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IRISH PEASANT PROPRIETORS

FACTS AND MISREPRESENTATIONS

A REPLY

TO THE

STATEMENTS OF MR TUKE

BY

W. J. SINCLAIR

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—LORD SHERBROOKE, *Nineteenth Century*, *Nov.* 1880.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
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THE travels of a tourist, however gifted, and the theories he deduces from his observations on men and things, are rarely of much national importance; but when they have been quoted with high approval in both Houses of Parliament by members of a Ministry which has announced the intention of dealing next session with the very important subject to which these observations and theories refer, they rise at once into that class of shadows which coming events cast before them, and call for inquiry into the capacity of the tourist for extracting accurate information from the materials at his command, his impartiality in making use of them, and the general correctness of the conclusions he has drawn from his facts. We need hardly say that we allude to the lately published pamphlet of Mr Tuke, "Irish Distress and its Remedies," and his article in the 'Nineteenth Century' for August, entitled, "Peasant Proprietors at Home."

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Mr Tuke, who had made a tour in Ireland during the famine of 1847, would, from his allusions to Mr W. E. Forster, the Irish Secretary, appear almost to have been sent out like a Noachian dove from the much-tossed Ministerial ark, to try if, in his flittings over the troubled waters of Ireland, he could pick up a chance spray of olive, to be turned hereafter by Mr Gladstone's conjurings into another "messenger of peace," as he rather infelicitously designated his Land Act of 1870.

The branch which Mr Tuke brought back to the Downing Street window was "peasant proprietorship," and the tree on which it grew, the action of the Church Temporalities Commission in creating a "peasant proprietary," which he affirms to have been an unqualified success,—though in support of his assertion his pamphlet only brings forward the cases of *three* glebe tenants out of many hundreds in the county of Donegal. He does also, in the 'Nineteenth Century,' quote a few cases in the county of Tyrone, of which, indeed, the success does not seem particularly brilliant. We do not believe that peasant proprietorship, in any shape or form, would be a cure for the ills of Ireland, either by warding off the periodical famines by which the proletarian districts of Connaught and Donegal have been periodically visited from time immemorial, or by putting an end to the agrarian outrages by which it is habitually afflicted. On the contrary, we have no doubt that both maladies would be intensified,—the one by more minute sub-

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division of the holdings, already too small for comfortable subsistence; the other by substituting a much more oppressive race of landlords than those at present in being, just as the Landed Estates Court has done already, and as has been the case in Belgium, where, as Mr de Molinari in his recent remarkable letters has shown, peasant proprietors are daily becoming fewer, and land is rented by the wretched tenants at a rate fully double that of Ireland. Still less were we inclined to believe, before seeing Mr Tuke's pamphlet, that the Church Temporalities Commission had been successful in creating a beneficial ownership of the soil. As, however, this alleged success is not only the *raison d'être* of his writings, which have been so belauded by men in high positions, but has also been the great stalking-horse of the advocates of peasant proprietary before Mr Shaw Lefevre's Committee, on whose report the projected Land Law of the present Ministry is said to be based, we thought it well to make some inquiries as to the accuracy of his statements and the correctness of his inferences, and found, as we confess we expected, that in many cases his statements are at variance with facts, and in others so coloured by *suppressio veri* as to have the appearance of *suggestio falsi;* whilst the inferences he draws are often not consistent even with the garbled narratives of his informants, — in short, that a more unreliable guide than Mr Tuke could hardly have been selected by Ministers willing to be deceived, as we shall proceed to show.

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Two attempts to create peasant proprietors by legislative measures have already been made by Mr Gladstone's party—one by the Bright clauses of the Land Act, the other by that part of the Disestablishment Act which offered to occupying tenants of the glebe lands the right of pre-empting the fee-simple of their farms. The first is an acknowledged failure. The persons who took advantage of it were, as a rule, people who required no legislative aid. To grease the wheels of this measure, so as to make it at all workable, was the avowed object of Mr Shaw Lefevre's Committee—and is that of the Land Commission appointed by the present Government. To justify their action, it is desirable to point to some sort of success. This, Mr Shaw Lefevre and Mr Tuke assert, has been achieved by the Disestablishment Act, as worked by the Church Temporalities Commission; and to glorify it, Mr Tuke's article in the 'Nineteenth Century' for August was expressly written as a suite of his "Tour in Donegal." We say his "Tour in Donegal," as he does not appear to have found any model peasant proprietor in Connaught; and also, because Donegal has presented the most extensive field in Ireland for the working of the Church Temporalities Act, along with, as we assert in opposition to Mr Tuke, the most decided proofs of its failure. And although it may be necessary to show the general unreliability of Mr Tuke's statements, and the bias which he apparently has against landed proprietors and Boards of Guardians in general, we shall, as far as possible, confine ourselves to this par-

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ticular locality and subject. Mr Tuke, on the whole, does not seem very fortunate in his discoveries, as he only quotes three instances of successful peasant proprietary in this great county, which contains within its boundaries about fifty parishes, most of which had glebe tenants, to whom was afforded the opportunity of being lords of the soil if they thought proper. He does certainly give a few instances in Tyrone. Tyrone, however, is, as every one knows, one of the most prosperous counties in Ireland. Although without manufactures, it maintains itself in peace and comfort, and makes no outcry for legislative interference. It neither murders its landlords nor holds out the hand of mendicancy, so that it may be dismissed with the mere statement that the few instances quoted by Mr Tuke present no feature by which the peasant proprietor can be distinguished from the adjacent tenant-farmer; and we shall return to Donegal, a county particularly remarkable as showing the highest degree of agricultural prosperity in its eastern districts, whilst the western portions present, under the same land laws and customs, scheduled unions inhabited by proletarian paupers. By customs, we mean that the Ulster tenant-right is fully prevalent in both; and as its extension to all Ireland has been advocated by some, and in a modified form was proposed by the Irish Attorney-General on the part of the Government during the debates on the Disturbance Bill, we wish to point out how little dependence can be placed on the mere passing of a law as a

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remedy for distress, and the immemorial vanity of *leges sine moribus.* In these western districts Mr Tuke found his three model peasant proprietors, and thus introduces them to his readers in the 'Nineteenth Century:' "The glebe lands first visited were in the county of Donegal, a few miles from Dunfanaghy. They consisted of three farms—the sizes, purchase-money, and other particulars, being as under:—

	Former rent.	Poor-law valuation.	Purchase.	Paid.	To pay.
H. M'Fadden, . . .	£7 1 0	£5 5 0	£127	£37	£89
John Sweeny, . . .	5 14 0	5 5 0	102	28	74
Andrew Gallagher, .	5 0 0	5 0 0	102	28	74"

He describes these peasant proprietors as marvellously superior to their neighbours in every respect, and as making rapid improvement. We also visited these glebe lands, which are those formerly attached to the rectory of Mairagh or Myragh. We found that, instead of consisting of three small farms, as stated by Mr Tuke, they covered 2500 acres, and were occupied by fifty-nine tenants. Of these, four, not three, had purchased their farms. The fourth is ignored by Mr Tuke—having been, we presume, not thought presentable by his guide. The remaining fifty-five occupiers became tenants to a Mr Doherty, who purchased the "residue." We made inquiry as to the condition of the "proprietors," and found in their general condition and that of their farms no feature of prosperity beyond that of the surrounding

tenants, and that they had all been recipients of relief under the Seed Act in the course of the present season. We heard that some of them had otherwise been "relieved;" but this we had no opportunity of verifying. We found, too, that Andrew Gallagher, the third on the list, who is reported by Mr Tuke as "doing as well as the others," had sold his parliamentary birthright to Mr Doherty—the purchaser of the residue—and re-entered the ranks of the tenantry, from which he had been for a short time elevated. We heard, also, that it was not unlikely his example would be followed by at least two of the remaining three. On the whole, we cannot think that a system which has only benefited three occupiers out of a possible fifty-nine, was a discovery worthy of all Mr Forster's laudation, even supposing that these three had received all the advantages which Mr Tuke ascribes to them. We have shown that one of them, Andrew Gallagher, has been obliged to sell his farm. This man is now in a decidedly worse position, morally and materially, than he was before he purchased it; and we maintain that there is not a property of similar extent in the county where as large a proportion of the rent-paying tenants would not be found in quite as good circumstances and undergoing less pressure than the three exceptional men of Myragh, who have been set before the public by Mr Tuke as if they were the sole occupants of the glebe lands to whom the right of pre-emption had been offered.

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If, however, Mr Tuke had confined himself to the glorification of the few specimens of peasant proprietors he has discovered amongst the many hundred glebe tenants to be found in Donegal who have rejected the proffered boon, this article would probably not have been written; but as he alludes in both his Donegal Tour and his 'Nineteenth Century' article to the circumstances of the glebe tenants of one of the most typical of the proletarian parishes of Donegal, in words which unfortunately do not represent facts, and as the actual circumstances of this case are most strikingly illustrative both of Mr Tuke's utter unreliability as a source of information, and of the difficulties and dangers which have beset the pet scheme of Messrs Bright, Shaw Lefevre, and Tuke, we shall quote his 'Nineteenth Century' paragraph at length, and append the results of our own investigations made upon the spot, or drawn from official documents.

Mr Tuke says of this parish: "It may be well very briefly to notice another instance where glebe lands were sold which has led to some newspaper controversy, and has *unjustly* been quoted as showing that the attempt to form a peasant proprietorship has failed. These were situated about thirty miles south of the above [the prosperous three], not far from Dunglow, in Donegal. They were formerly held by twelve very small tenants, whose total rental was about £45—varying from 20s. to £6—and one of £11. With two exceptions, the purchase-money

was under £100, varying from £19 to £85, and the higher ones were £129 and £209, and averaged about nineteen years' purchase. The tenants, it appears, were too poor to find the money, and applied to some one in the neighbourhood, who stated that he could borrow the money for them at 4 per cent; and they signed agreements with the Commissioners to purchase the land, he finding the money. Afterwards he told them it must be 10 per cent, not 4 per cent; and he brought them a deed to sign, the contents of which they were quite ignorant of, making over to him their rights of pre-emption, which the Commissioners allowed; and he is now the absolute owner—leaving the so-called purchasers tenants as before, but under contract to pay the money-lender 10 per cent, equal to double their old rental. Representations made to the Commissioners were too late to allow of their interfering. The rents were not paid last year, and certainly none can be paid this." He might more accurately have written that the unlucky "local usurer" had never received any rents at all, and apparently never will.

Such, however, is the version given of the Maghery glebe tenancies. But Mr Tuke is not the only person who has brought them before the public. Mr Shaw Lefevre, whom he elsewhere quotes with much admiration, thought proper, in the newspaper controversy above mentioned, to give a different one.

In a letter to the 'Times,' written January 26th, he stated that "the glebe lands of Templecrone were

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held by thirty-nine tenants, of whom five paid the entire purchase-money, and the rest fell into the hands of the local usurer;" and winds up his story by saying that these unlucky peasants "are not, and never will be, *owners*, and have not received the aid towards becoming so contemplated by the Church Act, and are in a worse position than they were before." His last clause is true, whatever the rest may be. The wretched people have, by the action of the Church Act, been put in a much worse position than they were; and the good intentions of its promoters have, in their estimation, largely added to the proverbial paving-stones.

We shall now proceed to show how completely Mr Tuke and Mr Lefevre have misrepresented the case —our authority being Mr Godley, secretary to the Church Temporalities Commissioners. In a letter dated January 28, 1880, which also appeared in the 'Times,' he says: "In the case of Templecrone, there were fifty glebe tenants in the parish. Out of these, forty-one purchased their holdings for cash, and the Commissioners have therefore no more concern with them. In twenty-eight cases out of the forty-one,[1] the conveyances were, by the purchasers' instructions, not made to themselves, but to another person, who may be presumed to have advanced the purchase-money. *Nine* new proprietors only, out of fifty,

[1] These twenty-eight tenants paid rent to the Commissioners from 6s. a-year to £2, 8s. 8d., which was the highest sum—see Mr Tuke, p. 10.

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remain on the Commissioners' books as still liable for part of the purchase-money of their farms. The total half-yearly interest secured by the nine mortgages executed by these *proprietors* is £9, 12s. 6d."

As it would be hard to find greater discrepancies than exist between these three statements, we made inquiry in the locality, and of course found that Mr Godley's was quite accurate *as far as it goes.* The tenants were fifty. Of these, twenty-eight got into the clutches of the "local usurer." They are included in the number of Mr Godley's forty-one "purchasers for cash," and very bitterly complain of the way in which the Commissioners allowed them to be misled. Five of the remaining thirteen were in sufficiently good circumstances to pay cash for their holdings; nine, as we were informed, raised the purchase-money by selling part of their stock and borrowing at high rates of interest, so that they have ever since been in straitened circumstances, and were recipients of charitable relief during the past winter. Mr Tuke might therefore have found a better illustration of successful peasant proprietary here than at Mairagh—five being actually in fair circumstances. Of these, our informant, Frank Devenny, was one. A better specimen of his class could scarcely be found, so that it is a great pity Mr Tuke did not "interview" him. He would, moreover, as we did, have learned that Devenny did not consider his condition in the least improved,—that he regretted he had made the purchase, and could have made a better use of the money (£70) which

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he paid for his farm. His father, he said, had paid £315, instead of £209, as stated by Mr Tuke.[1]

Our next inquiry was from one of the nine "mortgagers" who are still in debt to the Commissioners. On being asked if any of them had paid their instalments during the past year, he replied "that they had not, that some had never paid, and that he did not think any of them would ever pay again." To the remark that "non-payment would entail foreclosure of the mortgages and sale of the tenements by the Commissioners, his pithy rejoinder was, "*Where will they find a man to buy?*" very clearly showing that he felt himself master of the situation. On pressing our inquiries, we found that *not an individual out of the nine had as yet paid a single instalment to the Church Temporalities Commissioners.*

Mr Godley, we suppose, did not feel called upon to mention this item of intelligence, but it would have been more candid to have added it to the others contained in his letter; and it will now be seen, from the above analysis of the condition of the Templecrone peasants, that this unlucky glebe land presents within its limited area the active operation of almost every one of the objections which have been made to the plans proposed by Mr Bright, Mr Shaw Lefevre, and their allies, for the transfer of Irish estates from the possession of the present landlords to that of the occupying tenants. It is true that a certain very

[1] The rents of the twenty-eight tenants of the "local usurer" from 6s. per annum to £2, 8s. 8d—see Mr Tuke's statement, p. 10.

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small number of occupiers, who have by the accumulation of wealth as tenants proved that actual circumstances are no bar to the prosperity of their class, were able to purchase the fee of their holdings without inconvenience; but a larger number have either trenched on the capital required for the cultivation of their farms, or hung the everlasting millstone of debt around their necks. In many instances, indeed, they have done both. A third class, having sold its legislative birthright to the "local usurer," presents the worst features of rack-rented pauperism under a petty landlord, driven by his extortions into a well-organised combination to pay no rent at all; whilst the last batch, whose debts are due to the State, as represented by the Church Temporalities Commissioners, have proved how completely official agency has failed to palliate distress, or to cope with a similar combination to refuse payment of the instalments due on the purchase-money of the lands on which it still has a lien. Outwardly, there is no sign by which the four classes can be distinguished from the peasantry of the adjoining estate. Inwardly, the action of the Commissioners has been to introduce agrarian conspiracy in its first stage into a district where it was hitherto unknown.

After comparing the actual circumstances of the Templecrone case with the statements of Mr Tuke and Mr Shaw Lefevre, we would not be surprised at any attempt made by the thick-and-thin advocates of peasant proprietary to ignore or distort a state of

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affairs which so strongly tells against their cherished theories; but it does seem strange to find Professor Baldwin, a witness brought forward by Mr Shaw Lefevre before his Committee on the Bright clauses of the Land Act, quoting this very case as a success under adverse circumstances. Giving evidence in 1878, the Professor thus speaks of Mr Swiney, the "local usurer" of Mr Shaw Lefevre, and his transaction: "The tenants were very small farmers, and being very much afraid of a land-jobber being the purchaser, they went to a very respectable young man in the town of Dunglow, who is an auctioneer, and keeps a hotel and a large shop there, and said to him,—'You buy the estate in trust for us, giving us power to redeem at any time we think fit; and as long as you are out of your money we will give you 10 per cent for it.' This was actually done." The Professor goes on to add that the tenants are paying their rents and making the most *remarkable improvements* he ever saw, which he attributes partly to the 10 per cent, double their former rent, being "an additional stimulus put on in order to get rid of it."[1] It is true that Professor Baldwin does not actually name the estate of Templecrone glebe lands as the scene of Mr Swiney's financial operations; but after diligent inquiry, we have been unable to find any other corresponding transaction; and as it agrees in the main with the features of the Templecrone case as far as Swiney

[1] Professor Baldwin has since informed us that he did mean Templecrone.

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was concerned, we have no doubt of its identity, and are led to dwell upon it as another specimen of the sort of evidence on which the new Land Act, inspired by Mr Shaw Lefevre's Committee, is to be grounded. We regret to say, too, that Mr Shaw Lefevre's own letter was, to a certain extent, written contrary to "light and knowledge," as we were informed that he had inquired into the case, and had received information pretty nearly corresponding with that which we have given, which he could easily have verified by referring to the Church Temporalities Commissioners, and so have spared himself the humiliation of being contradicted by Mr Godley.

But it is now time to return to Mr Tuke, who might, if he had taken a very small amount of trouble and made some further investigation, have satisfied himself of the utter failure of the Church Temporalities Act in creating peasant proprietors in every parish he passed through in the county of Donegal—as, for a friendly witness like him, there would have been no difficulty in obtaining the official statistics denied to ordinary mortals by the Church Temporalities Commission. To us, of course, they were a sealed book; but we have been able to obtain returns of the actual comparative numbers of purchasing and non-purchasing tenants in several parishes which are mentioned by Mr Tuke, as well as of two or three others, which are as follows:—

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Parishes.	No. of Tenants.	Purchasers.
Inver, ...	45	4
Killybegs, ...	80	1
Kilcar, ...	85	6
Killymard, ...	33	5
Mairagh or Raymunterdony, . .	59	4
	302	20

But of these twenty, three in Killymard, and one in Mairagh, having sold their farms to the purchasers of the "residue," have re-entered the ranks of tenant-farmers. Briefly, *about 7 per cent purchased, and in five years 20 per cent of these ceased to be proprietors.* Of these returns, the first two are from the papers supplied to intending purchasers by the Church Temporalities Commission; the others from the union rate-books. In Inver, three out of the four purchasing tenants were public-house keepers; the fourth, a gentleman's butler. In Kilcar, the 79 non-purchasing tenants sold their right of pre-emption to two different individuals, who, of course, must look for a return on their outlay to increased rent. In Killymard, the purchaser of the "residue" informed us that he bought up the interest of three of the purchasing tenants for less money than they had paid for it; and the general result has been, as far as we can find out, that a few men, who, by their industry or their adventitious resources as publicans or shopkeepers, had raised themselves above the ordinary level, have become proprietors of their holdings; whilst the remainder have become

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the tenants of small landlords, who, as the experience of the Encumbered Estates Court sales have demonstrated, are about the worst class into whose hands they could have fallen. This, in fact, is the great difficulty in dealing with the land question on any terms short of total confiscation of the landlords' rights. What is to be done with the "residue"? Judge Flanagan, in his evidence before Mr Shaw Lefevre's Committee, states this very clearly as the reason why the Bright clauses of the Land Act have failed: "Owners will not sell their property to tenants; they will not run the risk of having *residues* left on their hands unsold;" and therefore, unless the solvent tenants pay such a price for their holdings more than they are worth as will recoup the vendor for this chance, sales will not be made. Towards remedying this defect, Mr Shaw Lefevre asked if it could not be made a legislative condition of sales under the Encumbered Estates Court that the owners should have no choice in the matter?—to which the Judge replied: "They may take away a man's entire property if they think fit,"—an answer which showed pretty clearly the opinion of as acute a legal mind as in Ireland, of the drift of Mr Shaw Lefevre and his friends, whose ends Mr Tuke's writings are intended to promote.

To do so more fully, it is of course desirable that the condition of Ireland should be made as black as possible—that landlords and Boards of Guardians should be represented as unfaithful to their duties, and the actual means of subsistence of the peasantry

looked at through the wrong end of the glass. We are unwilling to suppose that Mr Tuke voluntarily stated what was untrue; but his evident bias against the bodies above named, and his utter ignorance of the matters about which he undertook to write, made him the ready recipient of any tales which were told him, of which we shall proceed to give a few instances.

At Gweedore he visited the townland of Meenacladdy under the guidance of the Roman Catholic clergyman of the parish. He describes it as "stretching over a wide extent of wet bogland"—in all, 697 acres. On this, he tells us that in former years—down to 1877—the 34 tenants *usually grazed* 248 *head of cattle and horses, along with* 920 *sheep*,—now reduced to 71 head of cattle and 127 sheep. Nothing, he says, "could show more strongly the loss sustained, and the extreme poverty of the district, than the comparison of the foregoing figures."[1] It would certainly do so if they could be depended on; but the most moderate acquaintance with the subject would have informed him that either the sheep or the cattle represented as having *usually grazed* in *former years* would have been much more than the land could possibly have supported. The numbers must have been arrived at by some such mysterious process of arithmetic as was used by Mr Gladstone when, in his advocacy of the Disturbance Bill, he totted up the 15,000 victims of eviction; or by Mr Forster when, on the same occasion, he enumerated the many thousands of policemen

[1] The present stock being, as he says, 71 head of cattle and 127 sheep.

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employed in their manufacture. Mr Tuke's special instance of distress in this district does certainly seem rather strange. He finds one unfortunate man who has *four cows and a pony* in his drawing-room. We know enough of the habits of the country to be certain that the possessor of four cows had also at least as many head of young cattle—probably twice as many; but the poor man is wept over by Mr Tuke, because he feared "he would be obliged to sell some of his cattle to purchase food." We are hard-hearted enough to think that Mr Tuke wasted his commiseration; and probably the Board of Guardians thought so too.

Mr Tuke tells us that at Glenties there is a large amount of stocking and glove knitting, and a large warehouse where the people obtain the wool they knit, and "generally receive at the rate of one shilling per dozen pairs for socks," and "three shillings per dozen pairs for gloves." Mr Tuke did not take the trouble of verifying this statement at the factory. We found that the payment for socks varies from one and fourpence-halfpenny to seven shillings per dozen pairs,—the lowest rate being about 40 per cent over Mr Tuke's averages. Glove-knitters are paid from three shillings to eight: at the lowest rate, we were informed by several of the knitters themselves that they could earn sixpence per day. Messrs M'Devitt, to whom the country owes the introduction of this trade, informed me that the best knitters of fancy gloves could earn a shilling, or even more. We do not, therefore, wonder, when Mr Tuke says he saw

crowds of women, none of whom appeared to be in want, waiting for their supplies of yarn; and when we say that several firms are engaged in this trade, and that work was obtainable by every person who applied for it, we think that not only the distress of this district has been enormously exaggerated, but that the wages paid for a kind of work which is carried on as the worker goes to market, herds her cows, or trots to gossip with her neighbours, and requires not even light, can compare very favourably with those received by large classes of English seamstresses.

Mr Tuke's knowledge of agriculture does not appear very extensive. Undervaluing, as he habitually does, the efforts of every one but priests and relief committees, he says "the Glenties union is distributing potatoes for seed, but that the supply is limited to 4 cwt. for each applicant, which is only *enough for one rood of ground.*" If he inquires of some of his English neighbours, he will find that 4 cwt. of Champion potatoes are seed for half an acre, so that he diminishes by fifty per cent the relief afforded; and if he had in July traversed the country of which he gives such a deplorable account in February, he would have seen that, in spite of all he heard of the total want of seed, a larger amount of ground than usual was under both potatoes and oats—proving very clearly how cleverly the stores of seed had been concealed from prying eyes. Indeed he might have found in the local market notes, at the very time of his visit, and throughout the entire winter, until the

Boards of Guardians came into the market, that potatoes of good quality were selling in Donegal and Killybegs for 3s. 6d. per cwt.

Mr Tuke, speaking of the Glenties union, tells how the boys and girls habitually go forth to the richer parts of Ulster as agricultural servants, and laments that this source of revenue was cut off. Most certainly, as far as the previous summer was concerned, he was in error. The hirings at May were as numerous as usual. An instance within our own knowledge will help to explain how they might not have been so throughout the winter. A boy of twelve years of age was hired in November for three months. When his "quarter" was out in February, his master wished to re-engage him; and the boy would gladly have remained, but his father wrote that unless he got a considerable advance of wages, he must come home, "as we are getting seven pounds of meal a-skull every week, and the more there is of us, the more we will get—and maybe some clothing too." That this was no solitary instance, we have every reason to believe, as the complaint was general that this class of servants were particularly scarce during the past winter—which was not to be wondered at, as the girls naturally preferred the pound of meal per "skull," which secured existence, added to the sixpence a-day they could earn by knitting at home, to the drudgery of farm-service; and the boys, like true Irishmen, were content with short rations, joined to the *far niente* they were enabled to enjoy.

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Mr Tuke, in his strictures on the action of Boards of Guardians, mentions several cases in which, he says, they ought to have administered outdoor relief. One is that of a woman partially paralysed, whom he found "in a miserable room, quite unfit for human habitation, *but half full of good potatoes*," where she had to lie from "month's end to month's end, dependent upon others." Clearly this was a case in which the Guardians had no business to interfere. Her proper place, if relief was needed, was in the poor-house infirmary, to which she would have been at once forwarded, on application being made to the "relieving officer," and where she would have had the food and attendance suitable to her case.

Another of his illustrative tales is that of two poor lunatic women, mother and daughter, in the same locality, who, by the priest's account, were in a *most fearful state of destitution*, having pulled down their house and roof, under the idea that it was bewitched, and inhabited a mere heap of stones without a roof. "Where were the poor-law administrators?" asks Mr Tuke. The story of these poor women is sad enough, but does not justify Mr Tuke in his attack on the administrators of the poor-law. The mother is the widow of a policeman, whom she married soon after his former wife had been murdered. The murderer, as usual in Ireland, was undiscovered. Her eldest child was a son; after her second confinement, when the daughter was born, she became insane, her hallucination being that there was blood under every

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stone in the house, which she has pulled down in her efforts to discover it. Her daughter is affected by a similar craze. The son, a young man of most excellent character, is, as Mr Tuke says, in the metropolitan police, and gives all he can for their support through relatives in the neighbourhood. The women neither beg nor steal; they are not vagrants, and commit no assaults: and the "poor-law administrators" of the district, to whom we mentioned Mr Tuke's strictures, would be much obliged to that gentleman if he would point out under what section of the Poor Law Act they have any power to interfere with them.

But of all Mr Tuke's "specimens," as he calls them, the most absurd is probably that of Mr Patrick Burns, which, we are informed, the Duke of Argyll read out to the House of Lords with tears in his eyes. This worthy was found by Mr Tuke "sitting at a loom without woof or warp," at which he was "mechanically moving back and forwards," in a sort of mental doldrum, brought on by his destitute condition, which seems to have affected his other faculties, as, although Mr Tuke says "he pays six pounds a-year," he has, we are immediately after told, *not paid any rent at all for three years.* We would say that the landlord of Mr Burns is quite as much to be pitied as that gentleman himself. It is quite clear, at any rate, that it was no recent failure of crops which caused his distress. And as the trade of a weaver, in a district where the people are generally clad in homespun, is a very good one, we fear that sheer idleness was the

cause of Mr Burns's destitution; and we have no hesitation in saying that a more completely theatrical "get up" than that of the warpless weaver, has not been presented to an intelligent tourist since the Empress Catherine's eyes were regaled with pasteboard villages. Mr Tuke says he was told that tenant-right was unsaleable. He probably received this information; but we have cases before us from the immediate neighbourhood, in which thirty years' purchase was paid much about the time he speaks of; and recently, at Carrick, £200 were given for a farm of exactly the rental of that of Mr Burns—viz., £6 a-year.

Misery undoubtedly there was, and often is and will be, in such a country, in spite of any legislation; but the case of Mr Patrick Burns is about the last that should be brought forward as calling for any *deus ex machinâ* to interfere; and we suspect that Mr Tuke and many other people would have different views on the subject of peasant proprietary if they were a little more conversant with the actual condition of other countries, which they are constantly quoting,—as, for instance, Flanders, where, according to the latest edition of Mr de Laveleye's book (admittedly the best authority extant), peasant proprietary has almost ceased to exist, and its place has been taken by what he justly calls the worst possible of social conditions, "petty tenancies under petty landowners"—conditions which modern legislation, by the Encumbered Estates and Church Disestablishment Acts, have rapidly increased in Ireland; or France, where a

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late statistical writer (Bochin) tells that, out of 9,000,000 proprietors of the soil, "3,000,000 are in a normal condition bordering on destitution, and are in fact often in receipt of charitable relief;"—or if they knew the habitual condition of the wretched peasant dwellers in Silesia; or the reapers who come down from the Bavarian mountains to cut the Rhenish harvests, just as the Donegal and Mayo men do those of England and Scotland. In all these cases subdivision has gone on unchecked, as it would infallibly do in Ireland until its condition would be worse than it is at present.

If Mr Tuke had called at the Donegal poorhouse when he passed by, he would have found that not only did the Guardians supply seed to a great many occupiers of land whose needs they thought very small, but they actually had on hand at the end of the season many tons of oats for which there were no applicants. At Carrick, he dismisses the efforts of the Messrs Musgrave, the principal landed proprietors, in this curt fashion: "Mr Musgrave, a Belfast merchant who purchased seed, and owns most of this property, is *giving some work making roads*." One would hardly suppose from this that Messrs Musgrave were making many miles of road; had borrowed several thousand pounds from the Board of Works, which were being expended when Mr Tuke was in the country (employing, as we were told, all comers); and had imported over 100 tons of Champion potatoes for seed for their tenants;—but such was the case.

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Nor does he make the smallest mention of other proprietors who have done likewise. At Ardara, he says, "about £600 is likely to be expended on roads in two baronies." The two baronies referred to are Banagh and Boylagh. In a large part of Banagh no public works were needed. Moreover, the sum of £2244 was presented by the Baronial Sessions, and sanctioned by the Government; in Boylagh, £5000, and the money has actually been expended. In Banagh, the landed proprietors, who are charged with apathy, have for the most part made their properties liable for the payment of sevenpence in the pound (besides taking a large amount of shares), to promote a railway from which they can expect no pecuniary return, save through the benefits which they consider will accrue to their tenants. To this railway, we may add, the Government have steadily refused any aid, save on terms so onerous that it is impossible to comply with them. Mr Tuke enlarges on the decrease of cattle and sheep in Donegal, and its consequent present misery. There has certainly been a loss of cattle to the amount of 4 per cent, according to the agricultural statistics published by the Government; but this is as nearly as possible the general percentage of decrease over all Ireland: and of sheep the same returns make the decrease in Donegal 10 per cent, which is, within a fraction, the ratio over all Ulster, whilst over Ireland it is 12. These particular statistics do not certainly refer directly to the special object of this review, which was to show how completely the attempt

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to create an appreciable peasant proprietary by the action of the Church Temporalities Act had failed, and how poor and evanescent were the results where a few tenants had taken advantage of its provisions. They are quoted merely to throw light on the enormous exaggerations to which the public and the Legislature are invited to give credit, and as a supplement to the proofs we have given of the general unreliability of the testimony on which Mr Forster and the Duke of Argyll pin their faith, and, as far as we can learn, intend to base future legislation.

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