief, subject to certain privileges appurtenant to his chieftaincy, held only as trustee for the tribe, and if by his misfeasance he became personally dispossessed, the rights of his people were in no wise affected.

When, however, the councillors of Elizabeth determined to subjugate the entire island, and to substitute British for Brehon law throughout its whole extent, prince and people alike suffered when defeated. Victory for the English resulted in the dispossession and spoliation of the clansmen as well as of the chiefs who led them to battle; English adventurers, by the Queen's patent, obtained lordship and dominion over the conquered territory; and clan ownership gave place to private property in land.

The natural result immediately followed. Enormous rents were exacted from the tillers of the soil by their new masters, and the consequent risings and disturbances were suppressed with a high hand. To illustrate his description of the state of things which prevailed in Elizabeth's reign, Mr. Froude transcribes from his own report the following letter written in the year 1576, by Malby, the President of Connaught :—

“At Christmas,” he wrote, “I marched into their territory [Shan Burke's], and finding courteous dealing with them had like to have cut my throat, I thought good to take another course, and so with determination to consume them with fire and sword, sparing neither old nor young, I entered their mountains. I burnt all their corn and houses, and committed to the sword all that could be found, where were slain at that time above

sixty of their best men, and among them the best leaders they had. This was Shan Burke's country. Then I burnt Ulick Burke's country. In like manner I assaulted a castle where the garrison surrendered. I put them to the misericordia of my soldiers. They were all slain. Thence I went on, sparing none which came in my way, which cruelty did so amaze their followers, that they could not tell where to bestow themselves. Shan Burke made means to me to pardon him, and forbear killing of his people. I would not hearken, but went on my way. The gentlemen of Clanrickard came to me. I found it was but dallying to win time, so I left Ulick as little corn and as few houses standing as I left his brother, and what people was found had as little — favour as the other had. *It was all done in rain, and frost, and storm*, journeys in such weather bringing them the sooner to submission. They are humble enough now, and will yield to any terms we like to offer them."

Desmond confiscations

A few years later on the extirpation of the Munster Geraldines was undertaken, and 570,000 acres belonging to the Earl of Desmond were vested in the Queen.—

"Proclamation was accordingly made throughout England, inviting 'younger brothers of good families' to undertake the plantation of Desmond—each planter to obtain a certain scope of land, on condition of settling thereupon so many families—'none of the native Irish to be admitted.' Under these conditions, Sir Christopher Hatton took up 10,000 acres in Waterford; Sir Walter Raleigh, 12,000¹ acres, partly in Waterford and partly in Cork; Sir William Harbart, or Herbert, 13,000 acres in Kerry; Sir Edward Denny, 6,000 in the same county; Sir Warren St. Leger, and Sir Thomas Norris, 6,000 acres each in Cork; Sir William Courtney, 10,000 acres in Limerick; Sir Edward Fitton, 11,500 acres in Tipperary and Waterford; and Edmund Spenser, 3,000 acres in Cork, on the beautiful Blackwater. The other notable undertakers were the Hides, Butchers, Wirths, Berkleys, Trenchards, Thorntons, Bouchers, Billingsleys, etc. Some of these grants, especially Raleigh's, fell in the next reign to Richard Boyle,² the so-called 'great Earl of Cork' — probably the most pious hypocrite to be found in the long roll of the 'Munster Undertakers.'"—*Godkin's Land War*³

Hollinshed thus describes the progress of the English army through the country :—

"As they went, they drove the whole country before them into the Ventrye, and by that means they preyed and took all the cattle in the country, to the number of 8,000 kine, besides horses, garrons, sheep, and goats; and all such people as they met, they did without mercy put to the sword; by these means, the whole country having no cattle nor kine left, they were driven to such extremities that for want of victuals they were either to die and perish for famine or to die under the sword."—*Hollinshed*, vi. 427.

"By reason of the continuall persecuting of the rebels, who could have no breath nor rest to releve themselves, but were alwaies by one garrison or other hurt and pursued ; and by reason the harvest was taken from them, their cattells in great numbers preied from them, and the whole countrie spoiled and preied: the poore people, who lived onlie upon their labors, and fed by their milch cowes, were so distressed that they would

1 Sir Walter really had 42,000 acres granted to him, i.e., three seignories and a half, each containing 12,000 acres. See Calendar of Patent Rolls in Ireland, temp. Elis. p. 323, and Carte's Ormond, vol i. p. 67.

2 Further on Boyle's plunder is more fully referred to.

3 Mr. Godkin, from whose valuable work quotations are freely taken, was ordained an Independent Minister. He was afterwards editor of the Conservative Dublin Daily Express, and was for many years the Irish Correspondent of The Times.

follow after the goods which were taken from them, and offer themselves, their wives and children, rather to be slaine by the armie, than to suffer the famine wherewith they were now pinched.’—*Hollinshed*, vi. 33. Also *Leland*, book iv. Chap. 2.

Again, take the following from Sir George Carew :—

“ The President having received certaine information, that the Mounster fugitives were harboured in those parts, having before burned all the houses and corne, and taken great preyes in Owny Onubriaa and Kilquig, a strong and fast countrey, not farre from Limerick, diverted his forces into East Clanwilliam and Muskeryquirke, where Pierce Lacy had lately beene succoured; and harassing the country, killed all mankind that were found therein, for a terrour to those as should give releefe to runagate traitors. Thence wee came into Arleaghe woods, where wee did the like, not leaving behind us man or beast, corne or cattle, except such as had been conveyed into castles.”— *Pacata Hibernia*, 189.

“They wasted and forraged the country, so as in a small time it was not able to give the rebels any reliefe; having spoiled and brought into their garrisons the most part of their corne, being newly reaped.” —*Pacata Hibernia*, 584.

The English Protestant historian Morrison says :—

“No spectacle was more frequent in the ditches of the towns, and especially in wasted countries, than to see multitudes of these poor people, the Irish, dead, with their mouths all coloured green by eating nettles, docks, and all things they could rend above ground.”

Ulster confiscations

After the close of the reign of Elizabeth and the Flight of the Earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell (O'Neill and O'Donnell), the work of extirpation and plantation was vigorously carried on by James I. ; and in the early part of his reign Sir John Davis, one of the Irish Attorney-Generals of that monarch, was able to report—

“That ‘before Michaelmas he would be ready to present to his majesty a perfect survey of six whole counties which he now hath in actual possession in the province of Ulster, of greater extent of land than any Prince in Europe hath in his own hands to dispose of.’”

A sort of commission was appointed for parcelling out the land. It sat at Limavaddy, and as a sample of its proceedings it may be mentioned that a sub-chief, O'Cahan, who held under O'Neill, had his lands confiscated simply because of the flight of that Earl.

“ Although sundry royal and viceregal proclamations had assured the tenants ‘that they would not be disturbed in their possessions on account of the offences of their chiefs, it was proclaimed that neither O'Cahan nor those who lived under him had any estate whatever in the lands.’—*Godkin's Land War*.

A quotation from a letter written by the Lord Deputy, about the year 1607, will show the way in which the people were extirpated.

“I have often said and written, it is famine that must consume the Trish, as our swords and other endeavours worked not that speedy effect which is expected ; hunger would

be a better, because a speedier, weapon to employ against them than the sword. . . . I burned all along the Lough (Neagh) within four miles of Dungannon, and killed 100 people, sparing none, of what quality, age, or sex soever, besides many burned to death. We killed man, woman, and child, horse, beast, and whatsoever we could find.”

The province of Ulster having by this time been pretty well cleared of its native inhabitants,

“On July 21, 1609, a commission was issued by the Crown to make inquisition concerning the forfeited lands in Ulster after the flight of the Earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell. The commissioners included the Lord- Deputy Chichester, the Archbishops of Armagh and Dublin, Sir John Davis, Attorney-General ; Sir William Parsons, Surveyor-General, and several other public functionaries. This work done, King James, acting on the advice of his Prime Minister, the Earl of Salisbury, took measures for the plantation. . . . The city of London was thought to be the best quarter to look to for funds to carry on the plantation. Accordingly, Lord Salisbury had a conference with the lord mayor, Humphry Weld, Sir John Jolles, and Sir W. Cockaine, who were well acquainted with Irish affairs. The result was the publication of ‘Motives and Reasons to induce the City of London to undertake the Plantation in the North of Ireland.’”

“The corporation were willing to undertake the work of plantation if the account given of its advantages should prove to be correct. . . . So they sent over ‘four wise, grave, and discreet citizens, to view the situation proposed for the new colony’ . . . On their return they presented a report to the Court of Common Council, which was openly read, The report was favourable. . . . With respect to the disposal of such of the natives as remained it was arranged that some were to be planted on two of the small allotments, and upon the glebes ; others upon the land of Sir Art O’Neill’s sons and Sir Henry Oge O’Neill’s sons, ‘and of such other Irish as shall be thought fit to have any freeholds ; some others upon the portions of such servitors as are not able to inhabit these lands with English or Scotch tenants, especially of such as best know how to rule and order the Irish. But the swordsmen (that is, the armed retainers or soldiers of the chiefs) are to be transplanted into such other parts of the kingdom as, by reasons of the wastes therein, are fittest to receive them, namely, into Connaught and some parts of Munster, where they are to be dispersed, and not planted together in one place ; and such swordsmen who have not followers or cattle of their own, to be disposed of in his majesty’s service.’”—*Godkin’s Land War*.

The character of the Plantation made under Elizabeth differed materially from that of James’s reign. Gigantic grants were made in Munster by Elizabeth to her favourites, whereas we find that the allotments made by James to each individual were of comparatively moderate extent.

Thus we find the Prime Minister writing to Chichester about the year 1607, complaining—

“That was an oversight in the plantation of Munster, where 12,000 acres were commonly allotted to bankrupts and country gentlemen, that never knew the disposition of the Irish ; so as God forbid that those who have spent their blood in the service should not of all others be preferred.”

The character of the grants made by Elizabeth may be judged from the size of those mentioned at page 2, and moreover we read that 24,000 acres were given to Jane Beecher and Hugh Worth, 11,000 to Arthur Hyde, 11,000 to Sir G. Lytton in Tipperary, 11,000 to Sir G. Boucher, and so on.

All through the reign of James the work of conquest and confiscation went steadily on. Rebellion was promoted, and then when the Chiefs were routed we find the record running somewhat in this fashion :—

“ O’Dogherty’s country being confiscated, the Lord-Deputy, Chichester, was rewarded with the greatest portion of his lands. But what was to be done with the people? In the first instance they were driven from the rich lowlands along the borders of Lough Foyle and Lough Swilly, and compelled to take refuge in the mountain fastnesses which stretched to a vast extent from Moville westward along the Atlantic coast. But could those ‘idle kerne and swordsmen, thus punished with loss of lands and home for the crimes of their chief, be safely trusted to remain anywhere in the neighbourhood of the new English settlers? Sir John Davis and Sir Toby Caulfield thought of a plan by which they could get rid of the danger. Gustavus Adolphus was then fighting the battles of Protestantism against the house of Austria. . . . To what better use, then, could the ‘loose Irish kerne and swordsmen’ of Donegal be turned than to send them to fight in the army of the King of Sweden? Accordingly 6,000 of the able-bodied peasantry of Inishown were shipped off for this service.”—*Godkin’s Land War*.

A fighting adventurer named St. Lawrence, himself a Catholic, and the ancestor of the present Earl of Howth, obtained large grants of confiscated lands as a consideration for his giving perjured testimony as to the existence of a conspiracy on the part of O’Neill. Sir Fulke Conway, a Welsh officer, obtained similar grants, and at his death in 1626, his brother, who was a favourite of Charles I., succeeded to the estate, to which his royal patron added the lands of Derryvolgie, thus making him lord of nearly 70,000 statute acres of the broad lands of Down and Antrim.

By the end of the reign of James I., Ulster began to be pretty thickly populated by Scotch colonists, and the foundations of important towns, like Derry, Lurgan, and Belfast, with special privileges, had been laid. A remnant of native Irish, groaning under the exactions of the invaders, of course only waited an opportunity to throw off the foreign yoke; and the exactions of the “ Undertakers” at last produced the Rising of 1641. On the outbreak of this rebellion, before it had extended beyond the borders of Ulster, the English Parliament passed the Act 17th Charles I., whereby 2,500,000 acres of land were declared forfeited in Ireland, and which enacted that these acres should be offered for sale at fixed rates in London and the surrounding districts. One of the notable clauses in the Act provides that the lands are to be taken from the four provinces in equal proportions, that is, one-fourth from each, though at the time when it received the royal assent there was no rebel outside Ulster, and, there, not one convicted. Again, there cannot be the shadow of a doubt but that Parsons and Borlase, who were Lords Justices at the opening of the rebellion, goaded the Catholics of the Pale into insurrection, and refused all terms of accommodation in view of the splendid forfeitures which awaited suppression by the sword.

“Throughout the reign of Charles I. the Irish proprietors were harassed by Strafford, who imagined the device of a Defective Title’s Commission, and plotted the escheat of the entire province of Connaught to the Crown by legal chicane. The Irish House of Commons was induced to vote large supplies to Charles, on a promise that these schemes should not be persisted in, but the promise was shamefully broken, and Strafford had juries which would not ‘find’ estates for the King amerced in thousands of pounds, tortured and imprisoned.”—O’Connell’s *Memoir of Ireland*, chap. 3.

When the Commonwealth was proclaimed in England, the Irish, fondly imagining that by espousing the cause of King Charles I. Against the Parliament, they were striking for their property and

religion, a rally was everywhere made to the Royalist side over all the island, and for some years the Royal, or Catholic, or popular cause, was in the ascendant. But Cromwell, fresh from his victories in England, appears on the scene, and once more the work of savage subjugation and wholesale confiscation commences. His lieutenants were not more merciful than himself.—

“Sir William Cole, ancestor of the Earl of Enniskillen, proudly boasted of his achievement in having 7,000 of the rebels famished to death within a circuit of a few miles of his garrison : the descendants of the remnant of the natives on his estate do not forget how the family obtained its wealth and honours. Lord Cork prepared 1,100 indictments against men of property in his province, which he sent to the speaker of the Long Parliament, with an urgent request that they might be returned to him, with authority to proceed against the parties named as outlaws. In Leinster, 4,000 similar indictments were found in the course of two days by the free use of the rack with witnesses. Sir John Reid, an officer of the King’s bed-chamber, and Mr. Barnwall of Kilbrue, a gentleman of three score and six, were among those who underwent the torture.”— *Godkin’s Land War*.

Cromwellian confiscations

Similar proceedings, which it is needless minutely to describe, went on over the entire country.

“The Long Parliament having confiscated 2,500,000 acres, as stated above, offered it as security to ‘adventurers’ who would advance money to meet the cost of the war. In February, 1642, the House of Commons received a petition ‘of divers well affected’ to it, offering to raise and maintain forces at their own charge ‘against the rebels of Ireland, and afterwards to receive their recompense out of the rebels’ estates.’ Under the Act ‘for the speedy reducing of the rebels’ the adventurers were to carry over a brigade of 5,000 foot and 500 horse, and to have the right of appointing their own officers. And they were to have estates given to them at the following rates: 1,000 acres for £200 in Ulster, for £300 in Connaught, for £450 in Munster, and £600 in Leinster. | The rates per acre were 4s., 6s., 8s., and 12s, in those provinces respectively.

“ At the end of 1653, the Parliament made a division of the spoil among the conquerors and the adventurers ; and, on September 26th, an Act was passed for the new planting of Ireland by English, ‘The Government reserved for itself the towns, the church lands, and the tithes, the established church, hierarchy and all, having been utterly abolished. The four counties of Dublin, Kildare, Carlow, and Cork were also reserved. The amount due to the adventurers was £360,000.

This they divided into three lots, of which £110,000 was to be satisfied in Munster, £205,000 in Leinster, and £45,000 in Ulster, and the moiety of ten counties was charged with their payment—Waterford, Limerick, and Tipperary, in Munster; Meath, Westmeath, King’s and Queen’s Counties, in Leinster; and Antrim, Down, and Armagh, in Ulster.

But, as all was required by the Adventurers’ Act to be done by lot, a lottery was appointed to be held in Grocers’ Hall, London, for July 20th, 1653, to begin at 8 o’clock in the morning, when lots should be first drawn in which province each adventurer was to be satisfied, not exceeding the specified amounts in any province ; lots were to be drawn, secondly, to ascertain in which of the ten counties each adventurer was to receive his land—the lots not to exceed, in Westmeath £70,000, in Tipperary £60,000, in

Meath £55,000, in King's and Queen's Counties £40,000 each; in Limerick £30,000, in Waterford £20,000, in Antrim, Down, and Armagh £15,000 each."

Later on, [Godkin continues]:

"The English parliament resolved to clear out the population of all the principal cities and seaport towns, though nearly all founded and inhabited by Danes or English, and men of English descent, In order to raise funds for the war, the following towns were offered to English merchants for sale at the prices annexed :—Limerick, with 12,000 acres contiguous, for £30,000, and a rent of £625, payable to the state; Waterford, with 1,500 acres contiguous at the same rate; Galway, with 10,000 acres, for £7,500, and a rent of £520; Wexford, with 6,000 acres, for £5,000, and a rent of £156 4s.

"On July 23, 1655, the inhabitants of Galway were commanded to quit the town for ever by the 1st November following, the owners of houses getting compensation at eight years' purchase.

"On October 30, this order was executed. All the inhabitants, except the sick and bedrid, were at once banished, to provide accommodation for English Protestants, whose integrity to the state should entitle them to be trusted in a place of such importance; and Sir Charles Coote, on November 7, received the thanks of the Government for clearing the town, with a request that he would remove the sick and bedrid as soon as the season might permit, and take care that the houses while empty were not spoiled by the soldiery. The town was thus made ready for the English." —*Godkin's Land War*.

All the Irish population, including many of the Anglo-Irish planted by Elizabeth, were driven across the Shannon into Connaught. So sweeping were the clearances effected, that in Tipperary and other places the soldiery who came to settle upon the lands allotted to them, when they could not agree as to the boundaries of their estates, were compelled to obtain a special permission from the authorities to bring back for a short time from Connaught some of the dispossessed owners to point out their lands.

With the exception of some minor incidents of a similar character, which followed the Irish victories of William, the Cromwellian settlement just described was the last considerable landed property in Ireland. It was the successful consummation of work begun by Elizabeth —the wresting of the soil of Ireland from the Irish people.

Cromwell's administration effected revolution unparalleled in history. Its proceedings have been well summarized by Mr. D'Arcy McGee :—

" The Long Parliament, still dragging out its days under the shadow of Cromwell's great name, declared in its session of 1652 the rebellion in Ireland 'subdued and ended,' and proceeded to legislate for that kingdom as a conquered country. On August 12 they passed their Act of Settlement, the authorship of which was attributed to Lord Orrery, in this respect the worthy son of the first Earl of Cork. Under this Act there were four chief descriptions of persons whose status was thus settled: 1. All ecclesiastics and royalist proprietors were exempted from pardon of life or estate. 2. All royalist commissioned officers were condemned to banishment, and the forfeit of two-thirds-of their property, one-third being retained for the support of their wives and children. Those who' had not been in arms, but could be shown, by a parliamentary commission, to have manifested 'a constant, good affection ' to the war, were to forfeit one-third of their estates, and receive 'an equivalent' for the remaining two-thirds west of the Shannon. 4. All husbandmen and others of the inferior sort, 'not possessed of lands or goods exceeding

the value of £10, were to have a free pardon, on condition also of transporting themselves across the Shannon.

“This last condition of the Cromwellian settlement distinguished it, in our annals, from every other proscription of the native population formerly attempted. ‘The great river of Ireland, rising in the mountains of Leitrim, nearly severs the five western counties from the rest of the kingdom. The province thus set apart, though one of the largest in superficial extent, had also the largest proportion of waste and water, mountain and moorland. The new inhabitants were there to congregate from all the other provinces before the first day of May, 1654, under penalty of outlawry and all its consequences ; and when there, they were not to appear within two miles of the Shannon, or four miles of the sea. A rigorous passport system, to evade which was death without form of trial, completed this settlement, the design of which was to shut up the remaining Catholic inhabitants from all intercourse with mankind, and all communion with the other inhabitants of their own country.

“ A new survey of the whole kingdom was also ordered, under the direction of Sir William Petty, the fortunate economist who founded the house of Lansdowne. By him the surface of the kingdom was estimated at 10,500,000 plantation acres, 3,000,000 of which were deducted for waste and water. Of the remainder, above 5,000,000 were in Catholic hands, in 1641 ; 300,000 were church and college lands; and 2,000,000 were in possession of the Protestant settlers of the reigns of James and Elizabeth. Under the Protectorate, 5,000,000 acres were confiscated. This enormous spoil; two-thirds of the whole island, went to the soldiers and adventurers who had served against the Irish, or had contributed to the military chest, since 1641—except 700,000 acres given in ‘exchange’ to the banished in Clare and Connaught; and 1,200,000 confirmed to ‘innocent Papists.’

“The government of Ireland was vested in the Deputy, the Commander-in-chief, and four commissioners, Ludlow, Corbett, Jones, and Weaver. There was, moreover, a high court of justice, which perambulated the kingdom, and exercised an absolute authority over life and property, greater than even Strafford’s Court of Star Chamber had pretended to. Over this court presided Lord Lowther, assisted by Mr. Justice Donnellan, by Cooke, solicitor to the Parliament on the trial of King Charles, and the regicide Reynolds. By this court, Sir Phelim O’Neill, Viscount Mayo, and Colonels O’Toole and Bagnall were condemned and executed; children of both sexes were captured by thousands, and sold as slaves to the tobacco-planters of Virginia and the West Indies. Sir William Petty states that 6,000 boys and girls were sent to those islands. The number, of all ages, thus transported, was estimated at 100,000 souls. As to the ‘swordsmen’ who had been trained to fighting, Petty, in his *Political Anatomy*, records that ‘the chiefest and most eminentest of the nobility and many of the gentry had taken conditions from the King of Spain, and had transported 40,000 of the most active spirited men, most acquainted with the dangers and discipline of war.’ The chief commissioners in Dublin had despatched assistant commissioners to the provinces. The distribution which they made of the soil was nearly as complete as that of Canaan among the Israelites; and this was the model which the Puritans had always before their minds. Where a miserable residue of the population was required to till the land for its new owners, they were tolerated as the Gibeonites had been by Joshua. Irish gentlemen who had obtained pardons were obliged to wear a distinctive mark on their dress on pain of death: Persons of inferior rank were distinguished by a black spot on the right cheek. Wanting this, their punishment was the branding-iron or the gallows.

“No vestige of the Catholic religion was allowed to exist. Catholic lawyers and schoolmasters were silenced. All ecclesiastics were slain like the priests of Baal. Three bishops and 300 of the inferior clergy thus perished. ‘The bedridden Bishop of Kilmore was the only native clergy- man permitted to survive. If, in mountain recesses or caves, a few peasants were detected at muss, they were smoked out and shot.”

Thus England got rid of a race concerning which Mr. Prendergast found this contemporary testimony in a MS. In Trinity College library, Dublin, dated 1615:

“There lives not a people more hardy, active and painful; . . neither is there any will endure the miseries of warre, as famine, watching, heat, cold, wet, travel, and the like, so naturally and with such facility and courage that they do. The Prince of Orange’s excellency uses often publicly to deliver that the Irish are souldiers the first day of their birth. The famous Henry IV., late King of France, said there would prove no nation so resolute martial men as they, would they be ruly and not too headstrong. And Sir John Norris was wont to ascribe this particular to that nation above others, that he never beheld so few of any country as of Irish that were idiots and cowards, which is very notable.”

CHAPTER II. CROMWELL TO THE UNION.

WHEN upon the death of Cromwell the Restoration brought reparation and reward to the Royalists of England, no relief came to the race which had fought so stoutly for the King in the sister country. Many of the families exiled in Connaught hastened across the Shannon when the Monarchy was restored, only to find that their lands were held by Cromwellian troopers who had by that time become firmly established on them; and in but very few cases did the original owner succeed in recovering his estate. All through the reign of Charles II. The native Irish were repressed by their English governors with a stern hand, and when on the accession of James II. They had begun to breathe freely once more, the Revolution quickly put an end to their hopes, and again Ireland became the battle-ground whereon the destinies of the rival claimants for the English Crown were to be decided. In the short reign of James the Irish Parliament had passed an Act repealing the Act of Settlement. But soon after the Revolution measures were taken to render that settlement firmer than ever. A commission was appointed to inquire into the forfeited estates; and the consequence was that 1,060,792 acres were declared escheated to the Crown. In 1695 King William III, in his speech read to the Irish Parliament, assured them that he was intent upon the firm settlement of Ireland on a Protestant basis. He kept his word, for when he died there did not remain in the hands of Catholics one-sixth of the lands which their grandfathers held, even after the passing of the Act of Settlement. The Acts passed for securing the Protestant interest formed the series known as the Penal Code, which was in force for the whole of the eighteenth century.

This Penal Code, which appears to be directed solely to secure the extirpation of one form of worship and the ascendancy of another, was at the same time a tremendous political engine for securing their estates to the men of the Plantations and the Undertakings of the preceding reigns. It was not merely religious bigotry which was at the root of these ferocious enactments, there was also the consciousness that the men who made the laws rendering the possession of property value above £5 illegal for Catholics, legal for Protestants only, were wrongfully and unjustly in possession of the lands of those whose religion they were proscribing.

Manufactures prohibited

For example:

“[W]hen the last Duke of Ormond arrived as Lord- Lieutenant in 1703, the Commons waited on him with a Bill ‘for discouraging the further growth of Popery, which became law, having met his decided approval. This Act provided that if the son of a Catholic became a Protestant, the father should be incapable of selling or mortgaging his estate, or disposing of any portion of it by will. If a child ever so young professed to be a Protestant, it was to be taken from its parents, and placed under the guardianship of the nearest Protestant relation, The sixth clause renders Papists incapable. Of purchasing any manors, tenements, hereditaments, or any rents or profits arising out of the same, or of holding any lease of lives, or other lease whatever, for any term exceeding thirty-one years. And with respect even to such limited leases, it further enacts, that if a Papist should hold a farm producing a profit greater than one-third of the amount of the rent, his right to such should immediately cease, and pass over entirely to the first Protestant who should discover the rate of profit. The seventh clause prohibits Papists from

succeeding to the properties or estates of their Protestant relations. By the tenth clause, the estate of a Papist, not having a Protestant heir, is ordered to be gavelled, or divided in equal shares between all his children. The sixteenth and twenty-fourth clauses impose the oath of abjuration and the sacramental test as a qualification for office, and for voting at elections. The twenty-third clause deprives the Catholics of Limerick and Galway of the protection secured to them by the articles of the Treaty of Limerick. The twenty-fifth clause vests in the Crown all advowsons possessed by Papists.

“A further Act was passed, in 1709, imposing additional penalties. The first clause declares that no Papist shall be capable of holding an annuity for life. The third provides that the child of a Papist, on conforming, shall at once receive an annuity from his father, and that the Chancellor shall compel the father to discover, upon oath, the full value of his estate, real and personal, and thereupon make an order for the support of such conforming child or children, and for securing such share of the property, after the father’s death, as the court shall think fit. The fourteenth and fifteenth clauses secure jointures to Popish wives who shall conform. The sixteenth prohibits a Papist from teaching, even as assistant to a Protestant master. The eighteenth gives a salary of £30 per annum to Popish priests who shall conform. The twentieth provides rewards for the discovery of Popish prelates, priests, and teachers.”— *Godkin’s Land War*.

If for “Papist” property, *Irish* property is understood in these Acts, and for “Protestant,” *Englishman* (or person of English descent), their purport will be better understood. “Religion” of course gave zest to the plundering, but if the Irish too had been Protestants, the English would have robbed them all the same.

The English conquest, with its Planters and Undertakers, had thus artificially created a landlord class in Ireland. That landlord class was of course purely Protestant, and backed by English power, its members were now engaged in making laws for the enemies whom they had spoiled. Land, and the greed for its possession, was at the bottom of it all. Writing of this dreary eighteenth century, Mr. Froude says:—

“The English deliberately determined to keep Ireland poor and miserable, as the readiest means to prevent it being troublesome. They destroyed Irish trade and shipping by navigation laws. They extinguished Irish manufactures by differential duties. They laid disabilities even on its wretched agriculture, for fear that Irish importations might injure the English farmer.”

And speaking of the state of things which English domination thus established, he exclaims—

“Of all the fatal gifts which we bestowed on our unhappy possession [Ireland], the greatest was the English system of owning land. Land, properly speaking, cannot be owned by any man—it belongs to all the human race. Laws have to be made to secure the profits of their industry to those who cultivate it; but the private property of this or that person, which he is entitled to deal with as he pleases, land never ought to be and never strictly is. In Ireland, as in all primitive civilizations, the soil was divided among the tribes. Each tribe collectively owned its own district. Under the feudal system the proprietor was the Crown, as representing the nation; while the subordinate tenures were held with duties attached to them, and were liable on non-fulfilment to forfeiture.

In England the burden of defence was on the land. Every gentleman, according to his estate, was bound to bring so many men into the field properly armed and accoutred. When a standing army was substituted for the old levies, the country squires served as

unpaid magistrates on the commission of the peace. The country squire system was, in fact, a development of the feudal system, and, as we gave the feudal system to Ireland, so we tried long and earnestly to give them our landowners.

The intention, doubtless, was as good as possible in both cases, but we had taken no trouble to understand Ireland, and we failed as completely as before. The duties attached to landed property died away, or were forgotten—the ownership only remained. The people, retaining their tribal traditions, believed that they had rights upon the land on which they lived. The owner believed that there were no rights but his own.

In England the rights of landlords have similarly survived their duties, but they have been modified by custom or public opinion. In Ireland, the proprietor was an alien, with the fortunes of the residents upon his estates in his hands and at his mercy. He was divided from them in creed and language; he despised them, as of an inferior race, and he acknowledged no interest in common with them. Had he been allowed to trample on them, and make them his slaves, he would have cared for them, perhaps, as he cared for his horses. But their persons were free, while their farms and houses were his ; and thus his only object was to wring out of them the last penny which they could pay, leaving them and their children to a life scarcely raised above the level of their own pigs.”—*Romanism and the Irish Race*, p. 36.

Tyranny of Irish land-owners

A striking parallel, founded on the state of things thus produced, is drawn by Mr. Godkin, in his *Land War in Ireland*.

“Let us imagine that the Norman king had lived in Paris, and kept a viceroy in London—that the English parliament were subordinate to the French parliament, composed exclusively of Normans, and governed by Norman undertakers for the benefit of the dominant state—that the whole of the English land was held by ten thousand Norman proprietors, many of them absentees—that all the offices of the government, in every department, were in the hands of Normans—that, differing in religion with the English nation, the French, being only a tenth of the population, had got possession of all the national churches and church property, while the ‘poor natives supported a numerous hierarchy by voluntary contributions—that the Anglo-Norman parliament was bribed and coerced to abolish itself, forming a union of England with France, in which the English members were as one to six. Imagine that in consequence of rebellions the land of England had been confiscated three or four times, after desolating wars and famines, so that all the native proprietors were , expelled, and the land was parcelled out to French soldiers and adventurers on condition that the foreign ‘planters’ should assist in keeping down ‘the mere English’ by force of arms, Imagine that the English, being crushed by a cruel penal code for a century, were allowed to re-occupy the soil as mere tenants-at-will, under the absolute power of the French landlords. If all this be imagined by English legislators and English writers, they will be better able to understand the Irish land question, and to comprehend the nature of ‘Irish difficulties,’ as well as the justice of feeble, insincere, and baffled statesmen in casting the blame of Irish misery and disorder on ‘the unruly and barbarous nature of Irishmen.’ ”

The condition of the great mass of the people during all this time was one of the greatest misery. Exorbitant rents were wrung by the landlords from their unfortunate tenants.

Bishop Berkeley gives his opinion on the subject of high rents by describing Irish landlords as “Men of vulturine beaks with bowels of iron;” much as the *Times*, thirty years ago, said that the same class were “exercising their right with hands of iron and fronts of brass.” Chronic starvation prevailed. Every penny made by the tenant was seized by his lord ; and Dean Swift, in his “ *Maxims Controlled*,” says—

“ At least five children in six who are born, lie a dead weight for want of employment: . . . above one-half of the souls of this kingdom supported themselves by beggary and thieving, two-thirds whereof would be able to get their bread in any other country in the world.” Writing in 1729, he says there were “a round million (half the entire population) of creatures in human figure, whose sole subsistence, put into a common stock, would leave them in debt two million pounds sterling, adding those who are beggars by profession to the bulk of farmers, cottagers, and laborers, who are *beggars in effect*. . . . In the list of beggars,” says he, “I reckon all cottagers, labourers, and *four-fifths* of the farmers.”

Swift’s “ *Modest Proposal*”

The very state of things that suggested his “*Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of the Poor people from being a Burden to their Parents*,” will furnish an adequate idea of the extent of Irish misery at the time it was written.—

“The number of souls,” he writes, “in this kingdom being usually reckoned *one million and a half*, of these I calculate there may be about two hundred thousand couple whose wives are breeders; from which number I subtract thirty thousand couple who are able to maintain their own children (although I apprehend there cannot be so many under the present distresses of the kingdom). . . . The question, therefore, is, how this number (one hundred and twenty thousand children annually born) shall be reared and provided for? Which, as I have already said, under the present situation of affairs, is utterly impossible by all the methods hitherto proposed. . . . I do therefore offer it to the publick consideration, that, of the one hundred and twenty thousand children already computed, twenty thousand may be reserved for breed. . . . That the remaining one hundred thousand may, at a year old, be offered in sale to persons of quality and fortune through the kingdom ; always advising the mother to let them suck plentifully in the last month, so as to render them plump and fat for a good table.

I have reckoned, upon a medium, that a child just born will weigh twelve pounds, and, in a solar year, if tolerably nursed, will increase to twenty-eight pounds, I grant this food will be somewhat dear, and, therefore, very proper for *landlords*, who, AS THEY HAVE ALREADY DEVoured MOST OF THE PARENTS, HAVE THE BEST TITLE TO THE CHILDREN.” After dilating on the succulent properties of infant flesh for nurses—“I have already computed the charge of nursing a beggar’s child (in which list I reckon all cottagers, laborers, and four-fifths of the farmers) to be about two shillings per annum, rags included; and I believe no gentleman would repine to give ten shillings for the carcass of a good fat child, which, I have said, will make four dishes of excellent, nutritive meat, when he has only some particular friend or his own family to dine with him.

Thus the squire will learn to be a good landlord, and grow popular among the tenants ; the mother will have eight shillings neat profit, and be fit for work till she produces another child.” He then suggests to the “more thrifty (such as the times require) to flay the carcass, the skin of which, artificially dressed, would make admirable gloves for ladies and summer boots for fine gentlemen ;”

“ the establishment of shambles, butchers being sure not to be wanting,” and the “buying the children alive, and dressing them hot from the knife as we do roasting pigs.”

Having thus disposed of the infants, he came to the grown-up portion of the “ beggars,” and, at the suggestion of “a very worthy person, a true lover of his country,” recommends that “ the want of venison might be well supplied by the bodies of young lads and maidens, not exceeding fourteen years, nor under twelve—so great a number of both sexes being ready to starve in every country for want of work and service. . . . Neither, indeed, could he deny that, if the same use were made of several plump, young girls in this town [Dublin], who, without one single groat to their fortunes, cannot stir abroad without a chair, and appear at a play house and assemblies in foreign fineries, which they never will pay for, the kingdom would not be the worse.” And, lastly, as to “these vast number of poor people who are aged, diseased, and maimed,” he was “ not in the least pained upon that matter, because it was very well known that they were every day *dying and rotting by cold, famine, and filth, and vermin*, as fast as could be reasonably expected.”

Such is the picture of Irish wretchedness when our population was only “one million and a-half.”

Arthur Dobbs, afterwards Governor of Carolina, writing at this period, says :—

“What was it induced so many of the commonality lately to go to America, but *high rents*, bad seasons, and want of good tenures, or a permanent property in their land ? This kept them poor and low, that they scarce had sufficient credit to procure necessaries to subsist or till their ground. They never had anything in store ; all was from hand to mouth, so one or two bad crops broke them.”

This gentleman, it may be added, in 1732, carried a Bill for the Reclamation of Irish Waste Lands through both Houses of the Irish Parliament, but the indispensable sanction of the Crown was *refused*.

The misery of the country naturally led, as it always leads, to crime and outrage ; and various illegal secret combinations, such as the Whiteboy and kindred organizations, spread amongst the people. Speaking of the rising of the “Right Boys” in Cork and Kerry, in 1787, the Attorney-General, Mr. Fitzgibbon, declared it was owing solely to the cruelty of the landlords, and that “the peasantry of Munster bound to pay £6 an acre rent, and to work for their landlords at 5d. A day, could no longer exist under the wretchedness they endured.” On the debate on the Bill to suppress these disturbances he said:—

“I am well acquainted with the province of Munster, and I know that it is impossible for human wretchedness to exceed that of the miserable peasantry of that province. I know that the unhappy tenantry are ground to powder by relentless landlords, I know that far from being able to give the clergy their just dues, they had not food or raiment for themselves; the landlord grasps the whole. The poor people of Munster live in a more abject state of poverty than human nature can be supposed able to bear; their miseries are intolerable.” *Debate in Irish House of Commons, 1787.*

About this period we also read of “The Levellers,” “The Peep-of-Day Boys,” “The Hearts of Oak,” “The Hearts of Steel,” and other secret combinations formed by the tenants. These societies merely maintained on the part of the Keltic people the hereditary struggle for the lands from which their fathers had been dispossessed by Elizabeth, by James, by Cromwell, or by William, to make room for the stranger. Landlordism, however, was upheld by the law, and the Statute Book of the eighteenth century is blotted by ferocious and barbarous enactments, made by the landlords in the

interest of their class, to uphold them in the possession of their ill-gotten estates, and to prevent the people from winning back their own. It may be added, that the English still keep these laws in force, and that for trivial charges arising out of the land agitation of 1880, a Liberal Government indicts the mere Irish of to-day under statutes which prescribes for them a penalty, if convicted, of penal servitude for life, with the addition of being “if a male, once, twice, or thrice, publicly or privately whipped.”—1 & 2 William IV. Cap. 44, amending an Act of George III.⁴ These enactments had for object, in English phrase, “the maintenance of law and order in Ireland.”

Sixty-two years after Dean Swift made his “Modest Proposal” the condition of things in Ireland had not improved, as will appear from the following statement, addressed in 1791 to the Irish Parliament by an eminent Protestant Bishop, Dr. Woodward :—

“The lower class of the people of Ireland,” says Dr. Woodward, “are ill accommodated with lodging, raiment, and even food. And their poverty is likely to continue, with but little mitigation, from the following amongst other causes—the exorbitant rent extorted from the poorer tenantry, ever loath and afraid to quit their ancient habitations, by the general method of letting farms to the highest bidder, without any allowance for tenant-right, the oppression of duty-work, which drives the cottager arbitrarily from the tillage of the little spot which he holds at so dear a rent. . . . It would shock a tender mind to imagine (if imagination could paint) the miseries to which the bulk of the inhabitants of Ireland are continually exposed by the slightest reverse of fortune, by a single bad season, by occasional disease, or even by the gradual decay of nature.”

Free trade had, a few years before, been won for Irish manufactures, and the Irish manufacturers, who, of course, were Protestant, were fairly prosperous ; but the evidence of contemporary history shows that the condition of people at large was wretched in the extreme. For this the land system, and the land system alone, was to blame, or, in other words, “high rents and insecure tenures”—complaints regarding which go echoing down our records in saddening monotone, from century to century.—See Lecky’s *England in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. ii., chaps. 6 and 7.

4 See Queen v. Healy and Walsh, etc., Cork Assizes, 15th December, 1880.

CHAPTER III. The Union to The Devon Commission

Absenteeism added greatly to the evils of the country, and after the Parliamentary Union of 1800, these evils increased in a very marked degree. The Lords and Commons of Ireland, who were the great landed proprietors of the country, had heretofore, to a considerable extent, resided in the capital; but now their business took them across to London, and permanent residence in Ireland was no longer fashionable.

Dalton, in his *History of the County Dublin*, p. 85, gives as follows, a comparative table, compiled from the most approved authorities, of the amount of annual absentee rental.

Year	Amount [£ pounds]
1691	136, 018
1729	627, 799
1782	2, 223, 222
1783	1, 608, 932
1804	3, 000, 000
1830	4, 000, 000
1838	Now (as he says) nearer 5, 000, 000

Table 1: Amount of Annual Absentee Rental [source: Dalton]

At this rate the annual drain would amount at this moment to £6,000,000.

This estimate is confirmed by the fact that, in 1830, Mr. Butler Bryan estimated, before a Committee of the House of Commons, the absentee drain at £3,000,000. Mr. Ensor, “ after a minute calculation,” at £4,000,000. The *Irish Times*, in 1873, set it down at £5,000,000 or £6,000,000.

From Minutes of Evidence before a Committee of the Lords the following testimony of Mr. (afterwards Chief Justice) Blackburne, while Commissioner of the Insurrection Act, during several years in the south of Ireland, is taken :—

“ As to the state of Ireland,” said he, “ any view I suggest would be incomplete without stating the effects of absenteeism. My opinion is that, independent of its abstraction from the country of so much wealth, it produces great mischief to the whole frame of society : in Ireland, I may say, there is the destitution, the want of a distinct class. In ordinary times, the loss of influence and authority, and the control which belongs to education, to rank, and to property, must be deeply felt in any country ; but when it becomes disturbed, I need not say that that which would form the barrier for the protection of the peace is lost in Ireland ; and I have now been administering the Insurrection Act in counties where the property of absentees is extensive.”

After the Union the misery of the people increased, and the Act passed in 1793, giving to every person possessed of a forty-shilling freehold the right to vote for Members of Parliament, exercised

indirectly a considerable influence in lowering their social condition, as the great proprietors, by simply leasing for lives the smallest patch of land, were enabled to multiply almost indefinitely the number of their voters, and consequently to increase their political power. Population of course grew denser, and large numbers of the peasantry lived from year to year on a single acre or two of land sown only with potatoes. The most trifling failures of the harvest therefore produced, as an inevitable result, want, if not starvation, among the mass of the poorer classes. When the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 abolished the voting power of the forty-shilling freeholders, the landlords to whom this class of tenant had scarcely been profitable, except for political purposes, at once began that system of clearances, which from that time down to the present day has given the keenest impulse to agitation, and been the most fruitful source of outrage. Long previous to this date, however, the outrages arising from insecurity of tenure and the exactions of the landlords had wrung from the justice seat a remarkable pronouncement.—

“What,” says Judge Fletcher, in his charge to the Grand Jury of the County of Waterford in July, 1814, “is the wretched peasant to do? Hunted from the spot where he had first drawn his breath—where he had first seen the light of heaven—incapable of procuring any other means of subsistence—can we be surprised that, being of unenlightened and uneducated habits, he should rush upon the perpetration of crimes followed by the punishment of the rope and the gibbet? NOTHING REMAINS FOR THEM THUS HARASSED, THUS DESTITUTE, BUT WITH A STRONG HAND to deter the stranger from intruding upon their farms, and to extort from the weakness of their landlords—from whose gratitude and good feelings they have failed to win it—a sort of preference for the ancient tenantry.” Judges charges in these days of Catholic appointments—and equal misery—are rather different reading.

Abortive commissions

All this time there was no end of Commissions and Select Committees to inquire into the condition of the agricultural population, whenever Parliament was roused by the prevalence-of agrarian outrages. These commissions and committees reported, and there the matter ended. There were always insuperable difficulties when the natives were to be put in a better position, Between 1810 and 1814, for example, a commission reported four times on the condition of Irish bogs. They expressed their entire conviction of the practicability of cultivating with profit an immense extent of land lying waste. In 1819, in 1823, in 1826, and in 1830, Select Committees inquired into and reported on drainage, reclamation of bogs and marshes, on roads, fisheries, emigration, and other schemes for giving employment to the redundant population that had been encouraged to increase and multiply in the most reckless manner while “war prices” were obtained for agricultural produce, and the votes of the forty-shilling freeholders were wanted by the landlords.

These Select Committees, as has been stated, never led to anything. The report of that of 1819, under the presidency of Sir John Newport, to inquire into the state of disease and the condition of the labouring poor, opens by stating that the general distress and deficiency of employment “are so notorious as to render the production of any particular evidence to establish the extent and variety of the evil unnecessary.” To mitigate this evil, says Mr. Barry O’Brien, in his Parliamentary History of the Irish Land Question, and to give employment, which should have the twofold effect of relieving the existing misery and permanently improving the condition of the country, the committee suggested the adoption of. Measures for facilitating the development of Irish agricultural resources.

It stated that there were 2,000,000 acres of waste bog-land in Ireland; but nothing was done in consequence to reclaim them.

The report of the Select Committee appointed in 1823 tells the same sad tale of misery and want.

The condition of the people is described as “wretched and calamitous to the last degree.” We are told that they lived in a state of the utmost destitution, with scarcely an article of furniture in their miserable cabins, using as bed covering a “little fern and a quantity of straw thrown over it.”

“Landlords take advantage of the dreadful necessity, and exact rent out of all proportion with the value of the land.”—*Mr. Wyse’s Evidence before the Houses of Lords and Commons*, 1824, pp. 8, and 5 and 6.

In 1825 another crisis arose, and another Select Committee was appointed [vide *Report of Select Committee, House of Lords, to inquire into the State of Ireland*, 1825]. Before this committee, the peculiar characteristics and incidents which distinguished the relation of landlord and tenant in Ireland from that relation in England were well pointed out by an English landlord, who was also the proprietor of estates in Ireland—Sir Frankland Lewis, who said :—

“Nothing is more striking in Ireland than that a number of burdens which English landlords are willing to take upon themselves, the Irish landlords do not find it necessary to take upon themselves. In the maintenance of a farm in England all the expensive part of the capital employed upon a farm is provided by the landlord ; the houses, the gates, the fences, and the drains are all provided by the landlords. Everybody knows that in Ireland that is not the practice ; at the same time that the landlord obtains as rent in Ireland a much larger proportion of the value of the produce of the land than he obtains in England, and in parts of Ireland it appears to me that the landlord sometimes obtains for rent more than is produced by the land.”—*Minutes of Evidence of Select Committee, House of Lords, to inquire into the State of Ireland*, 1825, p. 39.

Mr. Nimmo, the eminent engineer was asked to state his opinion of the condition of the peasantry of Ireland. He replied—

“I conceive the peasantry of Ireland to be in general in the lowest possible state of existence. Their cabins are in the most miserable condition, and their food—potatoes, with water, without even salt. I have frequently met persons, who begged of me on their knees to give them some promise of employment, that from the credit of that they might get the means of support.”

“To what cause do you attribute this state of things ?” Mr. Nimmo was further asked. He replied:

“It is unquestionable that the great cause of the miserable condition [of the people] and of the [prevailing] disturbances is the management of land. There is no means of employment, and no certainty that the peasant has of existence for another year but by getting possession of a portion of land, on which he can plant potatoes. The landlord has, in the eyes of the peasant, the right to take from him in a summary way everything he has, if he is unable to execute those covenants into which he has been obliged to enter from the dread of starvation.”

Committee: “Do you attribute the distressed state of Ireland to the power which resided in the landlord, and to its abuse?”

Mr. Nimmo: "I conceive that there is no check to that power. It appears to me that, under the cover of law, the landlord may convert that power to any purpose he pleases. The consequence is, that when he wishes he can extract from the peasant every shilling, beyond bare existence, which can be produced by him from the land. The lower order of peasantry can thus never acquire anything like property; and the landlord, at the least reverse of prices, has it in his power to seize, and does seize, his cow, bed, potatoes in ground, and everything he has, and can dispose of the property at any price."—*Select Committee, House of Lords, 1825. Minutes of Evidence*, pp. 165, 179, and *Hansard*, vol. Xxxii. 3rd ser. p. 185.

Abortive committees

At the commencement of the session of 1829, Mr. Brownlow brought the condition of the tenant-farmers and labouring classes in Ireland under the notice of the Government. His speech, says Mr. Barry O'Brien, was nothing more nor less than a reproduction of much of the matter contained in the reports and evidence of the various select committees to which reference has been made. He dwelt upon the inactivity of former Governments, and now urged that employment should be given to the people, whose condition was "past description and past endurance," to save them from starvation. "If," said he, "there are millions of unemployed men in Ireland, there are millions of waste land capable of profitable cultivation."

A few months later (on the 16th Feb., 1830), the Irish Solicitor-General, Mr. Doherty, stated in the House of Commons that a great part of the tenantry of Ireland were "worse off than the beasts which browsed upon the land;" adding that it was "high time" to make an effort to ameliorate their condition. (*Hansard*, vol. Xxii. n. s. p. 541.) Mr. Brownlow passed through the Commons a Bill dealing with waste lands and bogs, but it did not pass the Lords. The same story is to be told of a good many useful Irish Bills sent up to their Lordships' House since 1830 !

The Select Committee appointed in 1830 repeats the old story of misery and want. A considerable portion of the population, nearly one-fifth, it was said, were out of employment, and a condition of poverty and suffering which "no language can possibly describe, and which it is necessary to witness in order fully to estimate," was laid bare. The report dwells at much length on "the law and practice of landlord and tenant," and directs attention to the various suggestions—such as emigration, the prosecution of public works, and the reclamation of waste lands—which had been made from time to time for remedying the existing disorders.

The Committee felt that something ought to be done by the Government to meet the exigencies of the crisis. "Your Committee conceives," says the report, "that it is the imperative duty of individuals, of the legislature, and of the Government, to consider what means can be devised to diminish the mass of sufferings, and, at the same time, to secure for the country a better economic condition, promoting the better management of estates, and regulating the relation of landlord and tenant on rational and useful principles." If a Select Committee could report fifty years ago that it was "the imperative duty of individuals to consider what means can be devised to diminish the mass of sufferings," what has happened in 1880 to absolve individual Irishmen from a duty as urgent now as then, and with this object, organizing themselves—even in Land Leagues—to redress their wrongs?

As usual nothing was done, although, in addressing the House of Commons on the 11th of November, 1830, the Irish Solicitor-General, Mr. Doherty, said, that "there was then in Ireland the

existence of a condition of things which the lower animals in England would scarcely endure, and which, in fact, they did not endure.”

This year riots had occurred in many parts of the country, and serious collisions had taken place between the peasantry and the police. A very grave state of affairs had, in fact, arisen. The Government, however, seemed unable to realize the condition of things. It was, apparently, the opinion of the Duke of Wellington in 1830 that the landlords were much to blame for the poverty and distress of the people. “If,” said he, “persons of estate and property in Ireland would live there, and spend their incomes in it, they would do more to tranquillize the country than all the measures which his Majesty’s Government could adopt.”

On the 18th of February, Mr. Browne stated in the House that the parish priest of Kilmore, in the Barony of Erris, in the County Mayo, had written him to say that before the end of the month there would be 30,000 people in that district without food. This statement of Mr. Browne was, in its substantial features, corroborated by the Irish Secretary, Mr. Stanley.

The only remedies, however, which the Government cared to apply to alter this state of things in Ireland are those with which we are so familiar—Arms Acts, Coercion Acts, and Suspension of the Habeas Corpus; and accordingly while remedial Bills, recommended by the Select Committees referred to, were not passed through Parliament, on the plea of want of time, abundance of time was found to run coercive measures through both Houses. The Government, notwithstanding, were fully conscious that the land system was at the root of all the existing crimes and misery. Witness after witness had borne testimony to this fact. Lord Melbourne declared, on the 18th March, 1831, that all the witnesses, Catholic and Protestant, magistrates and others, who were examined before various Select Committees, with reference to Ireland, had, with one voice, ascribed the disturbed state of the country to the relations subsisting between landlord and tenant to the manifest injury of both, yet the Government, instead of striking at the root of the disease thus pointed out, persisted in the application of local remedies, which created a great deal of irritation, and did no good.

Persistent coercion

In giving evidence before a Select Committee, a resident magistrate, Major Warburton, says :

“The destitution produced by *turning persons out of their land, when they have no other means of existence*, is a very great source of crime, as such a state of things *must naturally* involve the people in *criminal endeavours* to procure *the means of maintaining their families*.”

And again,

“That such a state of things *must necessarily involve people in crime*, when they are reduced to *destitution* by being *turned out of their lands* without having *any means* of subsistence.” He also states that “the causes which produce crime and outrage at present, are the same causes which, for many years back, have produced the same results.”

This last sentence might have been written for the present year of grace.

“Mr. Tomkins Brew says, the cause of Terryaltism in Clare was *the tenants receiving ‘notice to quit;’* that the people of Clare are, in many districts, in a state of great destitution, and likely to be worse next year; that the attacks on houses in Clare in 1837

proceeded from the scarcity of provisions—when a supply came the outrages all ceased.”

The people of Clare in fact perversely wanted to keep alive *at all costs*—which seems to be the general feeling of the common people everywhere, even when ever-adorable Law and Order has decreed that they should demurely die !

So late as the year 1836, the Poor-law Commissioners reported to the following effect:—

“It appeared that in Great Britain the agricultural families constituted little more than a fourth, whilst in Ireland they constituted about two-thirds, of the whole population; that there were in Great Britain, in 1831, 1,055,982 agricultural labourers; in Ireland, 1,131,715— although the cultivated land of Great Britain amounted to about 34,250,000 acres, and that of Ireland only to about 14,600,000. So that there were in Ireland about: five agricultural labourers for every two that there were for the same quantity of land in Great Britain. It further appeared that the agricultural progress of Great Britain was more than four times that of Ireland, in which agricultural wages varied from sixpence to one shilling a day; the average of the country being about eightpence-halfpenny; and that the earnings of the labourers came, on an average of the whole class, to from two shillings to two and sixpence a week or thereabouts for the year round.”

“In comparison,” says a writer in the *Dublin Review*, July, 1836, “to the mass of suffering which is unsparingly inflicted, the state of popular feeling and action in Ireland is quiescence itself. No; compared to the provocations they receive, we say that the blood of Irishmen is tame—is humble; nor is there any other people in Europe who would have so long brooked the wrongs they have endured, and not risen up in a simultaneous effort to shake off the annoyance of such heavy and contemptible oppressors.”

“The peasantry are ground down to powder by enormous rents,” says the *Quarterly*, December, 1840, “which are only paid by the exportation of the great bulk of the food raised in the country, leaving those who grow it a bare subsistence upon potatoes eked out with weeds.”

In the debate on the Irish Registration Bill, February, 1841, the late Lord Derby declared, that

“[P]ersons having from fifteen to twenty acres of land are generally from April to September in a state of the greatest destitution, living on potatoes, without either milk or meat, and considering themselves very happy if they have dry potatoes enough—men who during a great part of the year lived on dry potatoes —*men whom the landlords, letting their lands at a RACK RENT, may UPON ANY DAY turn loose upon the world to starve in THE LAST DEGREE OF MISERY.*”

Hopeless misery

The prime cause of the condition of the mass of the Irish people is summed up in a few words by several authorities, in a work, *Ireland and its Evil*, by M. T. Sadler, Tory M.P. for Newark, published in 1829:—

- Edmond Spencer. “The landlords there most shamefully rack their tenants.”
- Dean Swift. “Rents squeezed out of the blood and vitals and clothes and dwellings of the tenants, who live worse than English beggars.”

- Archbishop Boulter. “Here the tenant, I fear, has hardly ever more than the one-third for his share ; too often but a fourth or a fifth part.”—*Letters*, vol I. p. 292.
- Lord Clare (when Attorney-General in 1787). ‘The peasantry are ground down to powder by enormous rents.’
- “Exorbitant rents.”—Gordon’s *History of Ireland*, vol. ii.p. 241.
- “Exorbitant rents.”—Newenham’s *Inquiry*, etc., p. 15.
- “Exorbitant rents.”—*Argument for the Support of the Poor*, Dr. Woodward, p. 15.
- “Exorbitant rents.”—Curwen, *Observations on the State of Ireland*, vol. ii. 32.

Now for a few other authorities :—

“Exorbitant rents.” —*First Report on the State of Ireland*, 1825, p. 38; see pp. 59, 307, 413, 414, 638, etc.

“It is an undoubted fact that, as landlords, they exact more from their tenants than the same class of men in any other country.”— Wakefield’s *Account of Ireland*, vol. ii. p. 795.

“The Irish landlords, as a class, are needy, exacting, unremitting, harsh, and without sympathy for their tenantry.”—*Bicheno*.

“Landlords in Ireland, among the lesser orders, extort exorbitant rents out of the bowels, sweat, and rags of the poor, and then turn them adrift ; they are corrupt magistrates, and jobbing grand jurors, oppressing and plundering the miserable people.’—Bryan’s *View of Ireland*, 1832.

“The Irish country gentleman,” says the *Dublin Pilot* of 2nd January, 1833, “is, we are sorry to say, the most incorrigible being that infests the face of the globe. In the name of law he tramples on justice ; boasting superiority of Christian creed, he violates Christian charity ; is mischievous in the name of the Lord. Were the Irish Government inclined to govern the country with good policy (which, bless its heart ! it is not) the greatest impediment it would find would be in the arrogant, besotted, grasping, rack-renting, spendthrift, poor, proud, and profligate country gentleman.”

The Tory Englishman, Mr. Sadler, M.P., in the work above quoted, p- 161-2, remarks:—

“Is a system which can only be supported by brute force, and is kept up by constant blood-shedding; to be perpetuated for ever? Are we still to garrison a defenceless country in behalf of those whose property was, generally speaking, originally conferred on the special condition of residence, but whose desertion occasions all the evils under which she has groaned for centuries?—property so treated, that it would not be worth a day’s purchase, were the proprietors its sole protectors. But they are aware that their absence is balanced by the presence of a body of military and police, which enables them to conduct themselves with as little apprehension as remorse. The possessions of the entire empire would be lost were such conduct general; and are these so meritorious a class, that their utmost demands are to be extorted from a distant and suffering country, and themselves protected in the open neglect, or rather audacious outrage, of all those duties, on the due and reciprocal discharge of which the whole frame of the social system is founded? If they persist in this course, let them do so, but let it be at their own proper peril.”

With all this evidence before them, and the knowledge of the profound misery of the people, successive governments remained absolutely immovable so far as passing any beneficial measures for the general improvement of the country was concerned ; and whenever the people, goaded by their wrongs, broke out into turbulence or crime, no remedy save Coercion Acts seems to have been thought of. At last, in 1842, a commencement of practical legislation was made in relation to waste lands, which question had been brought continuously before Parliament since the Legislative Union of the two countries had been accomplished. The subject of waste lands in Ireland forms of course an important phase of the land question. The Registrar-General reports the total agricultural area of Ireland at 20,327,764 acres. Of this total he reports 4,661,938 acres to be absolutely waste. Professor Baldwin reports that exclusive of absolute waste, we have 4,000,000 acres more, rendered nearly valueless by the want of arterial drainage. Sir Humphrey Davy says that our marshes cover “some of the richest alluvial soil in these kingdoms.” We may, therefore, welcome as the first green spot in the legislative waste of Coercion and Arms Acts which theretofore represented the dealings of the English Parliament with Ireland, the fact, that in August, 1842, the Irish Arterial Drainage Act was passed. It did little service, however, until amended by the Summary Proceedings Act of 1846, and even as amended, it is well known that little has been done under it to effect reclamations on a large scale; as owing to some mismanagement or reckless expenditure in the famine period, the under- taking of new works was prohibited by Treasury Minute.

In the year 1843, on the estate of Mr. Shirley, whose family sent a Conservative representative to Parliament for the County Monaghan up to the last General Election, an incident occurred described in Mr. Trench’s *Realities of Irish Life*, as the “Farney Rent Campaign,” which parallels in a very remarkable way the occurrences arising out of the present land agitation. Mr. Shirley’s agent having died, a valuator was appointed who raised the rents of the land more than one-third. Mr. Trench was appointed agent, and the following is Mr. Godkin’s summary of what ensued :—The tenants refused in a body to pay the increased rents, and at once all the missiles of the law were showered on the recusants—notices to quit, *latitats*, processes for arrear, etc. Grippers, process-servers, keepers, drivers, were in full requisition. The grippers were to arrest all tenants against whom decrees had been obtained at the quarter sessions; the keepers were employed to watch the crops that had been seized; and the drivers were to bring the cattle, sheep, horses, or pigs to pound. These constituted the landlord’s army, having the police as a reserve, and the military if necessary.

Battle of Magheracloon

On the other hand, the tenants organised a body called the “Molly Maguires”—stout young men dressed up in women’s clothes, their faces disguised and besmeared in the most fantastic manner. These men way-laid and maltreated the officers of the law so severely that in a short time no money could induce a gripper, process-server, driver, or bailiff, to show his nose on the estate. Thus baffled, Mr. Shirley applied to the authorities in Dublin for an order for “substitution of service.” That is, instead of delivering the legal notices at the houses of the parties, which was impracticable, they were to be posted up on the chapel-door. To effect this object, a large police force was necessary, and it was accompanied by a stipendiary magistrate. As soon as the party came near the chapel grounds, a shout of defiance was raised by the peasantry, who began to crowd into the chapelyard, and with uplifted sticks and threatening gestures, swore that they would never allow the walls of the chapel to be desecrated by such a notice. The bailiff, a most respectable and temperate man, did his utmost to pacify the excited mob. He reasoned with them as best he could, and assured them that no desecration was intended—that he was only carrying out the law, which required that

the notice should be posted on the chapel walls. But his voice had no more power than if he had spoken to a storm of wind; they leaped and danced madly about, whirling their sticks over their heads, and shouting that they would never allow him to touch the sacred edifice. The stipendiary magistrate now ordered him to do his duty, and that he would be protected in doing it by the police, and he, trembling with fear, as well he might, at length approached with the notice in his hand to post it in due form. No sooner had he approached towards the chapel than a volley of stones sent him staggering back, though none actually struck him.

The police were now ordered to advance. They did so amidst another shower of stones. The storm of missiles still continuing, and several of the police having been struck and injured, they were at length ordered to fire. They aimed low, and directing their fire straight into the crowd of stone-throwers, they soon checked the vigour of the assault—six or seven men fell under the volley, and rolled upon the ground. There was a short pause, a dead silence ensued—but it was only for a moment, and before the police could recover themselves and load again, a furious rush was made upon them by the enraged populace. Stones were seen flying as thick as hail; and finally, the police, apprehending that they must be annihilated if they remained, ran to their cars, which were waiting at a little distance, and drove into Carrickmacross as fast as the horses could gallop, accompanied by the stipendiary magistrate!

The field thus quickly won, remained in the possession of the insurgents. One of the rioters was killed upon the spot—shot through the body. The others who fell were only slightly injured; one had his ear taken off, another was wounded in the finger, another shot in the arm.

This was “the battle of Magheracloon.” Mr. Trench wisely recommended a cessation of hostilities till the harvest was gathered in, promising the landlord that he would then by quiet means, acting on the tenants individually and privately, induce them to pay their rents. The tenants however won. Mr. Godkin, writing in 1870, and with what almost seems a prophetic eye to present events, in commenting on the mischief which could be done by driving the agricultural population to desperation, says:

“A general strike against the payment of rent would convulse society. If the war which raged in Farney had spread all over the island, the landlords would be in a serious difficulty. The British army might then have become rent-collectors, as they had been tithe-collectors in 1831.”

Confiscation of tenants' improvements

The population of the Barony of Farney, according to the census of 1841, exceeded 44,000 souls, and its rental brought in to two absentee proprietors the enormous annual revenue of £40,000, which at the present day has, it is said, been increased to £60,000. The land had been improved to yield this princely revenue solely by the labour of the tenants, as may be judged from the following account of the history of the estate given by Mr. Godkin :—

About the year 1606, Lord Essex, who had obtained a grant of the Barony of Farney, leased it to Evar McMahan at a yearly rent of £250. After fourteen years the same territory was let to Brian McMahan for £1,500. In the year 1636, the property yielded a yearly rent of £2,022 18s. 4d. Paid by thirty-eight tenants. A map then taken gives the several townlands and denominations nearly as they are at present. Robert Earl of Essex, dying in 1646, his estates devolved on his sisters, Lady Frances and Lady Dorothy Devereux, the former of whom married Sir W. Seymour, afterwards Marquis of

Hertfort, and the latter Sir Henry Shirley, Bart., ancestor of the present proprietor of half the barony. Ultimately the other half became the property of the Marquis of Bath. At the division in 1690, each moiety was valued at £1,318 14s. 43d. Gradually, as the lands were reclaimed by the tenants, the rental rose. In 1769 the Bath estate produced £3,000, and the Shirley estate £5,000. The total of £8,000 per annum, from this once wild and barren tract was paid by middlemen. The natives had not been rooted out, and during the eighteenth century these sub-tenants multiplied rapidly. It should be observed here that, in all crown grants, the patentees were charged crown rents only for the arable lands conveyed by their title deeds—bogs, wastes, mountains, and unreclaimed lands of every description being thrown in gratuitously, amounting probably to ten or fifteen times the quantity of demised ground set down in acres. Lord Lurgan's Agent, Mr. Hancock, at the commencement of his evidence before the Devon Commission, stated that "Lord Lurgan is owner of about 24,600 acres, with a population of 28,800, under the census of 1841"—that is, by means of original reclamation, drainage, and other works of agricultural improvement, Mr. Brownlow's 2,500 acres of the year 1619, had silently grown up to 24,600 acres, and his hundred swordsmen, or pikemen, the representatives of 57 families, with a few subordinates, had multiplied to 23,800 souls. Now Mr. Hancock founds the tenant-right custom upon the fact that few, if any, of the "patentees were wealthy;" we may therefore fairly presume that the settlers built their own houses, and made their own improvements at their own expense, contrary to the English practice. As the population increased, and "arable" land became valuable, bogs, wastes, and barren land were gradually reclaimed and cultivated, through the hard labour and at the cost of the occupying tenantry, until the possessions of his descendants have spread over ten times the area nominally demised by the Crown to their progenitor.

This process went on all over the province of Ulster, so that it would appear that property which in the year 1606 was let for £250, has now been made worth £60,000, solely by the labour of the tenants; in other words—that the difference between £250 and £60,000 of tenants' improvements is yearly confiscated by the landlords.

Munster confiscations

For a sample of similar enhancement in the value of confiscated land at the other end of Ireland, the case of the Devonshire Estates in Munster may be cited. It is mentioned at page 2, that Sir W. Raleigh got some 42,000 acres (exclusive, as usual, of waste, bog, and mountain), out of the plunder of the Earl of Desmond's territories. A London judge's clerk, named Richard Boyle, who had graduated in Ireland as a forger, a horse-thief, and conniver of murder, was raised to the Deputy Escheatorship of Munster, about 1590. Raleigh being in prison and straitened, Boyle offered him £1,500 for his 42,000 acres, which being accepted, he paid Raleigh £500 on account, and swindled him out of the balance. Later on, Boyle having now become Earl of Cork, got from James I. patents for all his plunder—the parchments of which, his historian mentions, covered a hall forty-eight feet long by three feet wide⁵. He married all his children into English aristocratic families, and the Duke of Devonshire in this way got his County Cork and Waterford Estates, out of which he draws some £30,000 a year, for land which cost his ancestor Boyle, £500. His Grace also claims the fishery rights of the Blackwater from the town of Lismore to the sea at Youghal (twenty miles), by virtue of James I.'s patent to the horse-thief, and in the course of eleven years of litigation, and nearly a dozen trials, has put the unfortunate fishermen of the district to thousands of pounds expense to assert his claims to the river. This unfortunately, pending the decision of the House of Lords, he has

5 See an interesting account in *The Monitor* for November and December, 1879, by the late Thomas Galway, M.A.

now succeeded in doing, having lately obtained a majority of the judges in the Irish Appellate Court, with a “historic conscience” tender enough to recognize his precious “ patent.” If the poor fishermen ever raise funds to take the case to the House of Lords, they will, for certain reasons, doubtless find a similar sensitiveness to “patent rights” pervading the noble breasts of the noble fellows of His Grace in their Lordship’s chamber.

CHAPTER IV. The Devon Commission To THE FAMINE.

Yielding to the instances of Mr. Sharman Crawford, Sir Robert Peel was induced in 1843, to appoint what is known as the “Devon Commission,” to enquire into the Irish Land Question. This Commission was entirely composed of landlords, and sat for two years. It examined an enormous number of witnesses—landlords, agents, middlemen, tenants, and others; and, based upon its recommendations, we find the first attempts at land legislation in the House of Commons. An extract from the report made by the Commission, says :—

“A reference to the evidence of most of the witnesses will show that the agricultural labourer of Ireland continues to suffer the greatest privations and hardships; that he continues to depend upon casual and precarious employment for subsistence; that he is badly housed, badly fed, badly clothed, and badly paid for his labour. Our personal experience and observations during our inquiry have afforded us a melancholy confirmation of these statements ; and we cannot forbear expressing our strong sense of the patient endurance which the labouring classes have generally exhibited under sufferings greater, we believe, than the people of any other country in Europe have to sustain.”

“Landlords and middle-men,” remarks the Report, in explanation of the vicious system of subdivision of land which prevailed, and which necessarily reduced the tenants to constant misery, “found the importance of a numerous following of tenantry, and sub-division and sub-letting being [by the Franchise Act of 1793] indirectly encouraged, greatly increased.” “Landlords,” corroborates Mr. Jephson, in his Notes on Irish Questions, “considering that every freehold they created added much to their personal and political interest in the country, often on the expiration of a lease cut up their farms into several smaller holdings, for the purpose of multiplying voters, and encouraged their leaseholders to divide their lands for the same purpose.”

“The landlords cut up their estates into ribbons for the purpose of manufacturing freeholders,” said Colonel Blacker (quoted by Right Hon. Hugh Law, in debate on Ulster Tenant-right Bill, June 2, 1875). As has been stated, however, the peasant lost his political value by the abolition of the forty-shilling franchise under the Emancipation Act of 1829, and now, sixteen years after their abolition, urged on at last by the clearances which had been effected and the representations of the Devon Commission, Lord Stanley, on June 9th, 1845, introduced a Bill for “the purpose of providing compensation to tenants in Ireland, in certain cases, on being dispossessed of their holdings, for such improvements as they may have made during their tenancy.” “The remedy for Irish evils,” he said, “is not emigration, but a system under which the tenant would be induced to invest his labour and capital in the land.” The Bill was opposed by the Irish landlords, and could not be passed through the Lords. Thus commenced that series of abortive legislative proposals dealing with the position of landlord and tenant in Ireland, which from that time to the present, year by year, have been introduced into Parliament—the Lords playing obstructive through the entire series.

Parliament declines to legislate

Immediately after the failure of Lord Stanley's Bill, Mr. Sharman Crawford moved for leave to bring in a Tenant Right Bill, which, says Mr. Barry O'Brien, he 'had intended introducing in 1843, but had subsequently withdrawn to await the result of the Devon Commission and the action of the Government thereupon. No result followed of course.

The next year—1846—Earl Lincoln, then Chief Secretary for Ireland, introduced “a Bill providing compensation in certain cases for tenants in Ireland who shall build on or drain farms, and to secure to the parties respectively entitled thereto due payment for such improvements.” This Bill was substantially the same as Lord Stanley's of the previous year, and shared the same fate.

The following session, Mr. Sharman Crawford asked for leave (on the 25th February, 1847), to bring in a Bill “to secure the rights of occupying tenants in Ireland, and thereby promote the improvement of the soil and the employment of the labouring classes.”

Famine was now stalking through the land, but a parliament of landlords would do nothing for the tenants, and the Bill was lost.

In December, 1846, Father Mathew wrote to Mr. Trevelyan, then Assistant-Secretary of the Treasury, that men, women, and children were gradually wasting away. They filled their stomachs with cabbage-leaves, turnip-tops, etc., to appease the cravings of hunger. ‘There were then more than 5,000 half-starved wretches from the country begging in the streets of Cork. When utterly exhausted, they crawled to the workhouse to die. The average of deaths in that union was then over a hundred a week.

From 27th December, in 1846, to the middle of April, in 1847, the number of human beings that died in the Cork workhouse was 2,130! And in the third week of the following month the free interments in the Mathew Cemetery had risen to 277—as many as sixty-seven having been buried in one day. The destruction of human life in other workhouses of Ireland kept pace with the appalling mortality in the Cork workhouse. According to official returns, it had reached in April the weekly average of twenty-five per 1,000 inmates ; the actual number of deaths being 2,706 for the week ending 3rd April, and 2,613 in the following week. Yet the number of inmates in the Irish workhouses was but 104,455 on 10th April.

All this in a land the fertility of which has evoked the continual surprise of foreign writers. Arthur Young, who travelled through it in 1776-8, says of Limerick and Tipperary— “It is the richest soil I ever saw.” Wakefield, in his *Statistical Account of Ireland* (1812) says :— “Ireland may be considered as affording land of excellent quality ; a great portion of the soil throws out a luxurious herbage, springing from a calcareous subsoil without any considerable depth. Some places (throughout Meath in particular) exhibit the richest loam I ever saw turned up by a plough. Where such soil occurs, its fertility is so conspicuous, that it appears as if nature had determined to counteract the bad effects produced by the clumsy system of its cultivators.” And the late Mr. McCulloch, in his valuable work on the *Statistics of the British Empire*, confirms these statements : —“The luxuriance of the pastures,” he writes, “and the heavy crops of oats that are everywhere raised, even with the most wretched cultivation, attest its extraordinary fertility.” “In the elements of natural fertility,” says Mr. M'Combie, M.P. for Aberdeenshire, “only the richer parts of England and very exceptional parts of Scotland, approach to it.” Another competent observer from Scotland (Mr. MacLagan, M.P.), says :—“The tillage lands of the south of Ireland, though not so rich as the

pasture lands of Tipperary, Limerick, and the Meaths, are also of great fertility. I join heartily in the eulogium pronounced by Arthur Young and other judges of the richness of the soils of Ireland.”—*Land Culture and Land Tenure in Ireland*, 1869.

The lands might be fat, but their fatness had been enjoyed only by the landlords, who now despised the miseries of their lean and hungry tenantry. For, all through the famine time, the work of clearance kept pace—in the devastation which it wrought by human agency—with the decimation of famine and pestilence, sent by God. Speaking in the House of Lords on the 23rd March, 1846, Earl Grey thus expressed himself on the clearance system :—“It was undeniable that the clearance system prevailed to a great extent in Ireland; and that such things could take place, he cared not how large a population might be suffered to grow up in a particular district, was a disgrace to a civilized country.” Lord John Russell spoke in terms no less strong. However, the expression of such opinions even from these high authorities had not the slightest effect. In 1849, 50,000 more families were swept off by the exterminator. “More than 50,000 families were in that year turned out of their wretched dwellings without pity and without a refuge,” said the noble lord. . . . “We have made Ireland—I speak it deliberately— we have made it the most degraded and the most miserable country in the world. . . . All the world is crying shame upon us ; but we are equally callous to our ignominy and to the results of our misgovernment.”

Wholesale evictions

In Mr. Ray’s *Social Condition of Europe*, it is stated that in 1849 no fewer than 500,000 Civil Bill Ejectments were served in Ireland.— *Hansard*, Mr. Butt’s speech on Land Bill of 1876.

The “consolidation” of farms, through the wiping out of small holdings is well shown by the following statistics from *Thom’s Directory* :—

“ Between 1841 and 1861, the number of holdings not exceeding 15 acres declined 55 per cent., while those above 15 acres increased 133 per cent.; between 1841 and 1861, the farms from 15 to 30 acres nearly doubled in number, and in the same period the farms above 30 acres increased from 48,625 to 157,833. Between 1861 and 1871 farms under 15 acres decreased 12,548 ; and in the same period farms above 30 acres increased 1,470.” If there can be such a thing as the pathos of figures, there is a good deal, in these bald statistics of quenched hearths and blotted homes. What became of the homeless people? Nobody cared.

In the ten years ending 1861, 1,227,710 Irish-born persons emigrated.

In 1871, 819,903 persons emigrated.

At the taking of the Census of 1851 there were in Irish workhouses 250,611 paupers, and 47,019 in the hospitals. Have English statesmen ever tried to contemplate what is meant by a quarter of a million of paupers in a population of six millions, and emigration at such a rate as this ?

In 1848, Captain (the late General) Larcom furnished a statistical report of the evictions and consolidations that had, even at that early stage after the famine, been effected.

Decrease in the number of farms :—

From 1 to 5 acres, - - - - 24,147

5 to 15 acres - - - 27,397

15 to 30 acres - - - 4,274

Above 30, increase - - - 3,670

In the words of John Mitchel, “70,000 occupiers, in all representing about 300,000 persons were rooted out of the land.”

In Leinster the decrease in the number of holdings not exceeding one acre, as compared with the decrease of 1847, was 3,749; above one and not exceeding five, 4,026; of five and not exceeding fifteen, 2,546; of from fifteen, 391; making a total of 10,000.

In Munster the decrease in the holdings under thirty acres is stated at 18,814; the increase over thirty, at 1,399.

In Ulster, decrease, 1,502; increase, 1,134.

In Connaught, there were, in 1847, 35,634 holders of from one to five acres; in the following year they were less by 9,703. There were 74,707 holders of from five to fifteen acres; less in one year by 12,891. Those of from fifteen to thirty acres were reduced by 2,121— a total depopulation of 26,499 holders of land, exclusive of their families, effected in Connaught in one year. In other words, there was a decrease of agricultural population, in that one year, in Connaught alone, of at least 132,500 souls; to which, if the 11,000 or 12,000 mere laborers who lived by the land are added, there will be found a total deficit for one year, in one province, of 150,000 souls.

According to Father Lavelle, in his exhaustive work, *The Irish Landlord since the Revolution*, published in 1870, p. 266, the number of houses levelled between 1841 and 1861 was 270,000, representing at least a population of 1,300,000 human souls—all driven to the workhouse, exile, or death.

In the parish of Louisburgh or Kilgeever, he says, scores of once comfortable townlands have literally been “cleared off” by the Earl of Lucan and the Marquis of Sligo—nothing is now to be seen, for miles around, but the herd and his dog, sheep and bullocks, and game. The population of that parish in 1846 was 2,200 families; it is now reduced to about 700.

In the parish of Aughagower, Captain Houston occupies two hundred square miles, out of which every living soul, except a few herds, was banished without remorse by the Marquis of Sligo. An eviction machine of ropes and pulleys was invented by Mr. Scully, a Tipperary landlord of a mechanical turn, for the speedier unroofing and demolition of homesteads, which enabled the Crowbar Brigades to do their business with much greater surety and despatch.— *New Ireland*, by A. M. Sullivan, p. 122, sixth edition, 1878.

Says the Times, of February 25th, 1847 :—

“The people of England have most culpably connived at a national iniquity. . . . Property ruled with savage and tyrannical sway. It exercised its rights with a hand of iron, and renounced its duties with a front of brass. The ‘fat of the land, the flower of its wheat,’ its ‘milk and its honey,’ flowed from its shores, in tribute to the ruthless absentee, or his less guilty cousin, the usurious lender. It was all drain and no return. But if strength and industry fared but ill in a land where capital was in perpetual flux and decay, how much more poverty and weakness ? In an integral part of the British empire, on the soil trodden by a British sovereign, the landowner was allowed to sweep away the produce of the earth without leaving even a gleanings for them that were ready

to perish. And they did perish year by year continually from sheer destitution. The whole Irish people were debased by the spectacle and contact of licensed mendicancy and recognized starvation. England stupidly winked at this tyranny. Ready enough to vindicate political rights, it did not avenge the poor. It is now paying for that connivance.”

Patience of the Irish people

And how did the people endure their sufferings? In the *Transactions during the Famine in Ireland*, by the Society of Friends, pp. 7-8, this passage occurs :—

“We cannot forbear expressing our strong sense of the patient endurance which the labouring classes have generally exhibited, under sufferings greater, we believe, than the people of any other country in Europe have to sustain.”

Speaking of the wholesale evictions of starving families in that time, the *Dublin Review* (vol. i. p. 479) exclaims :—

“Let any parent make the case his own. When we are assembled at the domestic hearth, with our family about us, let us bring home to our bosom the bare apprehension, that for exercising an undoubted privilege, not only recognised, but actually enjoined by the constitution, it were in the power of some brutal tyrant, some abortive, stunted upstart of yesterday, of whom gold, amassed by speculation and public plunder, is the sole nobility, to put out our fire, and drive us away far from that pleasant home; let us suppose him, by the word of his power, destroying our only means of providing for that bright and joyous circle, and turning our children and ourselves adrift to lead a vagrant, hopeless, scrambling life—disowned, rejected, persecuted, and maligned; could we bear it? Where is the father’s heart that could endure it? What reverence for the law, what sacredness of private property, what abstract right of men to do as they please with their own, would be of force to restrain our thoughts from dark imaginings, and our hands from giving them effect? *We frankly avow that we would not submit to such treatment, but would take the law into our own hands, and, if possible, redress ourselves.* Our children have a *right divine* to claim from us that *protection* which may be denied to them elsewhere; and we cannot recognize any human obligation which should or could constrain us to reject such an appeal. *No man owes a moral obligation* to an exterminating decree. No man, pretending or deserving to be free, would pay it an outward homage one moment longer than superior force compelled him to bow his neck under its intolerable yoke. These are our deliberate sentiments—the decisions of a mind tutored, perhaps, by some small share of philosophy, and, at all events, not provoked to a passionate or hasty judgment by the sense of personal wrong.”

And again—

“The persecutors and slanderers of this people talk of their untameable, fierce, and vindictive nature. But, if they believed what they say, would they dare to oppress and to harass them as they do? Would they expel fathers, mothers, infants at the breast, and tottering age, if they really thought that blood alone could slake the burning heart of a ruined Irish peasant? No!”

Starvation in a land with a population of 8,000,000, the soil of which, in his *Industrial Resources*, Sir Robert Kane says is capable, under proper management, of supporting in comfort 20,000,000 souls, M. de Beaumont says 25,000,000. Arthur Young mounts his estimate to 100,000,000!!—*Tour in Ireland*, vol. 2, pt. ii. p. 24.

The cause—if the iteration has not grown tiresome—is briefly stated by Drs. Baker and *Cheyne's Account of the Fever in Ireland*, vol. ii. p. 98, etc.:

“The high prices of land, artificially created by landjobbers, and the vast income drawn from the country by absentees, THE DEADLIEST FOES OF IRELAND—these are causes which, among many others, have reduced countless numbers to want, and converted a considerable part of our population to mendicants,”

Landlord heartlessness

Even the famine could not soften the heart of Parliament—if there is a heart in that place—to the real needs of the Irish tenant. Parliament might tardily vote Relief Works, but it would not pass Land Bills. In 1848, Sir William Somerville, then Irish Secretary, brought in another Bill, which was largely a copy of that of Earl Lincoln in 1846, and of course like it, was rejected. The landlords would not even subscribe to the Relief Funds to keep their tenants from starving; and as an instance it is related by Mr. Godkin, that while Lord Hertford, an absentee, who draws £60,000 per annum from his Antrim estates, for which he or his family never paid a shilling, was deaf to the cries of famishing Christians, whom he was bound by every tie to commiserate and relieve, an American citizen, who owed nothing to Ireland but his birth—Mr. A. T. Stewart, of New York—sent a ship loaded with provisions, which cost him £5,000 of his own money, to be distributed amongst Lord Hertford's starving tenants; and on the return of the ship he took out as many emigrants as he could accommodate, free of charge.

In the distress of 1879-'80, the landlords behaved in much the same way, and only admitted the distress when half the world had subscribed to relieve it. Landlords and their upholders in England, who firmly close their eyes to the plainest and fullest evidence, when it is a question of Irish distress, open them remarkably sharply and widely if it is a question of Irish “outrage,” and the most spurious and tainted evidence is then sufficient for their purpose. A little question in “simple proportion” might be submitted on the subject, as thus—If the allegations of a hundred landlords, officials, and policemen suffice to induce the English Parliament to pass a Coercion Bill for Ireland in twenty-four hours, how long would it take the same Parliament, on the evidence of all the rest of the world, regarding the reality and cause of Irish misery to pass a Land Act for that country ?

In that Parliament, as usual, the old work of debating and doing nothing, went on, On the 28rd July, 1849, Mr. Horsman (afterwards Chief Secretary for Ireland), moved “that an humble address be presented to her Majesty, praying her to take into her consideration the condition of Ireland.” “What have we done for Ireland?” Said Mr. Horsman. “Ireland has been truly described as one adjourned, debate. We found her prostrate in February; have we raised her in July? Ireland is now entering on the fourth year of famine; sixty per cent of her population are receiving relief. What are the causes which have produced such results? Bad legislation, careless legislation, criminal legislation, has been the cause of all the disasters we are now deploring.”

Hundreds of thousands of people had by this time perished, or been driven into exile, and Mr. Horsman's motion wrought no benefit for those who survived or remained. The Government had, years before been warned of what was coming, but no steps had been taken to avert the catastrophe. Said Lord John Russell speaking, after the Devon Commission sent in its Report :—

“ However ignorant many of us may be of the state of Ireland, we have here (in the Devon Commission) the best evidence that can be procured—the evidence of persons best acquainted with that country—of magistrates of many years’ standing, of farmers, of those who have been employed by the Crown ; and all tell you that the possession of land is that which makes the difference between existing and starving amongst the peasantry, and that therefore ejections out of their holdings are the cause of violence and crime in Ireland. In fact, it is no other than the cause which the great master of human nature describes when he makes a tempter suggest it as a reason to violate the law: ‘Famine is in thy cheeks, need and oppression starveth in thine eyes, upon thy back hangs ragged misery. The world is not! Thy friend, nor the world’s law; the world affords no law to make thee rich. Then be not poor, but break it.’”— *Hansard*, 3rd series, v. 1xxvii. p. 507.

Mr. Gladstone quoted this extract from Lord John Russell’s speech, in the debates of 1870 on his Land Bill. He will have another opportunity for introducing the quotation, in bringing in his Land Bill for 1881, and from the sketches of its scope to which we have been treated—as it seems that the evidence of the needs and wishes of the Irish people are once more to be disregarded in its provisions—some future English statesman, *anno* 1890, will, in the Land Bill for that year, probably have a similar opportunity. To further show the disregard of the English Government, anterior to the famine, to evidence and general report of the state of things in Ireland, another extract or two may be given.

In 1844 this declaration was made :—

“In Ireland the landlord has a monopoly of the means of existence, and has a power for enforcing his bargains which does not exist elsewhere —the power of starvation.”— Lord Normanby in the House of Lords, 17th Feb., 1844.

Causes of outrages

Crime and outrage were the inevitable attendant upon famine artificially created; and, as before, the Legislature, which would do nothing to amend the Land Laws which produced the evil, was busy with Arms Acts, Coercion Acts, and repressive legislation. Dwelling on these circumstances, an English writer, Mr. Binn, in his *Miseries and Beauties of Ireland*, vol. ii. p. 414, declared that—

“The wrongs which the Irish tenants have endured would have JUSTIFIED a course of conduct incomparably more violent than any which Ireland, in her wildest moments, in her fiercest paroxysms of excitement, has displayed.”

W. Bicheno, in his *Economy of Ireland*, p. 64, says: “The laws in the landlord’s favour are already more summary and stronger than they are in England, and he is yet calling for additional assistance. . . . The condition of the peasantry is reduced to a lower scale by every new power that is created. *Every fresh law* exonerates the proprietors more and more from cultivating the good opinion of their dependents, and, moreover, removes the odium of any oppression from the individual who ought to bear it, to the State.”

O’Connell, in a Speech delivered in the House of Commons, on the 3rd April, 1846 (*Collected Speeches*, edited by M. H. Cusack, vol. ii. p 201) said :—

“ Although there had been some murders committed in Ireland that were not directly traceable to evictions from land, yet in sum and substance the whole form and state of

society showed it was from evictions from land, from the insecurity of land holdings, from the difficulties arising through the want of land, that we must seek for the great and primary cause of all these crimes. The great fault was the land question. The fact was, that that House had done too much for the landlord, and too little for the occupier. What had been the first measure for the benefit of the landlords? The first statute passed after the Union in favour of the landlords was the Act, 56 George III. c. 88, which gave them additional powers to work out ejectments. Up to that time they had not the power to distrain. The statutes of England were not enacted in Ireland towards landlords, but the Act 56 George III. c. 88, gave them powers which were no part of the bargain at the time of the Union. Many parties had taken leases and made contracts without those new powers being in the hands of the landlords. The statute gave them the power of distraining growing crops, keeping them till ripe, saving and selling them when ripe, charging upon the tenant the accumulation of expense. All these powers were first introduced by this statute and conferred upon the Irish landlord. He did not believe there had ever been a more fertile source of murder and outrage than these powers. Thus the source of crime was directly traceable to the legislation of that house, and it was the imperative duty of that house, and every member in it, immediately, or as speedily as possible, to repeal that Act. Then there came the Act 58 George III. c. 39, for civil bill ejectment. First, the power was given upon the growing crop, enabling the landlord to ruin the tenant, and then there came the further power to the landlord of turning out the tenant from his holding. The Act 1 George IV. c. 41, extended the power of civil bill ejectment, and the Act 1 George IV. c. 87, enabled the landlords to get security for costs from defendants in ejectments. Then the Act 1 and 2 George IV. c. 31, gave the landlords the right of immediate execution in ejectment ; and the Act 6 and 7 William IV. Gave further facilities for civil bill ejectments. All these were additional powers to the landlord. And it was to these statutes that the late Lord Chief Justice Pennefather referred when he said their object was to forward the interests of the landlord.”⁶

“The tenantry of Ireland,” said Lord Palmerston, “ when they receive encouragement, and have reason to believe that their exertions will meet with a due reward, are as much inclined to industrious exertion as the tenantry of any part of the world.”

“The great evil of Ireland,” says Mr. Bright, “is this, that the Irish people—the Irish nation—are dispossessed from the soil, and what we ought to do is to provide for, and aid in, their restoration to it by all measures of justice.”—*Collected Addresses*.

Said Lord Dufferin: “What is the spectacle presented to us by Ireland? It is that of millions of persons whose only dependence and whose chief occupation is agriculture—for the most part cultivating their lands—that is, sinking their past, their present, and their future upon yearly tenancies. What is a yearly tenancy? Why, it is an impossible tenure—a tenure which, if its terms were to be literally interpreted [and its terms are literally interpreted in Ireland], no Christian man would offer, and none but a madman would accept.”—Lord Dufferin, as quoted in Mr. Arthur Arnold’s *Free Land*, p. 352.

A French writer, M. de Beaumont, in 1837 said :—“He had seen the indian in his forests and the negro in his chains —they are not the lowest term of human misery ; Irish misery forms a type by itself, of which there exists nowhere else either model or imitation.”

Lord Palmerston, in 1855, said that the “evils of Ireland were to be traced to the history of Ireland.” *Hansard*, May 4th, 1855.

6 “The land laws were made for the landlords, and should be interpreted in their favour.”

But the Government had no eyes for anything, except that “the law” (landlord-made law) must be maintained.

“The gallows,” says Mr. Bright, “has been the great preserver in Ireland.”—*Collected Addresses*, p. 51. [Delivered at Rochdale, 1867.]

With the government in Ireland, Mr. Froude has well remarked, “the gallows is the only preacher of righteousness.”— *English in Ireland*.

Celtic generosity

During the famine period, the exiled Irish in America sent over large sums to their friends at home, most of which it may be presumed went into the landlords’ pockets to pay the rent. ‘The following statement of sums remitted by emigrants in America to their families in Ireland, *through Bankers alone, exclusive of money sent privately*, was printed by order of Parliament :—

During 1848,	- - - - -	£460,180
1849,	- - - - -	540,619
1850,	- - - - -	957,087
1851,	- - - - -	990,811

Between 1848 and 1864 the Irish emigrants had sent back to Ireland upwards of £13,000,000.— Lord Dufferin’s *Irish Emigration and Tenure of Land* in Ireland, p. 3.

There is no evidence in the condition of the people that the recipients of this bounty benefited by it. They were as badly off as ever. “The jaws of ‘landlordism’ did devour it up,” and thus, to meet their exactions and maintain their state, the landlords, profiting in a double way by emigration, saw the energies of the Irish race on both sides of the Atlantic employed for their special behoof.

Discussing, in 1848, some of the eternal coercive “remedies,” Mr. Disraeli said :—

“He wished to see a public man come forward and say what the Irish question was. Let them consider Ireland as they would any other country similarly circumstanced. They had a starving population, an absentee aristocracy, an alien Church, and the weakest executive in the world. This was the Irish question. Gentlemen would say at once, on reading of a country in such a position, the remedy is Revolution—not the Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. But the connection with England prevented revolution. Therefore England was logically in the position of being the cause of all the misery of Ireland. What, then, was the duty of an English Minister? To effect by his policy all the changes which a revolution would do by force!”

But English Ministers had no notion of doing anything of the sort.

The Irish Members in Parliament kept on urging measures for the settlement of the land question, and the Government kept deaf as before to their pleadings. One “sweet boon” of the Legislature to the Irish tenant in the famine time deserves, however, to be mentioned. In 1848 a considerate Parliament passed an Act prohibiting evictions—on Christmas Day or Good Friday! It was further thoughtfully enacted that the roof must not be pulled off a tenant’s home—until the inmates had left ! What manner of landlords were these who required such restraints to be solemnly imposed by statute? And what manner of tenants to endure the deeds of such unrelenting tigers? Well, the people were quietly swept off, and in the records of Parliament again we read that on the 8th April, 1851, Sir H. W. Barron moved for a Committee of the whole House “to inquire into the state of

Ireland, and more especially the best means for amending the relationships of landlord and tenant.”
His motion was defeated. Perhaps, however, it is needless to say so!

CHAPTER V. The Famine to The Land Act.

The passing of the Encumbered Estates Act in 1849 had inspired Gavan Duffy and other popular leaders with the hope that by proper efforts the lands thrown upon the market by its operation might pass to the hands of the tenants, and a peasant proprietary be formed. They were not unmindful of the recommendation of an Irish Lord Lieutenant, which, ever since its utterance, has been the charter of Irish movements in endeavouring to influence English opinion. —

“Agitate, agitate,” said the Marquis of Anglesea on one occasion to Daniel O’Connell, “and you will succeed.”—McCullagh Torrens’ *Life of Lord Melbourne*, vol. I. p. 320. To reach the ear of the far away foreign parliament, Irishmen, to obtain redress of grievances, have nothing left for them but to agitate—the fiercer they agitate, the quicker it hearkens.

The occurrences of the famine had made the Irish leaders painfully alive to the necessity of action, and a Tenant League was accordingly formed in 1852. Many Members were returned to Parliament to support its programme, and an agitation which spread over the entire country, embracing even Ulster, was set on foot. The demands of the League were embodied in a Bill which was entrusted to Mr. Sharman Crawford.

Viewed in the light of later events, these demands seem very moderate, being, roughly speaking, the extension of the Ulster Custom; and had they been accepted by the landlords, the question would have been set at rest, at any rate for our time.

In March, 1852, Mr. Crawford’s Bill came on for the second reading; but was defeated by a majority of 167 to 57. Mr. Napier, the Irish Attorney-General, however, on the 22nd November, asked and obtained leave to present to the House a new Code for regulating the Relations of Landlord and Tenant in Ireland. This passed the Commons, but was afterwards rejected by the Lords. The Lords would not have one Bill, and the Commons would not have another—the Bill which would have satisfied the tenants, the Government would not accept in one House; and the Bill which the Government introduced in that House would not be accepted by the landlords in another. Between “both their houses” the farmers of Ireland were prettily bestowed !

Evictions were going on nearly as rapidly as ever, so that *The Times* declared, some time in 1852, that “the name of an Irish landlord *stinked* in the nostrils of Christendom.” Alluding to the prevailing agitation, the existence of agrarian outrages, and the disturbed condition of the country generally in 1852, Mr. Bright said :—“ It was in the eternal decrees of Providence that so long as the population of a country were prevented from the possibility of possessing any portion of their native soil, by legal enactments and legal chicanery, these outrages should be committed, were they but as beacons and warnings to call the Legislature to a sense of the duties it owed to the country which it governed.”

It was said about this date, by Earl Grey :—“Ireland is the one deep blot upon the brightness of British honour ;” “Ireland is our disgrace ;” “the evils of Ireland could only be produced by misgovernment.”

Writing in March, 1854, the *Quarterly Review* exclaims:— “Moderation,” indeed ! when one witnesses “the cabins of the peasantry pulled down in such numbers as to give the appearance,

throughout whole regions of the south, and still more of the west, *of a country devastated and desolated* by the passage of a hostile army.”

In a speech on the Regium Donum, House of Commons, 6th July, 1854, by John Bright, he speaks of “those western counties, in which no man can travel without feeling that *some enormous crime has been committed by the government under which that people live.*”

Alluding to this period, and to the expulsion of the people and their settlement in America and elsewhere, *The Times* said :—

“We must gird our loins to encounter the nemesis of seven centuries of misgovernment. To the end of time 100,000,000 of people, spread over the largest habitable area in the world, and confronting us everywhere by sea and land, will remember that their forefathers paid tithes to the Protestant clergy, rent to absentee landlords, and a forced obedience to the laws which these had made.”

No later than 1869, Mr. John Bright declared to his constituents that were Ireland removed one thousand miles westward into the Atlantic, the Irish proprietors would, almost one and all, be hurled into the ocean in a day.—*Collected Addresses*.

J. S. Mill's testimony

“The land of Ireland”—writes Mr. Mill⁸—

“the land of any country, belongs to the people of that country. The individuals called landowners have no right, in morality and justice, to anything but the rent or compensation for its saleable value. When the inhabitants of a country quit the country en masse because its government will not make it a place fit for them to live in, the government is judged and condemned. It is the duty of Parliament to reform the land tenure in Ireland. There is no necessity for depriving the landlords of one farthing of the pecuniary value of their legal rights; but justice requires that the actual cultivators should be enabled to become in Ireland what they will become in America—proprietors of the soil which they cultivate.”— *Political Economy*, c. x. p. 201, ed. 1880.

“The Irish circumstances and the Irish ideas as to social and agricultural economy,” says Mr. Mill elsewhere, “are the general ideas and circumstances of the human race. It is the English ideas and circumstances that are peculiar. Ireland is in the main stream of human existence, and human feeling and opinion. It is England that is in one of the lateral channels.”—*Hansard*, 17th May, 1866.

Mill further says :—

“ What has been epigrammatically said in the discussion on ‘peculiar burthens’ is literally true when applied to them : that the greatest ‘burthen on land’ is the landlords. Returning nothing to the soil, they consume its whole produce, minus the potatoes strictly necessary to keep the inhabitants from dying of famine: and when they have any purpose of improvement, the preparatory step usually consists in not leaving even this pittance, but turning out the people to beggary, if not to starvation. When landed property has placed itself on this footing it ceases to be defensible, and the time has come for making some new arrangement of the matter’ When the ‘sacredness of property’ is talked of, it should always be remembered that any such sacredness does not belong in the same degree to landed property. No MAN MADE THE LAND. It is

8 Editor note: The author is referring here to John Stuart Mill (1806 – 1873) – an English writer, philosopher and member of parliament.

the original inheritance of the whole species. Its appropriation is a question of general expediency. When private property in land is not expedient it is unjust. It is no hardship to any man to be excluded from what others have produced: they were not bound to produce it for his use ; and he loses nothing by not sharing in what otherwise would not have existed at all. But it is some hardship to be born into the world and to find all nature's gifts previously engrossed and no place left for the new comer. To reconcile people to this, after they have once admitted into their minds the idea that any moral rights belong to them as human beings, it will always be necessary to convince them that the exclusive appropriation is good for mankind on the whole, themselves included. But this is what no sane human being could be persuaded of, if the relation between the landowner and the cultivator were the same everywhere as it has been in Ireland."

At p. 195 of his *Political Economy*, speaking of the so-called sacred "contract" of the Irish tenant to pay a certain rent, Mill says:—

"When the habits of the people are such that their increase is never checked but by the impossibility of obtaining a bare support, and when this support can only be obtained from land, *all stipulations and agreements respecting amount of rent are merely nominal*, the competition for land makes the tenants undertake to pay more than it is possible they should pay, and when they have paid all they can, more almost always remains due."

In proof of this, Mr. Mill cites from the Devon Commission a case attested by Mr. Hurly, Clerk of the Crown for Kerry, who said, "I have known a tenant bid for a farm that I was perfectly well acquainted with, worth £50 a year; I saw the competition get up to such an extent, that he was declared the tenant at £450 a year."—*Political Economy*, p. 196.

The organization formed by the Tenant League in 1852 did not hold together long. The Government broke up its parliamentary party of "Independent Opposition," by purchasing or corrupting several of its leaders, and Mr. Gavan Duffy quitted Ireland in disgust. Still, efforts from time to time were afterwards continually made by various Irish Members to promote a legislative settlement of the land question. The Irish Members knew that they had a duty to discharge, and however feeble we may regard those efforts now, their continuity from year to year and from session to session shows at least that the people, through their representatives, never "attorned" to landlordism.

On the 20th of February, 1855, says Mr. Barry O'Brien, Mr. Serjeant Shee asked for leave to bring in what was practically the rejected Tenants' Compensation Bill of the Napier Code. The Bill was brought in; but that was all. It was soon dropped, and we hear of it no more until 1857, when, on the 28th May, Mr. Moore brought the Bill forward again, but found it impossible to obtain a reasonably early day for its discussion before the end of the session, and so withdrew it.

Legislative bungling

Next year Mr. Maguire, as leader of the Irish party, reintroduced (on 14th April, 1858) Mr. Serjeant Shee's Tenants Compensation Bill, in the hope that Parliament might be more disposed to entertain it than the Tenant-Right Bill; but the measure was defeated on the second reading by a majority of 200 to 65.

In November, 1858, the Most Rev. Dr. M Hale, Archbishop of Tuam, in a letter addressed to the late Lord Palmerston, complained that "not only did all the old evils subsist in all their vigour," but

that “they were even aggravated.”

In 1860 the Government passed an Act which rather worsened the tenant’s position :—

“The object and the intended effect of this Act was to substitute, in the relation of landlord and tenant, for the just and equitable principles of common law or custom the hard commercial principle of contract, and to render any right of the tenant, either as to duration of tenancy or compensation, dependent on expressed or implied contract.”—*Hansard*, 4th May, 1855.

“If” says Mr. Finlason, “it had been *successful*, it would have destroyed any claim of the tenant even to compensation for *future* improvements, unless in accordance with some *contract*, express or implied; and, although a usage might be *evidence* of an implied contract, still it would have been necessary to prove contract. And as to the past, as already stated, it contained no provision whatsoever. Neither did it contain any provisions calculated to promote security of tenure, or right to compensation.”— *Land Tenure*, pp. 120-126.

Up to this time there had been two attempts at insurrection since the Union, provoked by the extreme misery of the people; and now the foundations of a formidable Secret Society, whose workings ended in another abortive insurrection a few years afterwards, were laid. The smouldering discontent which pervaded the country gave zeal to, and was utilized by its organizers, and the efforts of this, the most widespread conspiracy which had existed in Ireland for some centuries, kept England in a state of continual alarm. Addressing the Statistical Society, May, 1864, Mr. Sergeant Heron, now one of the prosecuting counsel in *The Queen v. Parnell and Others*, said :

“ Under the present laws, no Irish peasant able to read and write ought to remain in Ireland. If Ireland were an independent country, in the present state of things, there would be a bloody insurrection in every county, and the peasantry would ultimately obtain the property in land as they have obtained it in Switzerland and in France.”

Commenting on these words, Mr. Butt, in his *Irish People and Irish Land*, p. 261, properly points out, that “they were not spoken at any excited popular meeting, carrying away the speaker by the passions of a crowd. They were read at a meeting of a scientific body, presided over by grave and eminent personages, and in the *Transactions* of that body they first saw the light of publication.”

It has been said that when France is satisfied Europe is tranquil. It may be said in this country that when the Peasant is discontented Ireland is disturbed. It is childish and impossible to suppose that without what may be called the “raw material” for the revolutionist, agitations and conspiracies will continually spring up and swell into those formidable factors in Irish political life which have constantly to be reckoned with by English statesmen. ‘Time after time, from the Union up to that period, the peasant, through his representatives in Parliament, had offered terms to his lord. Time after time, as we have seen, these terms were rejected with every circumstance of contempt. With the one class it was merely a question of losing a portion of their power and their revenue; with the other it was a question of life-long happiness or misery—of plenty or starvation. Outrages, it is true, have at times stained the record of Ireland; but the burning words of many English statesmen, which have been quoted, palliate, if they do not even seem to justify, the retaliation of the serf. The law was all on the side of the land- lord. No law had ever been passed in the interest of the tenant, For the tenant, the sole aim of the British Constitution in Ireland was to teach his landlord the play of the crowbar, and then to protect him in wielding it. The instinct of self-preservation—which is above all constitutions, British and otherwise—has schooled many an Irish tenant in the lessons of

the blunderbuss. The rule of the Czars has been described as “despotism tempered by assassination,” and would the autocrat’s rule over our peasants’ fields have been the milder, had exterminating landlords, unchecked by the Jaw, known no terror from the “lawless”? What may be called the case for the Ribbon Society, has been well put by Mr. Godkin :—

“In this self-defensive war, they cannot cope with the armed power of England in the open field; and they are driven upon the criminal resource of the oppressed in all ages and all lands—secret combination and assassination. For this crime they feel no remorse; first, because it is war—just as the soldier feels no remorse for killing the enemy in a battle; and, secondly, because their conquerors, and the successors of those conquerors, have taught them too well, by repeated examples, the terrible lesson of making light of human life. Poor ignorant creatures, they cannot see that, while the most illustrious noblemen in England won applause and honours by shooting down Irish women and children like seals or otters, the survivors of the murdered people should be execrated as cruel, barbarous, and infamous, for shooting the men that pull down the roof-trees over the heads of their helpless families, and trample upon their household gods. These convictions of theirs are very revolting to our feelings, but they are facts ; and as facts the legislature must deal with them. If there be a people otherwise singularly free from crime, who regard the assassination of the members of a certain class with indifference or approbation, the phenomenon is one which political philosophy ought to be able to explain, and one which cannot be got rid of by suspending the constitution and bringing railing accusations against the nation.”— *Land War in Ireland*.

The land-war continues

Agitations may be put down, insurrections may be crushed ; but is the record of the government of Ireland continually to be a record of quelling and crushing? “Force,” Mr. Bright told his constituents last month (16th Nov. 1880), “is no remedy ;” and, so far back as 1844, Sir James Graham uttered almost a similar expression: “Violence,” said he, “is not the policy for governing Ireland.”—*Annual Register*, 1844, p. 59.

Force and violence, however, had up to that been the only methods known to, or employed by, the government of this country. The state of things which the land system produces is well known to every official of the Executive, for the influence of the hierarchy of landlordism—the landlord, the agent, the bailiff—penetrates and permeates the whole social and political life of the people. The agent frowns upon them from the bench; he meets them and insults them at the poor-law board; he taxes them and thwarts them in the grand-jury room.

To quote again from Mr. Godkin’s valuable work :—

“The land war rages at every board of guardians, in every dispensary, in every grand jury room, at every petty sessions, in every county court, in every public institution throughout the kingdom. The land- agent is the commanding officer, his office is a garrison, dominating the surrounding district. He is able, in most cases, to defy the confessional and the altar ; because he wields an engine of terror generally more powerful over the minds of the peasantry than the terrors of the world to come. Armed with the ‘ rules of the estate’ and with a notice to quit, the agent may have almost anything he demands, short of the possession of the farm and the home of the tenant. The notice to quit is like a death- warrant to the family. [Mr. Gladstone in the debate on the Disturbance Bill, 5th July, 1880, called it “a sentence of starvation.”] It makes every member of it tremble and agonize, from the grey-headed grand- father and grandmother

to the bright little children, who read the advent of some impending calamity in the gloomy countenances and bitter words of their parents. The passion for the possession of land is the chord on which the agent plays, and at his touch it vibrates with ‘the deepest notes of woe.’ By the agent of an ‘improving’ landlord, it is generally touched so cunningly, that its most exquisite torture cannot easily be proved to be a grievance. He presents an alternative to the tenant ; he does less than the law allows. He could strike a mortal blow; but he lends a helping hand. Resistance entails ruin ; compliance secures friendship. Give up the old *status*, and accept a new one: cease to stand upon *right*, consent to hang upon *mercy*, and all may be well.”

The language of Professor Blackie, of Edinburgh, is not inapt :—

“Among the many acts of baseness branding the English character in their blundering pretence of governing Ireland, not the least was the practice of confiscating the land, which by real law belonged to the people, and giving it, not to honest resident cultivators, which might have been a polite sort of theft, but to cliques of greedy and grasping oligarchs, who did nothing for the country they had appropriated but suck its blood in the name of land rent, and squander its wealth under the name of fashion and pleasure in London.”

Lord Kimberley, speaking in the House of Lords in August, 1864, said :—

“ It was impossible for England to perform its duties to Ireland, so long as no attempt was made to deal with the important question of the tenure of land. He implored the Irish landed proprietors not to pass it by. The landed proprietors were supported by the force of the United Kingdom in maintaining themselves in a position which he was convinced *if Ireland stood alone* they could not possibly maintain, *and this country was strictly responsible for seeing that its military force was not applied in perpetuity to save the landowners from measures which they have neglected to provide*, and which might otherwise be forced on them.”

“I wish,” said Lord Clare, in his speech on the Union, “I wish gentlemen who call themselves the dignified and independent Irish nation, to know that 7,800,000 acres of land were set out to a motley crew of English adventurers, civil and-military, nearly to the total exclusion of the inhabitants of the island, many of whom, who were innocent of the rebellion, lost their inheritance, as well for the difficulties conjured up in the Court of Claims in the *proofs required of their innocence*, as from a deficiency in the fund for reprisal to English adventurers, arising chiefly from a profuse grant made by the crown to the Duke of York.”

The descendants of this “motley crew” raise the cry to-day of “the sacredness of property,” “confiscation,” etc. Was there no such thing as the “sacredness of property”, for the people whom their fathers plundered?

It may be asked, Why do the Irish cling to the land? To that it must be answered, Why did the English destroy their only other means of livelihood?—“Gentlemen,” said William III. To his Parliament, “I will do all in my power to discourage Irish woollen manufacture.” And he did, and succeeded too, unfortunately, as did his successors in similar branches. (See Statutes of William and Anne, etc.) In 1800 there were in Dublin ninety-one master manufacturers of woollens. To-day, such has been the decay caused by the Union, there is not more than one.—See Butt’s *Irish People and Irish Land*, p. 95.

Land bills abandoned

In the height of the Fenian scare, in 1866, another attempt was made to settle the land question. On the 30th April in that year Mr. Chichester Fortescue (now Lord Carlingford) brought in a Bill to amend the Act of 1860. The effect of that Act, he said, was that the tenant, before improving, had to ask the landlord's consent ; and this he described as "an invitation to the landlord to dissent." He now proposed that in the absence of any written contract to the contrary, the tenant should, by the general rule of law, have a *limited* beneficial interest in the permanent improvement executed at his own cost. The Bill fell through. Somehow all these Bills fall through!

On the 18th February, 1867, another Bill was brought in, this time by the Tories, who had, in the interval, succeeded to power. By this Bill, says Mr. Barry O'Brien, it was proposed that, instead of obtaining the landlord's consent before making improvements, the tenants should obtain the consent of a "commissioner of improvements." This was simply going back again to Lord Stanley's Bill of 1845. The tenants would have accepted Lord Stanley's Bill in 1845. They would not accept it now. The Bill was abandoned. How many Coercion Bills have ever been abandoned? A return of evictions moved for in this year by Lord Belmore, showed that in the preceding six years there had been 37,164 ejectments.

Speaking of the continual emigration in 1867, the then Lord Mayor of Dublin, Mr. William Lane Joynt, now the Prosecuting Solicitor in the *Queen v. Parnell and Others*, said :—

"Emigration is the haemorrhage which drains the life blood of Ireland away, and I deeply regret that a noble lord should have reanimated the Sangrado prescription of more blood-letting and hot water. Ireland has too much of that already. *I fear to face the future, when one and-a-half million of our population is to be reduced.* I fear to face the deep and untold misery to thousands—the quenched fires, the household gods scattered, the trading classes in the towns still further reduced and ruined, and the professional and middle classes feeling the want of that life-blood which it is the duty of true statesmen to keep in the body-politic, and above 'all, to arrest its continual flow."—(Reply to Lord Annaly's Clare tenantry, Mr. Joynt being agent on the estate.)

Lord Lifford, in 1867, in a reply to Mr. Butt, p. 14, says:—

"Want of employment places those who do not emigrate entirely in the power of the landlord and land-owners to make what terms the latter please, AS THE CONDITIONS OF A BARE SUBSISTENCE. The occasional misuse of that power, and the knowledge of the tenant that it exists, . . . *perpetuate chronic civil war.*"

And with what object was his lordship writing to Mr. Butt? Forsooth, to combat as "communistic" the then proposal of that gentleman to give tenants sixty-three years leases! It is remarkable that the landlord vocabulary of epithet is the same to-day as it was then; and then, as it was twenty years before. Whatever the proposals—great or small—put forward on behalf of the Irish tenants, they have always been, according to the landlords, either "communistic" or "socialistic."

Lord Dufferin in 1867 (three letters to the *Times*, January and February, 1867), says :—

"Some human agency or other must be accountable for the *perennial desolation* of a lovely and fertile island, watered by the fairest streams, caressed by a clement atmosphere, held in the embrace of a sea whose affluence fills the richest harbours of the world, and inhabited by a race valiant, tender, generous, gifted beyond measure with the power of physical endurance, and graced with the liveliest intelligence."

Glowing as is this description it is not more so than that of Lord Bacon, two and a half centuries before:

“ For this island, it is endowed with so many dowries of nature, considering the fruitfulness of the soil, the ports, the rivers, the fishings, the quarries, the woods, and other materials, and especially the race and generation of men —valiant, hard and active, as it is not easy, no not upon the continent to find such confluence of commodities, *if the hand of men did join with the hand of nature.*”—*Bacon’s Works*, vol. iii. p. 321.

Dr. Drew, the well-known Presbyterian Minister, writing to Isaac Butt, in 1868, sadly said :—

“I wish my lot had never been cast in rural places. As a clergyman I hear what neither landlords nor agents ever hear. I see the depression of the people; their sighs and groans are before me. They are brought so low as often to praise and glorify those who, in their secret hearts, are the objects of abhorrence. All this came out gradually before me. Nor did I feel as I ought to feel in their behalf until, in my own person and purse, I became the victim of a system of tyranny which cries from earth to heaven for relief. Were I to narrate my own story it would startle many.”

Most rev. Dr. Nulty's testimony

In a pastoral dated 20th February, 1871, Dr. Nulty, Bishop of Meath, thus wrote of the evictions in previous years of Mr. Rochfort Boyd, in County of Westmeath :—

“In the very first year of our ministry, as a Missionary Priest in this diocese, we were an eye-witness of a cruel and inhuman eviction, which even still makes our heart bleed as often as we allow ourselves to think of it.

“Seven hundred human beings were driven from their homes in one day, and set adrift on the world, to gratify the caprice of one who, before God and man, probably deserved less consideration than the last and least of them. And we remember well that there was not a single shilling of rent due on the estate at the time, except by one man; and the character and acts of that man made it perfectly clear that the agent and himself quite understood each other.

“The Crow-bar Brigade, employed on the occasion to extinguish the hearths and demolish the homes of honest, industrious men, worked away with a will at their awful calling until evening. At length an incident occurred that varied the monotony of the grim, ghastly ruin which they were spreading all around. They stopped suddenly, and recoiled panic-stricken with terror from two dwellings which they were directed to destroy with the rest. They had just learned that a frightful typhus-fever held those houses in its grasp, and had already brought pestilence and death to their inmates. They therefore supplicated the agent to spare these houses a little longer; but the agent was inexorable, and insisted that the houses should come down. The ingenuity with which he extricated himself from the difficulties of the situation was characteristic alike of the heartlessness of the man and of the cruel necessities of the work in which he was engaged. He ordered a large winnowing-sheet to be secured over the beds in which the fever victims lay—fortunately they happened to be perfectly delirious at the time—and then directed the houses to be unroofed cautiously and slowly, ‘ because, he said, ‘he very much disliked the bother and discomfort of a coroner’s inquest.’ I administered the last sacrament of the Church to four of these fever victims next day; and, save the

above-mentioned winnowing-sheet, there was not then a roof nearer to me than the canopy of heaven.

“The horrid scenes I then witnessed I must remember all my life long. The wailing of women—the screams, the terror, the consternation of children—the speechless agony of honest, industrious men—wrung tears of grief from all who saw them. I saw the officers and men of a large police force, who were obliged to attend on the occasion, cry like children at beholding the cruel sufferings of the very people whom they would be obliged to butcher had they offered the least resistance. The heavy rains that usually attend the autumnal equinoxes descended in cold, copious torrents throughout the night, and at once revealed to those houseless sufferers the awful realities of their condition. I visited them next morning, and rode from place to place administering to them all the comfort and consolation I could. The appearance of men, women, and children, as they emerged from the ruins of their former homes—saturated with rain, blackened and besmeared with soot, shivering in every member from cold and misery—presented positively the most appalling spectacle I ever looked at. The landed proprietors in a circle all around—and for many miles in every direction—warned their tenantry, with threats of their direst vengeance, against the humanity of extending to any of them the hospitality of a single night’s shelter. Many of these poor people were unable to emigrate with their families; while, at home, the hand of every man was thus raised against them. They were driven from the land on which Providence had placed them; and, in the state of society surrounding them, every other walk of life was rigidly closed against them. What was the result? After battling in vain with privation and pestilence, they at last graduated from the workhouse to the tomb; and in little more than three years, nearly a fourth of them lay quietly in their graves.

“The eviction, which I have thus described, and of which I was an eye-witness, must not be considered an isolated exceptional event which could occur only in a remote locality, where public opinion could not reach and expose it. The fact is quite the reverse. Every county, barony, poor-law union, and indeed every parish in the diocese, is perfectly familiar with evictions that are oftentimes surrounded by circumstances, and distinguished by traits of darker and more disgusting atrocity. Quite near the town in which I write [Mullingar], and in the parish in which I live, I lately passed through what might be characterized as a wilderness, in which, as far as the eye could reach, not a single human being, nor the vestige of a human habitation, was anywhere discernible. It was only with great difficulty, and much uncertainty too, that I was able to distinguish the spot on which, till lately, stood one of the most respectable houses of this parish. A few miles farther on I fell in with the scene of another extensive clearance, in which the houses that had sheltered three hundred human beings were razed to the ground some few years ago. That same proprietor desolated, in an adjoining parish, a densely-populated district, by batches of so many families in each of a series of successive clearances. Seventeen families formed the first batch.”

The culminating events of the Fenian movement (1867-’8), startled English statesmen out of their propriety; and as Coercion Acts, and Habeas Corpus Suspension Acts, and Arms Acts were all in full force at the time, and no other remedy of force, short of martial law, remained to be tried, it entered the minds of one or two English statesmen to think what might be the effects of a spell of justice, and the advantages of remedial legislation. They were encouraged by the attitude of what may be styled the constitutional patriots in Ireland, who, after the repression of the Fenian rising and the disorganization of the movement, recommenced their efforts on behalf of the farmer with

renewed energy. It was a Sisyphus task to have to resort once more to that hopeless House of Commons, but what were they to do besides?

Once more meetings began to be held throughout the country, and at one of these, in the county Longford, in 1869, the Earl of Granard said :—

“The necessity for reform [of the land laws] has been urged upon Parliament since the days of O’Connell up to the present time. The want of reform upon the most vital question which affects the prosperity of Ireland has been the fruitful source of agrarian disturbance, of poverty, and of misfortune in every county in Ireland. . . . I say it advisedly, that to the system of land laws, which we hope to alter— which, at least, we are here to protest against—are to be attributed those fearful agrarian outrages which disgrace the fair fame of our country. A celebrated minister of police in France, whenever he heard of a conspiracy, used to ask, ‘ Who was the woman?’ believing that there was always one mixed up with such organizations; and in a similar spirit, whenever I hear of an outrage in Ireland, I am always inclined to inquire, ‘ Who is the landlord ?’ For I do not hear of such things occurring on estates where justice and fair play are the rule and not the exception.”

The question began to be agitated in England, and Lord Clarendon, in a speech at the West Herts Agricultural Society, on the 26th of September, 1869, said

“[I]f he were to take a farm at will upon which the landed proprietor never did and never intended to do anything, and were to build upon the farm a house and homestead, and effectually drain the land, and then be turned out on a six months’ notice by his landlord, would any language be strong enough, not forgetting the language made use of at the public meetings and in the press recently in this country, to condemn such a *felonious* act as that ?”

Failure of land act

A great Liberal majority having been returned from England at the close of 1868, on the cry of “Justice to Ireland,” Mr. Gladstone, who had disestablished the Irish Church in 1869, addressed himself in the following year to the Irish land question.

On the 14th March, 1870, his famous Bill to Amend the Law of Landlord and Tenant in Ireland came on for second reading—when, speaking of the many previous attempts to grapple with the question, Mr. Gladstone said :—

“ Having witnessed the disorder and difficulty which have arisen from this long procrastination, we shall resolve in mind and heart, by a manful effort, to close and seal up for ever, if it may be, this great question, which so intimately concerns the welfare and happiness of the people of Ireland.” *Hansard*, 3, cxcix. p. 835.

It was read a second time—unanimously, it may be said; for although there was a division, the numbers were 442 to 11. But there is a great deal to be said about this 11. They consisted almost entirely of Irish Liberal Members, who divided against the Bill because they regarded it, and it was regarded in Ireland, as unsatisfactory, and because no one who understood the question believed the Bill would “close and seal it up forever.”

Their opinion was not heeded; their advice was rejected; the smallness of their vote was ridiculed. But had Mr. Gladstone regarded the wishes of that eleven, we should not to-day be in the

throes of another great land agitation, and Mr. Gladstone would not at this hour be once more preparing a fresh Land Bill, and perhaps with it a fresh Coercion Bill.

What happened? As plainly foretold by the Irish Members, the Land Act of 1870 worked little benefit to the Irish occupier. Evictions actually increased! In the three years before its passing, the ejectments on notice to quit were 4,253; in the three subsequent years they reached 5,641, showing an increase of 1,388; in the next three years they were 8,439 !

These figures represent only the capricious evictions, and do not include ejectment for non-payment of rent or non-title. The Act exasperated the landlords, and it left the tenants still in the grasp of the exasperated class. Before 1870 the relations of landlord and tenant were not altogether based on rights legislatively defined. Before that time “easy” landlords might treat their tenants not unjustly —might not evict them harshly, and might compensate for improvements, because it suited their good pleasure to do so. *After* the passing of the Act, few landlords would deal with their tenants upon any other footing than that strictly on which the Legislature had placed them, and the tenant whom the Legislature proposed to protect, by really leaving him unprotected, found his position, if his landlord were at all a favourable specimen of his class, rather, if possible, worse than before. The machinery of the County Court, which the tenant was obliged to invoke against his landlord, naturally came more readily to the hand of the educated and monied landlord than to that of the unlettered and possibly bankrupt tenant.

The County Court Judges, whose decisions sealed the peasant’s fate, are not drawn from the tenants’ class, but from that of their oppressors. From the prejudices of that class these judges are not always able to free themselves, and law is not a cheap commodity for the farmer to indulge in, if he wishes to impugn their decisions. Several practising barristers and solicitors have instanced to me decisions showing a most unfair bias towards the landlord on the part of County Court Judges. Moreover, those clauses of the Act which were intended to create a Peasant Proprietary, by giving the tenants a right of pre-emption, where the landlord is about to sell, remain largely inoperative, being overloaded with difficult conditions.

It was not long, therefore, until renewed proposals for legislation on the land question were put forward in Parliament on behalf of the Irish farmer. Every year since 1870, a Land Bill, or series of Land Bills, introduced by some leading Irish Members, and supported by Irish tenant representatives, have been before the House of Commons. They have been invariably rejected. It is remarkable to notice, though it is not remarkable in itself, that a Land Bill is scarcely ever introduced in the landlord chamber by any member of the Upper House. The landlords make no sign, and originate no proposals. The air of the House of Lords is fatal to tenant-right, and the echoes of an eternal non possumus on that question resound for ever within its walls.

CHAPTER VI. The Land Act to The Land League.

Date	Bill	Introduced by	Fate
1871	Landed Property, Ireland, Act, 1847, Amendment Bill	Sergeant Sherlock	Withdrawn
1872	Ulster Tenant Right Bill	Mr. Butt	Dropped
1873	Ulster Tenant Right Bill	Mr. Butt	Dropped
1873	Landlord and Tenant Act, 1870, Amendment Bill	Mr. Butt	Dropped
1873	Landlord and Tenant Act, 1870, Amendment Bill, No. 2,	Mr. Heron	Dropped
1874	Landlord and Tenant Act, 1870, Amendment Bill	Mr Butt	Dropped
1874	Landlord and Tenant Act, 1870, Amendment Bill, No. 2	Sir J. Gray	Dropped
1874	Ulster Tenant Right Bill	Mr. Butt	Dropped
1874	Irish Land Act Extension Bill	The O'Donoghue	Dropped
1875	Landed Proprietors', Ireland, Bill	Mr. Smyth	Dropped
1875	Landlord and Tenant, Ireland, Act, 1870, Amendment Bill	Mr. Crawford	Rejected
1876	Landlord and Tenant, Ireland, Act, 1870, Amendment Bill	Mr. Crawford	Withdrawn
1876	Tenant Right. on Expiration of Leases Bill	Mr. Mulholland	Dropped
1876	Land Tenure, Ireland, Bill	Mr. Butt	Rejected
1877	Land Tenure, Ireland, Bill	Mr. Butt	Rejected
1877	Landlord and Tenant, Ireland, Act, 1870, Amendment Bill	Mr. Crawford	Withdrawn
1878	Landlord and Tenant, Ireland, Act, 1870, Amendment Bill	Mr. Herbert	Dropped
1878	Tenant Right Bill	Lord A. Hill	Rejected by Lords
1878	Tenant Right, Ulster, Bill	Mr. Macartney	Withdrawn
1878	Tenants' Improvements, Ireland, Bill	Mr. Martin	Rejected
1878	Tenants' Protection, Ireland, Bill	Mr. Moore	Dropped
1879	Ulster Tenant Right Bill	Mr. Macartney	Rejected
1879	Ulster Tenant Right Bill, No. 2	Lord A. Hill	Withdrawn
1879	Landlord and Tenant, Ireland, Bill	Mr. Herbert	Dropped
1879	Landlord and Tenant, Ireland, Act, 1870, Amendment Bill	Mr. Taylor	Dropped
1879	Landlord and Tenant, Ireland Act, 1870, Amendment Bill, No. 2	Mr. Downing	Rejected
1880	Landlord and Tenant, Ireland, Act, 1870, Amendment Bill	Mr. Taylor	Dropped
1880	Ulster Tenant Right Bill	Mr. Macartney	Dropped

Knowing the urgency of the land question for their country, the Irish Members, accepting no rebuff, kept pressing upon the legislature the necessity for action. The foregoing table shows the constant rejection of Land Bills for the last ten years. In addition to these, the question was constantly raised

by way of resolution, by motions for Commissions, Select Committees, Inquiry into working of Land Act., etc. Yet, today, after having every one of their proposals thrown out, the tenants' representatives are asked for another proposal! Their answer is, that now it is the landlords' turn to make one. *Theirs*, by this time, is pretty definite.

Some five years ago, the late Conservative Government refused to Mr. Butt a Commission to inquire into the working of the Act of 1870, the defects of which were being so keenly felt in Ireland. In conveying the refusal, the words of the then Chief Secretary, Sir M. H. Beach, were that he "objected to a quinquennial revision of the Land Act." Perhaps his party may not find a decennial revision more acceptable; as to the landlords that revision is certainly not likely to prove more palatable. Within the last three or four years there have been several Conferences of the representatives of the Tenants' Defence Associations, calling out for the needed legislation. The Farmers' Clubs throughout the country have never ceased to agitate the question, and petitions have regularly been sent up to Parliament from all parts of Ireland supporting the same view. All to no purpose. The English Legislature, having with much travail and many a pang been induced to consent to the Land Act of 1870, closed its ears to all further proposals to better the position of the Irish farmer. It seems almost harder to pass a suitable Land Bill through that landlord Parliament than it is for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle!

Coercion Acts

Nearly every year since the Union, however, that Parliament has passed a Coercion Act for us. It appears from a pamphlet by Mr. Leadam, M.A., giving a history of coercive legislation in Ireland, that since 1880 we have have had 48 of these Acts :—

- 1830 Importation of Arms Act.
- 1831 Act to prevent Tumultuous Assemblies, known as The Whiteboy Act.
- 1831 Stanley's Arms Act.
- 1832 Importation of Arms and Gunpowder Act.
- 1833 Suppression of Disturbance Act.
- 1833 Change of Venue Act.
- 1834 Suppression of Disturbances Amendment and Continuance Act.
- 1834 Another Importation of Arms and Gunpowder Act.
- 1835 Public Peace Act.
- 1836 Another Arms Act.
- 1838 Another Arms Act.
- 1839 Unlawful Oaths Act.
- 1840 Another Arms Act.
- 1841 Outrages Act.
- 1841 Another Arms Act
- 1843 Another Arms Act.
- 1843 Act Consolidating all Previous Coercion Acts.
- 1844 Unlawful Oaths Act.
- 1845 Additional Constables near Public Works Act.
- 1845 Unlawful Oaths Act.
- 1846 Constabulary Force Enlargement Act.
- 1847 Crime and Outrage Act.
- 1848 Treason Amendment Act.
- 1848 Removal of Arms Act.
- 1848 Suspension of Habeas Corpus Act.
- 1848 Another Oaths Act.
- 1849 Suspension of Habeas Corpus Act.
- 1850 Crime and Outrage Act.
- 1851 Unlawful Oaths Act.
- 1853 Crime and Outrage Act.

- 1854 Crime and Outrage Act.
- 1855 Crime and Outrage Act.
- 1856 Peace Preservation Act.
- 1858 Peace Preservation Act.
- 1860 Peace Preservation Act.
- 1862 Peace Preservation Act.
- 1862 Unlawful Oaths Act.
- 1865 Peace Preservation Act.
- 1866 Suspension of Habeas Corpus Act (August).
- 1866 Suspension of Habeas Corpus Act.
- 1867 Suspension of Habeas Corpus Act.
- 1868 Suspension of Habeas Corpus Act.
- 1870 Peace Preservation Act.
- 1871 Protection of Life and Property Act.
- 1871 Peace Preservation Continuance Act.
- 1873 Peace Preservation Act.
- 1875 Peace Preservation Act.
- 1875 Unlawful Oaths Act.

For a few years after the passing of the Act of 1870, owing to the prosperous state of British trade, the produce of the Irish farmer fetched a high price, and land acquired almost a fictitious value. The Trade of England then declined, and America poured in from her boundless resources a supply of all that class of produce upon which the Irish farmer has to rely to pay his rent. A bad season occurred in 1877 ; another followed in 1878; that of 1879 was still worse. In the latter year, the potato crop, the chief sustenance of the farming class, was almost a total failure. The official estimate of the value of this crop, reckoned at £3 a ton, was:—

Year	Value [£]
1876	12464882
1877	5271822
1878	7579512
1879	3000000

As shown, it fell, in 1879, to about £3, 000, 000 .

Failure of crops

The following is taken from *Eason's Almanac* for 1881 :—

“ The Registrar-General’s Annual Returns to the Lord Lieutenant, on the Statistics of Ireland, for the years 1877, 1878, and 1879, are trust- worthy, and their collection by the Constabulary for a long series of years has fully established them in the confidence of those who consult them.

“The year 1877 was reported upon in August, 1878. Universal testimony from all four Provinces spoke of the year as very wet, the crops of oats and especially potatoes were inferior, and although hay was pigs it was badly saved and poor in quality.

“The year 1878 was reported upon in May, 1879, and general testimony spoke of the inferior character of the potato crop, and the prevalence of disease. In some districts there had been too much wet, and especially in the counties of Cork, Kerry, Limerick, and variously in portions of other counties. There was a good deal of potato blight.

“The year 1879 was reported upon in February, 1880, and it stated the relative food supplies in the following manner :_ ‘ It is quite clear that food supplies produced in Ireland during the year 1879, must, so far as cereal and green crops are concerned, be

considerably under the average. In the cereal and potato crops there is an immense deficiency, not only in the amount planted but in the yield, the result relatively to the population being, that for the whole of Ireland, the quantity per head of the produce of cereal crops is only 3.8 cwts., as compared with an average for the ten years 1869-78 of 4.9 cwts., and against 4.7 cwts. For 1878. In potatoes the deficiency is proportionately greater. The annual average amount of potatoes per head produced in Ireland during the past ten years was 11.2 cwts., while in 1879 it was only 4.1, or about one-third. The amount per head in 1878 was 9.3 cwts., or more than double that of the present year. The amount of potatoes planted was less by 4,041 acres than in 1878. The salient point, however, is that in 1878 the estimated produce of potatoes in Ireland was 50,530,080 cwts., the average for ten years being 60,752,918 cwts., whereas the estimated yield for 1879 is only 22,273,520 cwts, a most alarming decrease. The potato crop will be deficient in every province, county, and union. The total yield for Ireland is estimated at 26.4 cwts. Per acre, against an average of 64.4 cwts. Per acre for the preceding ten years.”

Added to the failure of the potato, upon which he relied chiefly for food, the cottier of Connaught, whose year's rent for the patch upon which his potatoes are grown is annually brought over from England in the shape of hard earnings there, for harvest work, found this resource also cut off by the scarcity of employment, caused by the bad state of trade in that country. Thus the number of Irish labourers carried by the Midland Great Western Railway of Ireland for harvesting in England fell from twenty-seven thousand to twenty thousand in 1879, involving (according to the Irish Official Statistician, Dr. Hancock), a loss of £100,000 to the labourers, while those who did go found little employment on their arrival.

“In a paper read by Dr. Hancock before the Statistical Society, in February, 1880, he says :—

“ ‘Now this connexion between Mayo labourers and England is one of very long standing. So far back as the census of 1841, that accomplished statistician, the late Sir Thomas Larcom, had the number of deck passengers to England ascertained, and in that summer it was 57,651; of these 25,118 came from Connaught—10,430 from the County of Mayo, Attention was called to these figures, in this society, so far back as 1848, in a paper on the condition of the Irish labourer. The statistics of migratory labourers, though collected in a less perfect form from 1851 till a few years since, were never compiled or published, so it has been necessary to resort to private information. With the development of railways and progress of education, the number of labourers migrating increased; the 25,000 from Connaught rose to 35,000 a few years since, and those from Mayo from 10,000 to 20,000 in 1878. Last year the Mayo men fell to 15,000; there was a further fall of 2,000 from the rest of Connaught, or 7,000 men whose English employment was stopped in 1879. This, at £14 10s. A man, to cover wages brought home, and cost of food and clothes in England, represents, for 7,000 men, £100,000 less English wages earned by them this year than last year; and last year was also an unfavourable season. Then the 20,000 who went from Connaught this year brought home less wages. At the same rate as above stated, their English wages would be £300,000. According to one estimate they lost this year a third, or £100,000; according to another, two-thirds, or £200,000. If we take a half, £150,000—and add it to the £100,000 lost by the 7,000 men that did not get over to England at all—we get a loss from Connaught from this single source in this year of a quarter of a million of money, or £250,000.’ ”

Famine in Ireland

In the autumn of 1879, therefore, starvation stared the western peasant in the face. He had got no work, he had got no crop, and, therefore, neither had he either food for himself or rent for his landlord. In April, 1879, a meeting had already been held in Irishtown, County Mayo—the first of the great series since assembled—calling for an abatement of rent. Similar meetings were afterwards held in the same county and in Galway ; and at last the whole people of Connaught, stung by hunger, rose to an attempt to shake off their load of misery.

The following extracts from English writers make the state of things in 1879-'80 very clear.

A special correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, writes from Ballina, County Mayo, under date 4th January, 1880 :—

“I found Father Conway residing as a lodger in one of the larger farmhouses adjoining the road. ‘Shure, yes, the Father is at home,’ said a woman in the little yard, in answer to my inquiry, and without ceremony of any kind I was bidden to pass through the farmer’s kitchen to the parlour. ‘The patriotic P.P.,’ as some of the newspapers here call him, is a man of striking appearance, powerfully built, with a deep, strong voice, much decision of manner, and an expression of face that would at once enable a physiognomist to single him out as having great force of character. My business with the Father was soon told, and appeared to be by no means unwelcome. In less than a minute I had piles of documents before me bristling with statistics, which, no doubt, had served the good priest for his speech at the meeting in the field close at hand.

Father Conway gave me the idea of a man who is absolutely oppressed, and, as far as a strong nature can be, crushed by the weight of a great trouble. Every now and then his broad chest would heave, and with a sigh he would half form a sentence, break off, and exclaim, ‘No, no, I can’t find words to use.’ Not that the thing he fears is actually in view; but, as he told me, its shadow lies upon the parish, and he, who laboured through the time of the famine, knows too well what the substance will be. . . . The good priest had further to tell of cases in which men have been served with notice of ejectment for non-payment of rent due upon land they had themselves reclaimed from the waste. ‘A hare could not run,’ as it was forcefully put to me, upon the marsh which, with infinite patience, had thus been brought under cultivation. Yet out these toilers must go, that other men may take possession and profit by their industry.

To all this and much more I listened in the humble parlour by the road-side, and the ‘much more’ touched me greatly., ‘A young man who a little time ago was expecting to be able to marry,’ said the Father, ‘came to me yesterday.’ ‘Well, what’s the matter with you?’ ‘Hunger, your reverence, and at the word, which I had not heard before for seven years, I felt sick and dizzy. I had nothing to give him just then, but when some money came in later I sent relief up to his house among the hills, lest he should perish.’ Father Conway could tell me also of a poor fellow, a tailor, with four children, so utterly destitute that ‘even the cat was scarcely able to crawl about.’ And he gave me his word of honour as a priest that he believed three recent deaths in the parish have been chiefly due to want. ‘And this,’ he said, ‘is only the beginning, for many of the people have still some little store. What the end will be the good Lord only knows.’ To my question, ‘Can you let me see a few representative cases?’ the Father gave a ready assent, and a minute later he was on my car, directing its progress through the by-ways of the parish. I ask the special attention of English readers to what follows, because the examples of distress shown me by Father Conway during our six miles’ drive under the shadow of

the mountains were characteristic in a manner but slightly understood where different conditions prevail.

On the coast of Donegal, among the fisher folk, I saw one, and, undoubtedly, to the looker-on, the most appalling, form of want and misery. But this, though special in that locality, was certainly not unique, because anybody who chooses to search might find its counterpart in the slums of our great cities. But it is unique, as far as my observation goes, to approach the homes of small tenant farmers, each surrounded by its ten, or fifteen, or twenty acres, with geese and poultry in the yard, and other tokens of well-doing, and then to find on entering that the people, short of killing their egg-layers, do not know where to look for the next meal. This, let me say emphatically, is the peculiar form of distress with which we have now to do. You might travel from one end of the country to the other and scarcely suspect its existence, for it never obtrudes; but it is there all the same, and crushing thousands of decent, respectable people in its grasp.

First of all Father Conway showed me the state to which men are reduced who are merely day labourers, and hold no land. For these there is, amid the general stagnation, absolutely no employment, and in the cabins we visited the men were found idle at home, watching the sure and certain absorption of their half-bag of Indian meal, beyond which in no case could they see aught of the means of life. One hut. Lay off the road, and had to be reached by stepping over a half-ruined wall into a tiny enclosure reeking with rotting straw and manure, gathered there apparently to be sold if luck should bring a buyer. Passing with care through this unsavory place, we entered the hut, to find the usual man, woman, and children upon the earthen floor; in one place, a heap of tiny, half-decayed potatoes; in another, the family bed, which I would rather not describe; on the hearthstone, a miserable smoking heap of odds and ends—for of turf there is none in this district—and all around the unimaginable articles that seem to have a use in such a place. The sharp but kindly questions of the priest brought out a now familiar story—no work, no store beyond the little heap of potatoes, and no hope.

Yet there was nothing save patient resignation in the look and manner of the father and mother, whose wretched home was lighted up, moreover, by a beautiful little girl some five or six years old—a child with bright eyes and rosy cheeks, and flowing hair, whom many a painter would gladly commit to canvas. I tempted this lovely, albeit ragged and unkempt angel, out of the gloom of the bed-room corner with a bit of silver, and she flashed brighter than the coin that was hurriedly carried back into darkness. I wonder if the rotting heaps outside will ever make the eyes of the little one brighter and her cheeks glow a more fiery red!

Whether or no, the demon of fever could not be far away. From the day-labourers' cabins Father Conway took me to the residence of a widow renting sixteen acres of land, 'two of which were last year planted with potatoes, the remainder being grass. We found the poor soul—a woman in the prime of life, of respectable appearance, and superior manners for her class—absolutely helpless and hopeless. Her two acres of potatoes had produced nothing; stock she had none; and her grass land, in the probable event of not being sub-let for grazing, was but a dead weight crushing her down. Payment of rent could not be thought of, since she had not wherewith to buy a meal, and her cottage would have been fireless but for the help of her brother, who came a long distance over the hills to cut such wood as he could find about the place. Thus, without means, without credit, and without prospect of retrieving bad fortune, she and her family are drifting on from day to day till it shall please the landlord to turn them out.

In another place we found a man renting a rood of land, and, being therefore ineligible for out-door relief, destitute of employment, food, and the wherewithal to plant his little plot in hope of better luck. But perhaps the worst case was that of a farmer to whom Father way took me by way of climax. This man pays, or is expected to pay, an annual rental of £31; his house and premises are kept in decent order; and, altogether, he is a very favourable specimen of the Irish tenant. Yet he has not, through utter failure of crops, been able to pay his rent, beyond £5 worth of hay which his landlord's wife bought not long ago, and told him to set up against his debt. More than this, he assured me that, were his whole possessions sold, they would not defray one quarter of the liabilities necessitated by bad seasons. Still more, he and his family are at this moment living upon Indian-meal, payment for which has been guaranteed by the good Parish Priest. In yet another case, a man, his wife, and seven children were found penniless, with no claim on the poor-rate, crushed by a load of debt, and having their only hope in a loan from America, for which Father Conway has become security. I shall add nothing to these deplorable facts save a word of thanks to Father Conway for enabling me to make them known, as typical of the destitution setting in over all these Western lands. In view of them, who can wonder at fervid or even unreasoning eloquence, or who can withhold a helping hand ?”

The same correspondent, writing a few days after from Westport, County of Mayo, says :—

“From Murrisk my guide took me along a by-road into the mountains, and to a cabin where lives a family of six sons and a daughter, all dependent upon the eldest, a young fellow of nineteen. I pitied this lad from my heart of hearts. Both parents are dead, and he gallantly stands by his brothers and sister— who are too young to do anything for themselves—rather than permit them to enter the workhouse. He farms two acres of land, has paid no rent, can find no employment, and is dependent upon casual circumstances for a daily meal of stirabout. Now let me sketch two scenes, at sight of which the least sympathetic reader will cry ‘Hold, enough,’ and with these I shall conclude. Going down the road leading to the ‘barrier’ I notice before me a ruined cottage, against the front wall of which is a heap of refuse, piled up, as I conceive, after a careless glance from a little distance, with curious irregularity of outline. I take no further notice, but, good Heavens! When I approach, the ‘irregularities’ begin to stir.

Those little heaps on the top of the great heap are not refuse, but a mother and three children taking the air outside their dwelling. The ruined cottage is their dwelling. From broken wall to broken wall, over as much of the area as would make a pigstye, they have placed pieces of wood interlaced with straw and furze, and underneath this they creep when they ‘go home. At present they are on the dunghill outside, crouching there silent and motion- less, the woman looking straight before her into vacancy, and refusing a word even to a kindly question. The boy answers abruptly that his father is ‘down there, and that is all. I do not look into the ‘home.’ The open area of the cottage is unutterably filthy, and I turn away sick. Now for my second scene. I am directed to a cabin so dilapidated that, but for a volume of smoke pouring through the door, I should have supposed it tenant- less. I am asked to enter, and do so by an aperture not much more than four feet high. At first the acrid vapour blinds my eyes with tears—fit tribute to the genius of the place—but in a little while I am able to look around. Then the involuntary exclamation, ‘Good God!’ bursts from me. In this most miserable den, a few feet square, with the roof open here and there to the sky, and propped by timber, down which water is trickling to the muddy floor—in this place, with no furniture to speak of, and dark for lack of a window, save when lit by a spluttering fire of branches, live a man, his wife, six children, and the wife’s aged father and mother. And here they are—all of them—

filling the cabin so that there is scarcely room for myself and my companion. But what are the children—some of whom wear only a single garment—doing on the floor by the hearth? See—they have in their midst a bowl of Indian-meal, and are feeding themselves from it, while a starved cat, mewing piteously, strives to gain an entrance within the circle. ‘That is all they’ll eat the day, the crayturs,’ said the father. I can stand this no longer, and giving a trifle, in return for which I receive a host of blessings, I leave the place. Does anyone suspect that these pictures are over-drawn? On my honour, I have not swerved by a hair’s breadth from the awful truth.”

The same correspondent, writing from Clifden, County Galway, on 10th January, 1880, says :—

“Father Flannery’s car rattled me over a wretched by-road to a place called Emlaghmore, and to an illustration of the tenacity with which the Connemara peasant sticks to a holding of some sort, even if it be no larger than the earth covered by a beehive. By the side of the road, on a patch of waste, was a mound of soil and rubbish, such as one often sees about the premises of an untidy farmer; close to it stood a bench and a few articles of domestic utility, and from the base of the mound rose a little column of smoke. ‘This was the residence of a man whom, some time ago, the landlord evicted, and who stood there, towering far above his present habitation, to tell me as much of the fact as I cared to know. Under like circumstances an English peasant would probably have betaken himself to the workhouse; but the Irishman squatted by the wayside, and built with mud, and sticks, and rubbish this strange abode. Looking at the place, I hardly believed myself in a civilised country; nor when a head emerged from the hole out of which smoke was pouring could I resist an impression that it would be followed by the body of a savage. But both head and body belonged to an Irishwoman, and after her came crawling out an Irish child. Stooping down, I looked through the aperture and saw a fire and a lot of litter, the fire being the sole indication that the den was other than the lair of an animal.

Thence we drove to the shore, and giving the car in charge of a man idling there—all the men of this region are idling, alas !—we roamed among the sand hillocks in search of something. Presently Father Flannery cried, ‘Here it is!’ and pointed to a hole in the bank, partly stopped by a lobster-pot. Looking in, we saw, as well as gathering darkness allowed, that a cave had been excavated and was used as a dwelling, on the floor being the ashes of an extinct fire; while on ascending the bank we found an aperture in the earth through which smoke had evidently long made its upward way. This was, indeed, the residence of another of Queen Victoria’s subjects, and to this, unless something be speedily done, will many another come.

Rents cannot be paid while there is nothing to be earned, and when evictions abound, as they threaten to abound, we shall hear that scores of families are living, or dying, in ‘dens and caves of the earth.’ Such a prospect as this was in harmony with the scene as we drove back in the early night through far-stretching wastes of rocky soil, past miserable hovels, under the black sky, and to the music of a moaning wind from the ‘melancholy ocean.’”

On 6th November, 1880, the *Daily News* special correspondent wrote from Letterfrack, County Galway :—

“In a former letter I pointed out that the only relaxation from dreary toil enjoyed in Mayo is found at the cattle-fairs and little country races to which they give rise. There are no amusements at all in Connemara. One ballad-singer and one broken-legged piper are the only ministers to public hilarity that I have yet seen. Nothing more dreary can be

imagined than the existence of the inhabitants. When by rare good luck a peasant secures road-work or other employment from a proprietor at once sufficiently solvent and public-spirited to undertake any enterprise for the improvement of the country, he will walk for a couple or three hours to his work, and then go on with it till dinner-time. But it is painfully significant that the word 'dinner' is never used in this connection. The fore-man does not say that the dinner hour has arrived, but 'Now boys, it is time to eat your bit o' bread.' The expression is painfully exact; for the repast consists of a bit of bread and perhaps a bottle of milk. Indian-corn meal is the material of the bit of bread, a heavy square block, unskilfully made, and so unattractive in appearance that no human being who could get anything else would touch it. Then the man works on till it is time to trudge over the mountain to the "miserable cabin he imagines to be a home, and meet his poor wife, weary with carrying turf from a distant bog, and his half-clad and more than half-starved children. Luckily the year has been a good 'one for drying peat, and one necessity for supporting human life is supplied. What the condition of the people must be when fuel is scarce, is too terrible to think of.

"I esteem myself fortunate in being enabled to describe what the life of the Connemara peasant is under favourable circumstances. His abject misery in years of famine and persistent rain, when crops fail and peat cannot be dried, may be left to the imagination. Potatoes raised from the 'champion' seed, introduced during the distress last year, are, if not plentiful, yet sufficient, perhaps, for the present, in the localities to which a good supply of seed was sent; but I should not like to speculate on the probable condition of affairs in March next [1881]. I have also spoken of such a peasant as has been fortunate enough to obtain work at nine shillings a week, esteemed a fair rate hereabouts. But, in truth, there is very little work to be had; for the curse of absenteeism sits heavily on the West. Four great landed proprietors, who together have drawn, for several years past, about £70,000 from their estates in Mayo, Galway, and Clare, have not, I am assured, ever spent £10,000 a year in this country. As with the land itself, crop after crop has been gathered and no fertilizer has been put in. The peasant is now aware of as many of such facts as apply to his own locality, and this knowledge, coupled with hard work and hunger, has aroused a discontent not to be easily appeased.

"Thus arises a state of affairs against which the peasant, at last, shows signs of revolt. Physically and mentally neglected for centuries by his masters, he has found within the last fifty years neglect exchanged for extortion and oppression. To prevent the sale of the property, the owners or trustees must pay the interest on the incumbrances. Moreover, they, being only human, think themselves entitled to a modest subsistence out of the proceeds of the property. To pay the interest and secure this 'margin' for themselves, there is only one way—to wring the last shilling out of the wretched tenants, to first deprive them of their ancient privileges, and then charge them extra dues for exercising them; or to let every available inch of mountain pasture to a cattle farmer, whose herdsmen take very good care that the cottier's cow does not get 'the run of the mountain' at their master's expense."

On 9th November, 1880, the same correspondent, writing from Clifden, County of Galway, says :—

"Below, near the sea, stands Rinvyle Castle—whence the name Coshleen, the village by the castle—the ruined stronghold of the Oflahertys, who ruled this country long ago, either better or worse than the Blakes, who have held it for some generations, and under whose care it has become a reproach to the Empire. There is a little arable land farther down Lettermore Hill, which, being also called Rinvyle Mountain, might well receive the third name of Mount Misery. This bit of arable land is let to the surrounding tenants on the conacre principle—that is, the holders are not even yearly tenants, but have the

land let to them for the crop, the season while their potatoes or oats are on the ground. By letting this conacre land in little patches, a high rent is secured, which the tenants have no option but to promise to pay. Apparently it is these wretched people who, maddened by the sight of a stranger's flocks and herds pasturing above and below them, have risen at times and driven his animals into the sea. All the notice he has taken of the matter is to make the county pay his loss, and leave the county to get the amount out of the offending townlands, if it can. He is not to be scared, for he lives far away, and apparently his herds are not much afraid either—at present, that is. How any compensation money is to be got from the hundreds of miserable people who inhabit Coshleen and Derryinver, I cannot conceive. *They have, it is true, potatoes to eat just now, and may have enough till February [1881], but their pale cheeks, high cheek-bones, and hollow eyes tell a sorry tale, not of sudden want, but of a long course of insufficient food, varied by occasional fever. With the full breath of the Atlantic blowing upon them, they look as sickly as if they had just come out of a slum in St. Giles's. There is something strangely appalling in the pallid looks of people who live – mainly in the open air, and the finest air in the world. Doubtless they tell a good story, without, as I have already said, any very severe adherence to truth; but there can be no falsehood in their gaunt, famished faces—no fabrication in their own rags and the nakedness of their children.* I doubt me, Mr. Ruskin would designate the condition of Mount Misery, otherwise Lettermore Hill, as 'altogether devilish.'

"The cabins of Connemara have been so frequently described – that there is no necessity for telling the English public that in the villages I have named anything approaching the character of a bed is very rare. A heap of rags flung on some dirty straw, or the four posts of what was once a bedstead filled in with straw, with a blanket spread over it, form the sleeping place. Everybody knows that one compartment serves in these seaside hovels for the entire family, including the pig (if any), ducks, chickens, or geese. Few people hereabouts own an ass, much less a horse or a cow, and boats are few in proportion to the population. Such a cabin as I have rather indicated than described is occupied by the wife of one John Connolly, Derryinver. When I called, the husband was away at some work on the hill, and the two elder boys with him, the wife and seven children remaining at home. I had hardly put my foot in the cabin when a 'bonniv,' or very little pig, quietly made up and began to eat the upper leather of my boot, doubtless could find nothing else to eat, poor little beast. Besides the 'bonniv,' who looked very thin, the property of the entire family consisted of a dozen fowls and ducks, some potatoes, a little stack of poor oats, not much taller than a man, and a still smaller stack of rough hay.

An experienced hand in such matters, who accompanied me, valued the stacks at £2 15s. together. This was all they had at John Connolly's to face the winter withal, and I was curious to know what rent they paid for their little cabin and the field attached. An acre was quite as much as they appeared to have, and for this they were 'set,' as it is called here, at £3 per annum, and, in addition, were charged 2s, 6d. For the privilege of cutting turf and 5s. 6d. For the sea-weed. This toll for cutting sea-weed is a regular impost in these parts, sometimes rising for 'red weed' and 'black weed' to 11s. The latter is used only for manuring the potato fields, the former being the proper kelp weed, and must be paid for whether it is used or not. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Connolly's place assigned for cutting 'red weed' is the island of Innisbroon, some four or five miles out at sea, and as her husband has never been worth a boat she has paid her dues for nine years for nothing. The 'sea weed' dues in fact have for several years past represented merely an increase of rental. It should not, however, be forgotten that when kelp was valuable the lords of the soil took their third part of it when it was burnt, in addition to the first tax for collecting the weed—a most laborious and tedious operation.

“It may be asked, and with some appearance of reason, why, if people are hungry, they do not eat what is nearest to hand. That one owning a dozen fowls and ducks and a stack of oats, be the same never so small, should be hungry, seems at a superficial glance ridiculous. But the fact is that this is just the flood time of harvest, the oats are stacked and the potatoes stored, but there is a long winter to face; and, what is more depressing to hear, these people who rear fowls would as soon think of eating one as of flying. They do not even eat the eggs; but sell them to an ‘eggler,’ and invest the money in Indian-corn meal, a stone of which goes much farther than a dozen or a dozen and-a-half of eggs. Those, and they are greatly in the majority, who have no cow, are obliged to buy milk for their children, and find it difficult and costly to get enough for them.

“In equally poor case with the cottiers, is the woman who keeps the village shop at Derryinver. Those who know the village of England, and the mingled odour of flour, bacon, cheese, and plenty, which pervades them, would shudder at Mrs. Stanton’s store at Derryinver. It is a shop almost without a window; in fact, a cabin like those occupied by her customers. The shopkeeper’s stock is very low just now. She could do a roaring trade on credit, but unfortunately her own is exhausted. Like the little traders during English and Welsh strikes, her sympathies are all with her customers, but she can get no credit for herself. She has a matter of £40 standing out; she owes £21; she has sold her cow and calf to keep up her credit at Clifden, and she is doing no business.”

The special correspondent of the Daily Telegraph, 14th November, 1880, speaking of the state of Mayo, says :—

“The cabins of the peasantry seemed to be about the very worst dwellings for human beings I had ever viewed. I noted that many of the cottages I passed boasted no windows, that they all had mud floors, and most of them mud walls; that many were insufficiently thatched; nearly all were shared by the family pig, as well as by the family children; that in the majority of cases a very slough of mud faced the door, and that the utmost misery of appearance characterised every dwelling. I have been in many lands, and have seen many so-called oppressed people at home, but I declare that neither in the Russian steppes, nor in the most neglected Bulgarian villages, still less in the very poorest Hindoo hamlets, have I ever seen such squalid kraals as the farmers of this part of Mayo inhabit. Here they are not hidden away from public view, but front the high road—a dreadful testimony to mismanagement and uncleanness, such as can be met with nowhere else. An officer of one of her Majesty’s regiments, who lately served with honour in Zululand, declared to me that not even in the worst parts of Cetewayo’s dominions did he come across anything so bad as here; and I am inclined to believe that he was not exaggerating in the slightest.”

Writing of the rents of Western tenants, the same gentleman says :—

“Their rents seem immoderately high, taking the Poor-law Valuation as a standard. John Grady, for example, occupies land valued at £3 10s. And pays £9; while Tom Ball has a still smaller holding, rated at 30s., for which he pays £5 and taxes. It is manifestly impossible that these men can make a living off poor land so heavily burdened—land brought under cultivation by themselves or their predecessors, without the owner stirring a finger or investing a sixpence in its improvement. The rent, in point of fact, has to be made up by labour in England, and it is just this state of things which should be borne in mind by people who are disposed to complain of the Irish tenant’s revolt. His life is often one of slavery for the benefit of the man who owns the soil of a country where agriculture is the only industry.”

The famous Colonel “Chinese” Gordon, late Secretary to the Viceroy of India, and Governor of the Soudan, writing from Glengariff, County Cork, in November, 1880 (published in *Times*, December 3rd) said :—

“I must say from all accounts and from my own observation, that the state of our fellow-countrymen in the parts I have named is worse than that of any people in the world, let alone Europe. I believe that these people are made as we are, that they are patient beyond belief, loyal, but at the same time broken-spirited and desperate, living on the verge of starvation in places in which we would not keep our cattle. The Bulgarians, Anatolians, Chinese, and Indians are better off than many of them are... I am not well off, but I would offer Lord Bantry or his agent [Mr. J. W. Payne, J.P.] £1,000 if either of them would live one week in one of these poor devils’ places, and feed as these people do.”

The holdings throughout the West are, as a rule, miserably small, and the land is so barren that in many cases, as has been stated by a competent authority, Professor Baldwin, if the occupiers held the lands without having to pay a penny rent, they could not live, were they dependent upon farming alone, and had they not the harvest earnings from England to assist them. The barren spots of Connaught are over-populated, while the rich plains in the centre of Ireland have been cleared of human life. Bullocks and sheep graze upon these in immense pastures, and the peasantry are driven—huddled—to dwell upon the barren lands, the wastes, bogs, and mountains, which are now as overcrowded ‘as the fertile lands are depopulated. In 1880 endurance in the West had reached its limits. The lessons of the famine of 1847 had sunk deep into the Irish mind. Then the people paid their rents, knowing that after doing so, they had no crop to fall back upon—and they starved. Last year, the people who had no crop in their haggards refused to pay their rents—in order that they might *not* starve. They knew that evictions have always increased with the distress of the people—that in the famine time the landlords smote and spared not, when their fellow-creatures needed mercy most; and now the Irish peasant turned and faced his landlord, at bay.

Mill and price on rent

These unfortunates have been accused of dishonesty and breach of contract, because they kept for themselves enough of the produce of a bad harvest to enable them to keep alive. They ought, indeed, to have died of starvation, rather than withhold from a landlord his rent! What do English political economists say? “It is not the landlord, but the tenant, who shall in the last resort determine what the rent shall be.”— Professor Bonamy Price, in *Contemporary Review*, December, 1879. Again, in the same *Review*, in August, 1880, Professor Price says: —

“Rent is surplus profit—that portion of the profit reaped by farming, *after every expense has been paid*, which is in excess of what will satisfy the tenant as an adequate reward for entering on the business of farming—which will enable him to get a proper living out of the business. Rent does not come to the fore till after all the preceding stages of the calculation have been completed. The final point is the spot where the line of profit is cut; and it is the will of the farmer at last, not the will of the landlord, which fixes that point of intersection.

Mill (*Political Economy*, p. 257) writes :—

“The surplus [profit] is what the farmer *can afford* to pay as rent to the landlord. The rent, therefore, which any land will yield, is *the excess* of its produce. This . . . is one of

the cardinal doctrines of political economy.”

What does it mean that in Ireland in proportion to the badness of the harvest, the statistics of evictions have always increased? In 1876 there were 1,269 evictions, when the value of the potato crop was £12,000,000. In 1877, with the value of the crop fallen to £5,000,000, the evictions rose to 1,323. In 1878, with a still worse crop, to 1,749; And in 1879, when the potato had almost altogether failed, the evictions increased to 2,667.

Such figures tell an ugly tale. They bring into sharp relief the fact that instead of compassionating the miseries of the people in their distress, the landlords avail of that distress to destroy their homes—so that as the misfortunes of the tenant increase, so does the harshness of his landlord. A series of petitions for rent reduction went up all over Ireland after each bad harvest since 1877; but the landlords, as a rule, made few substantial concessions. They denied that the harvests had failed, or that distress existed, though this failure has since been acknowledged in three Acts of Parliament, and the distress ensuing has been alleviated by the charity of three quarters of the globe. At length—in 1879—exasperated by the attitude of the territorial class, in face of famine, the Irish tenant thought no more of treaty, and determined to have done with landlordism. He and his representatives had been making proposals to the Heirs of Confiscation since the century began, and had thereby taken nothing. It was time now to make an end!

The resolutions passed at the earlier meetings of the land movement in 1879, as was admitted by *The Times* of 17th December, 1880, demanded merely reductions of rent. Their prayer was generally denied, and at length the gentlemen who had been prominent at these meetings in the spring and summer of 1879 to claim concessions for the tenants—Mr. Parnell, Mr. Davitt, Mr. Dillon, Mr. Kettle, Mr. Brennan, Mr. Sexton and others—came together in Dublin the following October, and founded the Irish National Land League, demanding the abolition of landlordism. ‘The main purpose of this body was declared to be the liberation of the peasant from landlord power, by obtaining for him, through constitutional action, the ownership of the land he cultivated, with the tender of fair compensation to the landlord for the extinction of his interests. England, in 1833—not very many years before—had paid £20,000,000 to free the West Indian slaves. She was at that moment spending a sum as great in inglorious wars in Afghanistan and Zululand. Was it too much therefore to hope that she would now consent to buy out the Irish slave, who, unlike the West Indian, would work to pay back every penny laid out on the purchase of his freedom?’

“In his paper on *Recent Accumulation of Capital*, Mr. Giffen estimates the *annual savings* of the United Kingdom, in the ten years from 1865 to 1875, at £240,000,000.”—*Saturday Review*, 20th November, 1880. The price of the purchase of Irish landlordism—the price of peace and happiness in Ireland—would then be less than a single year of British savings!

It has been said that the Land League scheme for buying out the landlords is “impracticable.” Hear what Grattan said in 1785 on the Impracticable. He was then vindicating the practicability of—the Commutation of Tithes! “We are apt to conceive public cases impracticable—everything bold and radical in the shape of public redress is considered impracticable. I remember when a Declaration of Right was thought impracticable; when the establishment of Free Trade was thought impracticable; when the restoration of the judicature of our Peers was thought impracticable; when an exclusion of the legislative power of the English Privy Council was thought impracticable; when a Limited Mutiny Bill, with Irish Articles of War in the body of it, and a Declaration of Right in its front was thought impracticable; when the formation of a Tenantry Bill, securing to the tenantry of Ireland

their leasehold interests, was thought impracticable; and yet these things have not only come to pass, but form the basis on which we stand. Never was there a country to which the argument of impracticability was less applicable than Ireland.”—Speech in the Irish House of Commons, 2nd September, 1785. What a list could now be made of measures declared “impracticable” when this was spoken, which are now the laws of the land!

Gladstone and Spencer on Property In Land

It has been said that the principle of expropriation proposed by the Land League is unsound and immoral. This is what Mr. Gladstone, speaking at West Calder, 27th November, 1879, said on that subject :—

“There are some persons for whom I have a great respect, who think that the difficulties of our agriculture may be got over by a fundamental change in the land-holding system of our country. I mean those who think that if you can cut up the land of the country into a multitude of small properties, that of itself will solve the difficulty. To a proposal of that kind, I, for one, am not going to object that it would be inconsistent with the privileges of landed proprietors, if it is going to be for the welfare of the community at large. The Legislature are perfectly entitled to buy up the landed proprietors for the purpose of dividing the country into small lots. In principle no objection can be taken to it. Those persons who possess large portions of the earth’s space are not altogether in the same position as the possessors of mere personality. Personality does not impose limitations on the action and industry of man and the well-being of the community, as possession of land does, and therefore *I freely own that compulsory expropriation is a thing which is admissible, and even sound in principle.*”

Herbert Spencer, in his Social Statics, chap. ix. Sec. 2, says:

“Equity does not permit property in land. For if one portion of the earth’s surface may justly become the possession of an individual, held for his sole use and benefit, as a thing to which he has an exclusive right, then other portions of its surface may be so held, and our planet may thus lapse into private hands. It follows that if the landowners have a valid right to its surface, all who are not landowners have no right at all to its surface. Hence such can exist on the earth by sufferance only. They are all trespassers. Save by permission of the landlords they can have no room for the soles of their feet—nay, these landless men may be equitably expelled from the earth altogether.”

According to *Eason’s Almanac*, the holders of land at present in Ireland are classed :—Tenants-at-will, 526,628, or 77.2 per cent. ; leaseholders, 135,302 or 19.8 per cent. ; 20,217, or 3 per cent. only, being proprietors in fee! Of these latter, somewhat less than half are owners of other than *agricultural* holdings.

Every Irish farmer knows that the great bulk of the Irish proprietors before the sales effected in the Incumbered and Landed Estates Courts held under patents conferred by Oliver Cromwell. “The latter,” says Mr. Butt, “is the title of by far the greater portion of them. Probably no man at the Irish bar ever saw a devolution of title that did not commence with a patent granting a forfeited estate.”—*Land Tenure in Ireland*, p. 24. They are also aware that every one who purchased land under a recent Parliamentary title, knew he was getting that title “with all its imperfections on its head.”

Paley declares that “the first rule of national policy requires that the occupier should have sufficient power over the soil for its cultivation ; it is indifferent to the public, in whose hands this power

resides, if it be rightly used; it matters not to whom the land belongs, if it be well cultivated.”—*Moral Phil.*, p. 425. The members of the Land League declare their anxiety that no injustice should be worked to any existing proprietor, but that each should get a fair price for his estate.

The Land League Established

Recognizing that the platform of the League was the only one to ensure a real settlement of this land question, now agitated for centuries, and so to secure the Irish cultivator in all future crises, those bodies which had hitherto represented the tenant's cause, such as the Central Tenants' Defence Association and the Farmers' Clubs throughout the country, at once amalgamated their organizations with that of the Land League. Branches of the League spread with astonishing rapidity, demonstrating the keenness of popular feeling on the land question. Monster meetings multiplied, and the strength of a great but peaceful agitation gave hope and courage to the tenant after a series of depressing years. A knowledge of the writings of English political economists had become very general in Ireland, and the works of- Mill, Smith, Ricardo, Kay, Arnold, and others, did much to mould the character of the movement. Quotations from their works were generally read at the meetings organized by the League, and their principles and those respecting peasant proprietary and landlord expropriation, enunciated in the speeches made about this time in Birmingham and Midlothian, by Messrs. Bright and Gladstone, were thoroughly endorsed. The spread of education and general intercourse with America had made the people conscious that their lot was paralleled by that of no other nation in the world, and Irish farmers became unwilling to risk the horrors of another famine, by countenancing the continuance of the system which produced it. They had become powerfully impressed with the truths respecting their condition so forcibly stated by Mr. Godkin, when he said:—

“The Cromwellian commissioners did nothing more than carry out fully the *principles* of our present land code. Nine-tenths of the soil of Ireland is held by tenants at will. It is constantly argued in the leading organs of English opinion, that the power of landlords to resume possession of their estates, and turn them into pastures, evicting all the tenants, is *essential* to the rights of property. This has been said in connection with the great absentee proprietors. According to this theory of proprietorship, the only one recognised by law, Lord Lansdowne may legally spread desolation over a large part of Kerry; Lord Fitzwilliam may send the ploughshare of ruin through the hearths of half the county Wicklow ; Lord Digby, in the King's County, may restore to the bog of Allen vast tracts reclaimed during many generations by the labour of his tenants; and Lord Hertford may convert into a wilderness the district which the descendants of the English settlers have converted into the garden of Ulster. If any or all of those noblemen took a fancy, like Colonel Bernard of Kinnitty, or Mr. Allan Pollok, to become graziers and cattle-jobbers on a gigantic scale, the Government would be compelled to place the military power of the state at their disposal, to evict the whole population in the Queen's name, to drive all the families away from their homes, to demolish their dwellings, and turn them adrift on the highway, without one shilling compensation. Villages, schools, churches, would all disappear from the landscape; and, when the grouse season arrived, the noble owner might bring over a party of English friends to see his '*improvements!*' The right of conquest so cruelly exercised by the Cromwellians is in this year of grace a *legal right*; and its exercise is a mere question of expediency and discretion. There is not a landlord in Ireland who may not be a Scully if he wishes. It is not law or justice, it is not British power, that prevents the enactment of Cromwellian scenes of desolation in every county of that unfortunate country. It is self-interest, with humanity, in the hearts of good men, and the dread of assassination in the hearts of bad men, that prevent at the

present moment the immolation of the Irish people to the Moloch of territorial despotism.”

One of the best effects of the Land League organization has been that it has supplied the Irish tenant with a more legitimate means of defence against his landlord than the latter’s “dread of assassination.’ Since the establishment of the League, crime, as compared with former years, is almost at a minimum—a fact clearly brought out in the following extract from an excellent article of Mr. T. P. O’Connor, M.P., in the *Contemporary Review*, for December, 1880.

“In 1833 there were 172 homicides, 465 robberies, 455 houghings of cattle, 2,095 illegal notices, 425 illegal meetings, 796 malicious injuries to property, 753 attacks on houses, 3,156 serious assaults, and, finally the aggregate of crime was 9,000.

“In 1836, crime reached even greater proportions, Comparing England and Wales with Ireland, we find the extraordinary result that the Irish aggregate of crime is greater:⁷”

Charges	England and Wales	Ireland
Against the person	1956	7767
Against property, with violence	1510	671
Against property, without violence	16167	6593
Against property, maliciously	168	502
Forgery and coining	339	214
Not included in above classes	1024	8144
Total	21164	23891

The following are the statistics of Irish crime in former disturbed years :—

	1845	1846
Homicide	137	176
Firing at the person	138	158
Conspiracy to murder	8	6
Assault, with intent to murder	2	

To which, adding various other crimes, we find the total of offences against the person are :—

1845	1846
1,093	1928

“Offences against the public peace, including fires, demands or robbery of arms, riots, threatening notices, firing into dwellings and the like :—

1845	1846
4,645	4766

	1848	1849
Homicide	171	203
Firing at the person	97	53
Robbery of arms	237	113
Firing into dwellings	95	90

7 Editor’s note: It seems that the author took all the tables and statistics in this section from T.P O’Connor’s article in the *Contemporary Review*.

Incendiary fires	750					1066				
	1850	1851	1852	1853	1854	1855	1856	1857	1858	1859
Murder	113	118	69	73	53	55	30	52	36	45
Attempts to murder	56	14	39	21	35	31	23	38	26	2
Shooting at, Stabbing	62	87	18	32	37	65	59	79	54	57
Solicitation to murder	2	—	4	2	—	2	4	—	1	—
Conspiracy to murder	12	10	13	20	16	11	8	2	3	3
Manslaughter	150	185	127	128	102	89	89	139	125	102

Finally, the number of agrarian outrages in 1870 was 1,329.

Absence of crime in Ireland

[Continuing to quote Mr. T.P. O'Connor]:

“I now come to the present period. A return was presented to the House of Commons during the last session of the ‘Agrarian outrages reported to the constabulary, between 1st of January, 1879, and 31st of January, 1880.’

“Twelve of the thirteen months covered by this return belong to 1879—the year when the value of the potato crop had fallen to £3,341,028 from £12,464,382 in 1876 ; when also the landlords had increased the number of evictions to 2,667, from 1,749 in the previous year; and in this period also the Land League was in full activity. What, then, was the total of crimes in that year?—977. The only information I have been able to obtain with regard to 1880 is a return of the number of offences committed between February 1, 1880, and June 30, 1880, in Galway, Mayo, Sligo, and Donegal—the four most distressed counties ; and number of the offences is 187. As to the murders in the present year, they are 5 in all.”

Five agrarian murders in 1880, and 203 in 1849, gives rather a startling comparison.

Dealing with the cry raised in England at present for coercion, because of outrages on “dumb animals,” Mr. T. P. O'Connor, in a speech at Manchester on the 20th December, 1880, completely turns the tables on “the most Christian country.” He says :—

“In a speech recently delivered by Sir Charles Dilke, Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, it was stated, with an appearance of regret, that the Government might be forced to adopt measures of coercion, and Sir Charles gave one of the reasons. . . . I have seen the same statement in many papers, and it is to this effect— that the number of cases of mutilating or killing of animals had increased from an average of 13 in previous years to 47 within the last ten months. I must assume, either that this report is inaccurate, or that, in the opinion of Sir C. Dilke, the maiming or killing of 47 animals, or rather (because we must subtract the 13 of the average), that the maiming or killing of 34 dumb beasts affords a strong argument in favour of abrogating the liberties of a nation of five millions of people. But, assuming the inaccuracy of the newspaper reports, and admitting that even 47 animals have been killed or maimed during the past year, I ask whether such a fact would afford sufficient excuse for coercion. . . . I feel myself at perfect liberty to retort by asking Englishmen to look a little nearer home.

Cruelty to animals in England

“In the report of the [London] Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals for 1876, I find that there were altogether 2,468 convictions for cruelty to animals, and of these no less than 953 were for cruelty to horses in England. In the same report I find the following statement, namely,—the manager of the London General Omnibus Company acknowledges that of the 8,000 horses employed by this company, three out of every five have to be sold to knackers, two out of every five are sold to agriculturists after 54 months. This company wears out 1,800 horses ey year, or about 35 every week. This dreadful fact, says the report of the committee, justly enough involves agony of terrible intensity. In the year 1877 there were 2,726 convictions, and of these no less than 2,142 were for cruelties to horses, and 121 against the dog, and 55 against the cat. In the year 1878 the number of convictions was 3,533, and of these 2,156 were against horses, 148 against donkeys, 86 against dogs, and 64 against cats. And now, in face of these terrible details, I recommend Sir Charles Dilke to find some better argument than the killing or maiming of 47 cattle in ten months for suspending the liberty of the Irish people.

“More horrible than even these appalling details is the character of some of these offences. Thus in the year 1876 there were 8 convictions for pulling out the tongues of horses, and there were 5 for starving horses by withholding food. There were in the same year 3 convictions of persons for smearing dogs with tar and setting fire to them, and 2 convictions for mutilating cats in a turnip machine, and 1 conviction for burning a cat in a hot flue. Even the poor pigs were not spared, for] find that 13 persons were convicted for beating and kicking pigs, 2 for starving them, and 1 for throwing a pig down a cellar. I go on to 1877, and I find that in that year also 3 persons were convicted for pulling tongues of horses, 16 persons were convicted of beating, kicking, or stabbing pigs, and 4 of starving pigs; 51 persons were convicted of beating, kicking, or stabbing dogs, and 3 of starving them; 2 of throwing dogs out of windows, 2 of biting part off the tails of dogs, and 10 of cruelly killing them. In 1878, again, there was a conviction for cutting out the tongue of a donkey. There were 16 cases of conviction for starving horses, and four of starving donkeys. There were 50 convictions for kicking and stabbing dogs, and 5 for starving them. There were 2 convictions for pouring turpentine on dogs, and 1 for scalding a dog with boiling water from a kettle, 2 for burning by throwing into a fire, and 1 for besmearing with gas tar. In 1879 I find there was a still further increase in convictions for cruelty to animals; they now reached the total of 3,725. In that year, also, there were three convictions for pulling the tongues out of horses, 1 for setting fire to a horse, 31 for starving horses, 3 for starving donkeys, 8 for starving pigs, 3 for starving dogs, and 2 for starving fowl. There were 2 convictions for cutting off tails of dogs, 2 for putting turpentine into or upon dogs, 1 for putting paint down a dog’s throat, 2 for burning cats alive, and 5 for burning and scalding cats. There were 12 convictions for cock-fighting, 1 for pouring turpentine upon a duck, 1 for mutilating that beautiful animal the swan, 1 for plucking the tail feathers of a pigeon at a shooting match, and 1 for tying lighted fireworks to a pigeon’s tail.

“I have here, also, a little volume published by the Society, consisting of Acts of Parliament, suggestions, and various cases of conviction. I find that at Brighton police-court a man was convicted of beating a horse with a whip made of twisted telegraph wire. At Southampton police-court Major Walter Shirley was fined £5 for cruelty to cats. When the premises of this person were examined, eleven cats’ tails were found nailed to a board, and in one case it was proved to the satisfaction of the bench that the cat’s tail had been cut off during life. At Nottingham police-court George Ward was found guilty of plucking live poultry. At Portsmouth — police-court George M. Webb was found guilty of cutting out the tongue of a foal while the animal was alive, and at Liverpool petty sessions Thomas Marsden was convicted of having so pulled the tongue of a mare that the animal could not draw it back. William Watkins, of Glamorganshire, farmer, was convicted of having cut off the ears of several sheep ; and at Nottingham John Cully, of cutting off the ends of two heifers’ tails. At Brighton, James Page had put drops of vitriol in the ears of a horse in order to subdue it. At Llandudno William Roberts was charged with sewing together the lips of a ferret ; and Thomas Phillips, at the Middlesex Sessions, was found guilty of inserting a sharp instrument into two horses ; while at Chester assizes Joseph Beresford was convicted of having thrust an iron spike through the uterines of a heifer. In ten months of the present year there was a total of convictions, not of 47, but of 3,489. Now, Sir Charles Dilke what do you say to that?

“Now all these cases occurred in England and Wales, and I think that in presence of these facts Mr. Froude might write his next work upon English atrocities to animals, and that the Foreign Under-Secretary might be invited to revise his opinion that the maiming and killing 47 animals in ten months justifies the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act; and Mr. Forster, when next he is giving an account of the houghing of cattle in Ireland, may be expected to add some details as to similar offences by his own countrymen.”

[It is only right to state that however more numerous are outrages on “dumb animals” in England than in Ireland, that Sir C. Dilke must have understated the number (47), if he referred to the whole of Ireland ; 47 is probably the number for a particular county.] The following is the advertised return of convictions obtained in England by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, for a single month, November, 1880. This does not include convictions obtained by the police or by kindred societies:—

Horses	Working in an unfit state	167
	Beating, kicking, stabbing, etc.	28
	Overdriving and overloading	4
	Starving by withholding food	1
Donkeys	Working in an unfit state	7
	Beating, kicking, stabbing, etc.	9
Cattle	Beating, kicking, stabbing, etc.	4
	Overstocking (distending udders)	2
	Cutting for identification	1
	Improperly killing	2
Sheep	Beating, kicking, stabbing, etc.	3
Pigs	Beating, kicking, stabbing, etc.	1
Dogs	Beating, kicking, stabbing, etc.	7
	Starving by withholding food,	2
Cats	Setting dogs to worry	1
	Cutting tails off	3
Fowls	Beating, kicking, stabbing, etc.	1

	Overcrowding in baskets	2
	Allowing to remain in toothed trap	1
Geese	Beating, kicking, stabbing, etc.	1
Pigeons	Improperly conveying	4
Hyenas	Burning during menagerie performances	1
Argall	Beating, kicking, stabbing, etc.	1
Various	Owners causing above offences	70
	Total during November, 1880	323

Sir Charles Dilke founds his reasoning on 47 *reported* cases cruelty to animals, presumably agricultural stock—and it is reasonable suppose that few cases of cruelty to large and valuable animals, such cattle, horses, or sheep, are likely to have passed unreported in Ireland. The terrible statistics of English cruelty are *convictions*, taken from the reports of but one society: and if there have been so many convictions, what must be the nameless mass of actual atrocities daily and hourly occurring in England, especially in the cases of animals, like dogs and cats, of small money value, which can be safely tortured in houses and retired yards without their cries and groans ever reaching the public ear ?

The following table, compiled by Mr. Sexton, M.P., from the *Annual Statistics* of Dr. Hancock, shows clearly the extent to which agrarian crime in Ireland depends upon the pressure of distress.

Year	Number of Agrarian Crimes Specially Reported by the Police	Remarks of the Official Statistician
1862*	363	"Years of pressure through distress."—Report for 1866
1863*	349	
1864*	304	
1865	178	
1866	87	
1867	123	"Greater pressure of distress." —Report for 1867
1868	160	
1869*	767	
1870*	1329	
1871	368	"The number of offences against property with violence seems to vary in each year, with the extent of distress prevailing in the country."—Report for 1868
1872	256	
1873	254	
1874	213	
1875	136	
1876*	201	
1877*	236	
1878*	280	

Year	Number of Agrarian Crimes Specially Reported by the Police	Remarks of the Official Statistician
1879*	870	
"The last year when there was a similar increase of crime was 1862, In the report for 1863 the observation is made that the change from decrease to increase was owing to the amount of distress in these two years. The special measures which became necessary to relieve distress (in 1879) indicated that the pressure was greater than in 1862, and more nearly approached, in some districts, the effect of the famine of 1847. These figures indicate the effect of the pressure of distress in producing crime."—Report for 1869 * Years of distress marked thus (*)		

English and Irish murders contrasted

The following table shows the murders in Ireland since 1865 contrasted with the murders, committed in an equal proportion of the population in England, according to the coroners' returns.

Year	Number of Murders in Ireland		Total	Number of Murders in an equal proportion of the population of England and Wales
	Persons under 1 year old	Persons over 1 year old		
1865	39	31	70	72
1866	40	24	64	106
1867	45	30	75	115
1868	35	23	58	103
1869	43	33	76	67
1870	37	40	77	64
1871	21	32	53	54
1872	18	28	46	54
1873	17	23	40	60
1874	26	32	58	51
1875	Return not available			
1876	11	19	30	46
1877	20	23	43	46
1878 & 1879	Return not available			

About two months after the foundation of the Land League, its President, Mr. Parnell, M.P., himself a landlord, undertook, with Mr. Dillon, a mission to America (December 1879) to invite the co-operation of the people of that country in the new movement, and to seek for charity to relieve the deep distress which existed. His visit was a great success. His reception on arrival was enthusiastic. He was invited by Congress to address the House in session at Washington, upon the condition of Ireland. The same compliment was paid him by the State Legislatures in all the States he visited, and city freedoms were showered upon him everywhere. Some £70,000 was forwarded to the Land League in Dublin through Mr. Parnell's exertions, when after a three months' tour through the States and Canada his mission was cut short by the dissolution of Parliament.

On his return to Ireland in March, 1880, supporters of the principles of the Land League were elected in the chief Irish constituencies, the principal landlords and landlords' advocates were defeated, and Mr. Parnell, at the first meeting of the newly-elected Members in Dublin in May, was chosen leader of the Irish party in Parliament. The House of Commons met soon afterwards, when the new Government announced no measure to deal with the distress (then at its worst) or with the Land Question. Owing to the exertions of the Irish party, however, a Relief Act was at length passed, and the Compensation for Disturbance Bill was carried through the Lower House. Although this Bill merely extended, until 1881, a portion of the Ulster Custom to the distressed districts, it was rejected by the House of Lords. The chief function, indeed, now remaining to that assembly under the British Constitution seems to be the uncompromising rejection of useful Irish Bills. Ireland had up to this time remained in a state of such profound peace, in spite of the distress which prevailed, that the Government declined to renew, as being unnecessary, the Coercion Acts which expired in June, 1880, and which had been in force for seven or eight years previously.

A promise had been given that a comprehensive measure dealing with the land question would be introduced in 1881, and to obtain evidence to enable them to legislate upon it in a satisfactory manner, the Ministry announced the appointment of a Royal Commission. When, however, it was found that they refused to place a single representative of the tenants on this Commission, which was to shape coming legislation, and that in fact every one of its five members was a landlord, the discontent created by the action of the Lords in rejecting the Disturbance Bill was further intensified. The Government were warned of the impression that would get abroad in Ireland respecting their bona fides of intention really to grapple with the question, and Mr. Justin M'Carthy proposed a motion of dissatisfaction in the House of Commons on the subject ; but it was defeated, and no heed, as usual, was paid to the representations of Irish Members. The inevitable consequences resulted. A fierce agitation was fanned into flame, and the people of Ireland, who twenty, ten, five, two years ago would have been content with a far different settlement of the question, have proclaimed from a thousand platforms their determination to rest satisfied with nothing less than the final abolition of that system of landlordism, which for hundreds of years has done no good thing, and which has worked untold misery, and brought countless evils upon the Irish Nation.

END .

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