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MR. GLADSTONE
AND
THE THREE F'S.

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THE year 1870 was an important epoch in the history of the Land Question. In that year a series of Essays on the Systems of Land Tenure which prevailed in various Countries was published under the sanction of the Cobden Club. In the same year the Act to amend the Law relating to the Occupation and Ownership of Land in Ireland was passed by Mr. Gladstone. The Essays reflected the conclusions on the Land Question at which speculative thinkers had arrived, in accordance with the principles of Cobden. The Act embodied the changes which the Practical Statesman considered essential to the development of Liberal Principles in the Government of Ireland. As was natural, there were divergences of opinion according as people regarded the practical or the speculative aspects of the question. But, in spite of such divergences, there was one point on which the Practical Statesman and the

Scientific Economist were entirely at one—and that was the deliberate and decisive repudiation of the scheme of Land Tenure, which, judging from the signs of the times, is likely to be obtruded on Parliament in the year 1881.

In the year 1870 every writer for the Cobden Club who touched upon the Irish Question rejected the scheme of the Three F's, as it is now popularly called—the scheme by which it is proposed to confer Fixity of Tenure, at a Fair Rent, with the right of Free Sale, upon the Irish Tenant. The writer of the Essay on *The Tenure of Land in Ireland*, the Right Honorable Mountifort Longfield, did not hesitate to describe it as 'a mere violent and wrongful transfer of property' from the Landlord to the Tenant (p. 45, Ed. 1876); he wrote of it as a transfer of property, which, while it would convert the Tenant into a Landlord, would eventually leave the cultivator of the land without the capital necessary for its cultivation (p. 46); he stigmatised it, in fine, as at once 'a confiscation of the Landlord's estate,' an 'obstacle to Agricultural Improvement,' and an 'impediment to Free Trade in Land' (p. 49). The writer of the Essay on *The Agrarian Legislation of Prussia* was not less emphatic in the expression of his views. He insisted on 'the impossibility of directly applying that legislation to the present state of Ireland' (p. 282); he showed that Fixity of Tenure would lead to 'the stereotyping of the system of double ownership,' or to 'the dispossession *en bloc* of the present proprietors' (p. 282); and he warned the

reader that the dispossession of the present proprietors would mean 'the withdrawal from the soil of the class having the largest capital and enjoying the largest credit,' as well as 'the reproduction, in another shape, of the present evil of a class monopoly in the ownership of land' (p. 283).

Nor did Mr. Gladstone himself, in the year 1870, entertain any opinions on the subject of the Three F's which were not in strict accordance with the views which were sanctioned by the Cobden Club. Indeed, the Statesman went beyond the Economists in the vigour of his expressions. 'Perpetuity of Tenure,' he said, in his Speech on the second reading of the Land Act, 'is a phrase that I flatter myself is a little going out of fashion; and if I have contributed anything towards disparaging it I am not sorry.' Still more emphatic was his reprobation of the doctrine which he described as 'sometimes called Fair Rents, and sometimes Valuation.' 'I have not heard,' he said—'I do not know, and I cannot conceive, what is to be said for the prospective power to reduce excessive Rents.' He denounced the device as 'a plan more calculated than anything else for throwing into confusion the whole Economical arrangements of the country.' He denounced it as a plan more calculated than anything else 'for driving out of the field all solvent and honest men, who might desire to carry out the honourable business of Agriculture.' In fine, he denounced it as a plan more calculated than anything else 'for carrying wide-spread demo-

ralization throughout the whole mass of the Irish People.'

By a strange political fatality, and one suggestive of serious reflections, Mr. Gladstone in the year 1881 finds himself asked to reconsider the proposal which in the year 1870 he denounced as one calculated to demoralise the Irish People, to drive all honest men from the pursuits of Agriculture, and to involve the whole Economical arrangements of the country in confusion. Of course no Statesman is bound for the sake of mere consistency to adhere to what he said ten years ago. He may have indulged in heedless rhetoric; he may have been carried away by the impetuosity of irresponsible opposition; he may have over-expressed himself in the hurry of debate. But in the year 1870 Mr. Gladstone was in Office; he was the Prime Minister of England; he was the Messenger of Peace to Ireland; he was pledged to the final settlement of a momentous question. It is true that in the unforeseen developments of human affairs a period of ten years may have modified all the relations of society and revolutionized the world. All the conditions of the problem may have changed; and with the change of circumstances, a Statesman may be coerced to change his mind. Even this is not all that may be reasonably said. A Party Leader may find it necessary to consolidate a great party by a particular party cry. A Practical Politician may conceive that he can solve a practical difficulty by a measure which he cannot in theory defend. So it

may be with Mr. Gladstone. It is possible that in the present posture of affairs he may feel himself compelled to adopt the very measure in favour of which ten years ago, as he himself said, he had not heard, and did not know, and could not conceive, what could possibly be said.

It is plain, then, that the question of the Three F's is reopened, and requires to be carefully reconsidered. We must ask ourselves not what was said against it in 1870, but what can possibly be said in its favour in 1881. If we take this mental attitude, it may possibly be said that the social and economic condition of Ireland is such, that a measure of Land Reform embodying the Three F's would, at all events, remove the more obvious causes of Irish disaffection and distress. But take the forms of misery described by the various Correspondents of the English Press who, during the last four months, have written on the state of Ireland. It is evident that no alteration in the Land Laws would directly affect the condition of those who hold no Land. It is evident, for instance, that no alteration in the Land Laws would relieve the abject wretchedness which exists among the small tradesmen in the small country towns, with large families and little trade; or that which exists among 'the fisher folk' of Donegal, whose dependence is the sea; or that which exists among those 'who are merely day labourers,' and who, 'amid the general stagnation, have absolutely no employment.' As to the 444,729 Farm Labourers of Ireland, representing, as they

do, a population of some two million souls, it is evident that the Three F's would confer no perceptible benefit on them. On the contrary, that measure would convert them into the mere serfs of the 423,829 Tenant Farmers whom it would convert into the exclusive owners of the soil. Writers speak of the 'rare good luck' of the peasant who secures employment from 'a proprietor at once sufficiently solvent and public-spirited to undertake any enterprise for the improvement of the country' Writers complain that 'the curse of Absenteeism sits heavily on the West.' But what would be the position of the peasant when all the solvent and public-spirited proprietors had disappeared from Ireland? What would be the burden of the West if all the great proprietors, by reason of the Three F's, were converted into Absentees?

Take, then, the 423,829 Tenant Farmers themselves. It is notorious that the holdings throughout the West of Ireland, as a rule, are so miserably small, and the lands so miserably barren, that in many cases the occupiers could not subsist by farming, even if no rent were payable for their wretched plots of ground. Professor Baldwin makes the statement, and the Report of the Royal Commission authenticates its truth. It is clear that no mere alteration in the Land Laws would afford a remedy for misery such as this. Of what service would Fair Rent be to the cottier who could not support himself rent-free? Of what use would Free Sale be to the squatter who had nothing to sell

which any reasonable man would buy? What benefit, in fine, would Fixity of Tenure confer upon a tenant whose salvation requires him to abandon the patch of barren rock, or unproductive bog, which he paradoxically calls his farm?

Well, then, let us take the 140,000 or 150,000 Tenant Farmers who hold land enough to live by, without working as labourers for others. The misery which is paraded to the world is unshared by these. For the most part they are substantial and comfortable men. They live well; they save money; they make provision for their children. They cannot be capriciously evicted without receiving the amplest compensation; and they are entitled to the amplest compensation for every improvement which may have been made by them or theirs. In spite of their alleged grievances and wrongs, they are the principal Depositors with the Banks; and, even in the *annus mirabilis*, 1880, the sums deposited in the various Banks amounted to £29,350,000. In the words of Mr. Gladstone, they are animated by 'a general sense of comfort and satisfaction.' That cases of individual hardship will occur is not to be denied. Unfortunately there are grasping and oppressive Landlords of the lower order. From the necessity of the case there will be occasional assertions of right which will be followed to the verge of wrong. Occasionally there will even be that bitterest of wrongs—the legalized abuse of right. But these are evils which are not peculiar to the land. They are to be met with

in every relation of life. As there are oppressive landlords, so there are harsh masters, brutal husbands, and unnatural fathers. But this is not the rule; and the Lawgiver does not legislate for the exception. No system of law could enforce gratitude, or generosity, or the mutual kindness and mutual forbearance which are the glory of human nature, and without which society itself could not subsist. The operation of these beneficent principles must be left to higher influences than those of law. The attempt to bring them under legal sanctions would produce more evil than it would prevent, and would prevent more good than it would produce. So would it fare with any legislation which proposed to regulate the relations between Landlord and Tenant on a basis of impracticable perfection. Undoubtedly the existing race of Tenant Farmers would escape certain evils, and secure a certain good, by the confiscation of the Proprietor's estate. But even these equivocal advantages would be restricted to the present race of tenants. Converted into the owner of the fee, the triumphant tenant would exercise the right of sale; he would claim the privilege of letting; and, whether he let or sold, he would avail himself to the fullest extent of the principle of competition, in order to exact the last penny that could be exacted for purchase-money or for rent. What, then, would be the position of the tenant farmer of the future? It is plain he would be overwhelmed, in an aggravated form, with the evils complained of by the tenant farmer of the present.

The tenant complains of Insecurity of Tenure; but he systematically declines to take a lease. He complains of the unfairness of his Rent; but he clamorously demands the right to sell his interest. It is demonstrated by *Facts and Figures*, that even if we take the low standard of letting value which is indicated by the Government Valuation, probably some six-sevenths of the land in Ireland is let at rents which must be recognised as moderate, and fully one-half at rents which must be admitted to be low (p. 18). The farmer's tenure, it is said, is insecure. But insecurity is the common lot. It is the lot of the professional man as well as of the peasant. It is the lot of the manufacturer and merchant. It is the lot of the tradesman, the day-labourer, and the artisan. Human life is a struggle for existence, and in that struggle the great mass of mankind must ever exist from hand to mouth, and be subject to the shifts of chance and change. The Irish peasant, it is said, is for ever haunted by the spectre of Eviction. Eviction, it is said, is the sentence of death to the evicted peasant. But if Eviction is a sentence of death, so is bankruptcy and insolvency—so is failure in any profession or pursuit. Let us discuss this matter of Eviction fairly. Suppose the land-owner to be converted by the Three F's into a mere rent-chargeant on his own estate—how is the rent-chargeant to secure the payment of his rent? Distress is a difficult and complicated remedy, one which it is easy to evade and perilous to employ.

The ordinary process of law can only terminate in an Execution which, in the case of the small farmer, produces next to nothing. The only efficacious remedy is Eviction. And why should the tenant be permitted to retain possession of the land for which he cannot pay? Is the landlord to be evicted from existence in order that the tenant may not be evicted from the land? The landlord also has a right to live. But then Eviction is not merely a remedy for the recovery of rent; it is the only safeguard against ruinous subletting and destructive waste; it is the means employed for the settlement of family disputes, and for the creation of new tenancies upon mutually advantageous terms. Nor is Eviction an agency which is exclusively employed by landlords. It is employed by tenant farmers themselves to enforce their rights against their tenants. It is employed by bankers for the purpose of recovering their advances, and by traders for the purpose of recovering their debts. It is employed by one member of a family against another, for the purpose of establishing title to a share of the assets of an intestate farmer. In the great majority of cases the evicted tenant receives ample compensation; in a great number of cases the evicted tenement is redeemed. But what is the number of these Evictions, enforced as they are by so many different classes, and for so great a diversity of objects? All England was startled when the Government Returns showed that 2000 families had been evicted in the year 1880. True, the

returns were not made by the Officers of the Courts by which the writs were issued, nor by the Sheriffs or Sub-sheriffs by whom the writs were executed, but by the Constabulary, who had no official notice of the matter, and acquired their information upon hearsay. But take it that the Government Returns were true. Grant that, among the 423,829 Tenant Farmers of Ireland, there were 2000 evictions, and that none of those evicted were restored to possession as caretakers or as tenants, the percentage of eviction would be only one in 200, or less than one-half per cent. per annum for the whole of Ireland. But take the wider experience which is recorded in *Facts and Figures*. The Tables show that over an area of some seven millions of acres, occupied by some two hundred thousand tenants, only 357 persons have been evicted during the past ten years for causes other than non-payment of rent (p. 26); that only 1031 have been evicted during the same period for non-payment of rent (p. 27); and that for all causes soever—whether for non-payment of rent, or for committing waste, or for subletting, or for overholding, or for the purpose of settling family disputes—there have been on an average per annum less than 139 evictions (p. 27). In other words, on an average of the last ten years, it is only one tenant in one thousand four hundred and twenty-eight that has been evicted in any one year, for any cause whatsoever, in a country which is said to be desolated by Eviction.

It is plain, therefore, that the Three F's would

be no cure for the more obvious evils which are said to be the sources of Irish disaffection and distress. It would not ameliorate the condition of the small Tradesmen and inferior Artisans. It would not raise the position of the Farm Labourers; on the contrary, it would have a tendency to lower it to a depth still lower. It would confer no benefit on the minor Tenant Farmers, who are in reality Farm Labourers, and can only by an abuse of terms be considered Farmers. It would leave the Tenants of the future more heavily oppressed than ever by rack-rents, and more than ever in peril of eviction. The whole Political Economy of the subject is summed up in the recent Report of Mr. Bonamy Price, the Professor of Political Economy at Oxford, and a Member of the Royal Commission on Agriculture:—‘The Three F’s’, says Mr. Price, with all the evidence before him, ‘ought to be condemned as false in principle, both socially and economically, as calculated to perpetuate the peculiar evils from which Ireland is suffering, and to arrest that increase of production, from which alone she can hope to advance towards prosperity.’

Nor is the effect which the Three F’s would produce upon the Landed Interest of Ireland an element in the problem which is unworthy of the consideration of the sober Statesman. The Landed Interest, according to the calculation of Mr. Parnell himself, when addressing one of the Land League meetings, represents half a million of

the population. In reality it represents far more. Into the political uses of a Landed Aristocracy this is not the moment to inquire. Possibly the Landed Aristocracy, like the Aristocracy of Intellect, and the Aristocracy of Wealth, may be destined to disappear in the Democratic Progress of the future. But if one of the forces in modern Society is to be destroyed, the Statesman who is to be responsible for the act should perform his work with open eyes. He should look the measure in the face. Consider, then, the present position of the Irish Gentry. Their old ascendancy has been long ago reversed. Their political influence is gone. The borough franchise is possessed by every Irishman who, by any stretch of the imagination, can be said to be rated for a house; and it will probably be conferred on every Irishman that can be said to occupy a hovel. The whole administration of justice is committed into the hands of the multitude by the Jury Act of Lord O'Hagan. A measure is promised which will transfer all powers of Local Government from the Grand Jury of the county to the class which may be said to monopolise the franchise. Grant the Three F's, and the social Revolution will be consummated and complete. The Ownership of the Land will be conferred on those who already monopolise Parliamentary influence, and in a few months may monopolise the powers of every Local Board. The existing Landowner will be converted into the owner of a rentcharge—a rentcharge the payment

of which the Government will not guarantee, and the payment of which the Law of the Land, in the periods of recurrent Agitation, will be unable to enforce. Deprived of all political influence, and of all social importance—encamped amongst a hostile population—possessed of an invidious and precarious species of wealth—with no public duties to discharge, and with no power or interest in the management of the land—why should the Irish Proprietor continue to reside in Ireland? *Quid Romae faciat?* He would inevitably become an Absentee. He would abandon his country in disgust, and Ireland would be converted into a sordid and sullen community of Priests and Peasants and Police.

These considerations are so obvious that they cannot possibly have escaped the mind of the Statesman who now has the fortunes of the country in his hands. But the Prime Minister is asked to believe that his Legislation of 1870, in spite of his confident predictions, has proved a failure. He is still animated by the ambition to solve the Irish problem, and by the belief that it is his privilege to solve it. But he is told by his followers that Ireland can only be pacified by governing it according to Irish Ideas; and he is warned by the Irish Parliamentary Party that Irish Ideas can only be ascertained by listening to the voice of Irish Agitation.

Let us listen, then, to the voice of the Irish Agitation. If the Irish people unanimously demanded the Three F's, if there was any probability that by

the concession of the Three F's all Ireland would be rendered loyal, in such a case a Statesman might well be justified in making the experiment, and taking chance. But in the present state of Ireland no English Statesman can rely on a justification such as this. The Three F's are not what the Ireland of the Agitation asks; nay, they are the very thing which the Ireland of the Agitation scouts. Mr. Parnell notoriously considers the Three F's to be a mere perpetuation of the system which, in his opinion, is the curse of Ireland. On this subject he has expressed his views on a hundred platforms; and since the meeting of Parliament he has spoken by his henchman, Mr. Healy. The pamphlet entitled *Why there is an Irish Land Question and an Irish Land League* was prepared as a portion of the brief for the Traversers in the recent prosecutions. It professes to present the Irish Land Question from the point of view of the Irish National Land League for the benefit of the Legislature. It is published by the Executive of the Land League, and it may be regarded as the official statement of its views. And what is that official statement? Does the League accept the Three F's as a remedy for the ills of Ireland? No. 'The People of Ireland,' it says, 'who twenty, ten, five, or 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 on the Irish Nation' (p. 98).

Such is the manifesto which the League addresses to the Legislature. The statement, it is true, is not characterised by the precision of language which a manifesto should display. The League professes to desire the abolition of the system of Landlordism; but what it in reality desires is the extermination of the present race of Landlords. At a thousand meetings its orators have expressed the determination 'to bring the Landlords to their knees'—'to banish every blasted Landlord from the country.' Such is the decency and the decorum of their language. But neither Landlordism nor Landlords can be abolished by the *fiat* of the League. Mr. Gladstone has shown in his Midlothian Speeches, that 'we shall continue to have, as we have had, a class of Landlords, and a class of Cultivators of the soil.' Even a Peasant Proprietary would not put an end to the distinction. In Belgium itself, according to M. de Laveleye, only one-third of the occupiers are owners, and the remaining two-thirds occupy their farms by contract or by lease. The Peasant Proprietor claims the right of letting his lands as energetically as the Feudal Baron; and in Ireland he would exercise it with the rigour of a Front-de-Bœuf. What the Land League wants to exterminate is neither Landlordism nor the Landlord; it is the Landlord who is at present in possession.

This suggests an entirely new class of considerations. What is the meaning of this savage animosity against the Landlords? What are the real aims and objects of the Agitation? These are questions which painfully exercise the English mind. But their answer is obvious to every Irishman who knows anything of Ireland. The Agitation which is desolating the country is not Agrarian—it is not Political—it is Revolutionary. Mr. Parnell audaciously avows it. ‘If they abolished the Landlords,’ he said, to an astonished House of Commons, ‘there would remain no class who were interested in the maintenance of English Government in Ireland.’ ‘I wish to see the Tenant Farmers prosperous,’ he said at Galway in words which have become historical; ‘but large and important as is the class of Tenant Farmers, I would not have taken off my coat, and gone to this work, if I had not known that we were laying the foundation in this movement for the regeneration of our Legislative Independence.’ This is not a matter which admits of doubt. Her Majesty’s Attorney-General, at the recent abortive trials, proclaimed the fact. He deliberately asserted that the Farmer is only made ‘the cat’s paw’ of the League, for the purposes of Revolution. To demonstrate the fact, the Attorney cited the public utterances of Mr. Parnell’s coadjutors. ‘We will first settle the Land Question in our own way,’ one of those gentlemen is represented as saying ‘and then, please God, we will go on with another

matter that will put the Irish People on the way to settle another and a greater question.' 'Give us your adhesion to the cause,' another is represented as having said—'stand together like men, and when you are able to achieve your social independence, you may, from the rank and file of the 250,000 Land Leaguers, select an Irish National Guard—and, with the weapons of free men slung upon their shoulders, we will complete the work which a hundred years ago gave Ireland a glimpse of Independence.'

But it is not in overt Rebellion, or actual Civil War, that the *immediate* peril of Great Britain lies. It is true that among the revolutionary and rebellious classes the old hatred of the English connexion still survives. It is as strong as in the days of Tyrone, of Tyrconnell, and of Tone. But we need not at present apprehend a repetition of the Rebellion of 1641. We are at present in no danger of a Civil War, such as that which desolated Ireland in 1689. We are not even, so far as appears, in peril of an armed Insurrection, such as that of 1798. Our true peril lies in a very different direction. Mr. Lecky, in his *Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland*, relates a remarkable anecdote of Mr. Grattan. 'You have swept away *our* Constitution,' the brilliant Irish rhetorician is related to have exclaimed to an English gentleman, 'you have destroyed *our* Parliament; but we shall have our revenge—we will send into the ranks of *your* Parliament, and into the very heart

of *your* Constitution, a hundred of the greatest scoundrels in the kingdom.' The speech of Mr. Parnell at Waterford on the 6th December, 1880, reflects a lurid light on this prophecy of Mr. Grattan. 'We stand to-day in the same position as that in which our ancestors stood,' said the Leader of the League amid tumultuous applause—'we declare that it is the duty of every Irishman to free his country if he can.' Here the Apostolic Succession of Rebellion is openly avowed. But Mr. Parnell deprecates Civil War in the *present* position of affairs. 'I call for no vain, no useless sacrifice,' he said—'I do not wish to be misunderstood for a moment. Our present path is within the lines of the Constitution. England has given us that Constitution for *her* purposes; we will use it for *ours*.' Amid deafening applause Mr. Parnell again referred to the contingency of his having to 'call upon the People of Ireland to go beyond the lines of that Constitution'; but 'for the present,' he said, 'taking our stand within the limits of the Constitution—relying upon organized Parliamentary Action, and relying upon organized National Action at home—I believe we have forces to achieve our ends.'

Mr. Parnell has not left us in the dark as to what, in his hands, an organized *Parliamentary Action* means. Pending the outbreak of the Civil War—pending the Invasion of the Irish from abroad on which he reckons—Mr. Parnell proposes to fulfil the prophecy of Mr. Grattan, and

carry war into the bosom of the Constitution. His policy, it is true, is not original. It was first broached by the editor of the *Tablet*, the late Frederick Lucas, when addressing an audience at Kells, so far back as the year 1852. 'If,' said Mr. Lucas 'they insist on keeping the English and Irish Parliaments united, which in my conscience I believe to be a gross wrong—if they insist upon a Parliamentary Union between the countries, my honest conviction is, that it is the duty of the Irish part of the Representatives to act as a separate party in the Legislature, disordering, disorganizing, and interfering with, every business that may be transacted, as far as it is expedient and feasible to do so, and tormenting this unjust anti-Irish House of Commons until they find it their interest to do us justice.' 'These words,' said Mr. Parnell at the Cork Banquet on the 3rd of October, 1880, 'are words from the grave. Lucas was thirty years before his time. Now we are a party occupying an independent position in the House of Commons, pledged to remain aloof from every English Party who will not concede to Ireland the right of Home Government; pledged, in the words of Mr. Lucas, to be a separate element in the Legislature, and if necessary *disorderly*—disorganizing, interfering with, every business that may be transacted, as far as is feasible, expedient, or possible.'

Nor are we left in uncertainty as to the meaning of organized *National Action* at home. In his declarations on this point no one could be more

frank than Mr. Parnell. In his speech in the Debate on the Address, that gentleman is reported to have expressed himself as follows. 'We have undoubtedly called on the people of Ireland,' he said, 'constitutionally, and without violence, by organization and passive resistance, by refusing to take farms from which others have been evicted or by refusing to deal with, or supply food to those who take those farms, to resist those who attempt to enforce those unjust laws.' What Mr. Parnell styles 'constitutional,' lawyers style conspiracy. Be this as it may, for the present he has resolved to proceed by way of Interdict, and not by way of Insurrection. He has pronounced a sentence of Excommunication against every Irishman who presumes to disobey his will. He addresses his victim with the *Vade in pacem* addressed in the dark ages to the religious who had broken their vows. He has not pronounced a sentence of death against the obnoxious Landowners; he has simply bid his emissaries let them die. But the zeal of the emissary has outrun the discretion of the master. He has organised a secret *Vehmegericht*. He has armed himself with the cord and dagger of the Vehme. The result of this National Action has been described by one of those Statesmen who is still old-fashioned enough to reverence the Constitution. 'For the Law of the Land,' said Lord Hartington, 'has been substituted the Law of the Land League; for the Judge and the Magistrate, an irresponsible Committee; for the Police constable and Sheriff's

officer, the Midnight Assassin, and the Ruffian who invades the humble cottages, disguised, by midnight.' The sufferers from this intolerable tyranny, as this popular and liberal Statesman proclaims, are not the Landlord class alone, but hundreds of thousands of honest men, who desire honestly to gain their living, but cannot do so because they are in terror of their lives.

Such is the movement which has brought the Three F's within the range of practical politics. It has struck politicians with a panic. But panic is always wild and incoherent, and its vision is distorted. If we are to legislate on the Land Question, let our legislation be calm and deliberate, and with full perception of the facts. The demands of a Nation, we are told, are not to be ignored. But what claim has this so-called National Action to be regarded as the action of the Nation? It is a movement of which the most considerable portion of the Nation is a victim. It is a movement from which the whole sound portion of the Nation stands aloof. It is a movement which multitudes of those who are compelled to afford it ostensible countenance regard with secret terror and abhorrence. It is, in fact, the movement of the Nationalist, and not the movement of the Nation. Party politicians may affect to believe that the Irish people are represented by the Land League. But the Land League does not even represent the Land. Here again Her Majesty's Attorney-General for Ireland is a witness for the truth. 'One would naturally sup-

pose,' said the Law Officer of Mr. Gladstone, 'that the Traversers had some deep and personal interest in the land; but with the exception of Mr. Parnell, who is a Landlord, I do not believe that any of the others has anything on earth to say to land, or ever had.' The Attorney gives the style and description of these regenerators of society. Mr. Dillon, it seems, is a doctor; Mr. Biggar and Mr. Egan are dealers in provisions; Mr. Walsh is a commercial traveller; Mr. Harris is a road-contractor; Mr. O'Sullivan is a national schoolmaster; Mr. Sheridan is a publican; Mr. Gordon is a shoemaker; and Mr. Nally, according to the Attorney-General, is nothing. These are the gentlemen who are turning the world upside down. These are the men of light and leading, who are resolved to exterminate the Landlords, and sever the connexion between Ireland and England. These are the Leaders of the new Commune. They openly deride the sanctity of contract, and ignore all the moralities of law. They appeal to the selfish instincts of the peasant. They claim the ownership of the land for the tiller of the soil. They run through the whole gamut of the Jacquerie of Jacques Bonhomme, and the Jacobinism of St. Just. Pay no rack-rent, they exclaim; pay no rent but that which is convenient to yourself; pay no rent whatsoever—re-enact the scenes of the French Revolution, and treat your Landlords as the French Noblesse were treated by the Terror.

The facility with which a faction composed of a few of the most audacious and reckless of a nation may triumph over the immense majority of the holders of property in a state has been shown in the history of Europe. Take Alison's description of the Jacobins of France. The active part of that tremendous faction never exceeded a few thousand men. Their position in society was low; their talents were by no means of the highest order. Yet they trampled under foot all the influential classes. They kept two hundred thousand of their fellow-citizens in bondage. Day by day they led out hundreds of the best blood in France to execution. Such was the effect of sheer audacity—such was the effect of unity of purpose and secrecy of action. This is the political portent which is now blazing before our very eyes. It is a small but energetic band of desperadoes that has brought Ireland into the condition which Lord Hartington describes.

Such is the condition of the country which supplies the politician with a pretext for abnormal legislation. The country, we are told, is in such a condition that concessions must be made, even if the Landlords have to sacrifice their rights. The political folly of such a contention is obvious. What would the sacrifice avail? To what would the concessions tend? They would merely blood the Agitation, which is bent on dismembering the Empire. But it is the political immorality of the contention that is most revolting to the honest

mind. Lord Dufferin brands it as it merits. It is a contention, as he says, that 'the Highwayman on Bagshot Heath, instead of being dealt with by the strong arm of the law, is to be invested with a Royal Commission to rob the Queen's subjects, in order that legality may square with facts' (p. 11).

It was not thus that Mr. Gladstone proposed to square legality with facts in 1870. In memorable words he compared the face of Justice to the face of Janus. He compared it to the face of the majestic Lions, which keep watch and ward around the Pillar which is the record of our country's greatness. 'She presents one tranquil and majestic countenance,' he said, 'towards every point of the compass, and every quarter of the globe.' 'That rare, that noble, that imperial virtue has this above all other qualities,' he said, 'that she is no respecter of persons, and she will not take advantage of a favourable moment to oppress the wealthy for the sake of flattering the poor, any more than she will condescend to oppress the poor for the sake of pampering the luxuries of the rich.'

The true character of the Agitation is recognised by Mr. Gladstone. He has declared to the House of Commons that the abettors and perpetrators of the atrocities which have converted Ireland into a Bulgaria are not the suffering population of Ireland. He has photographed them as 'the Whiteboys, the ex-Whiteboys, the remains of the Fenian Agitation, the members of the dangerous classes,' by which every community in Europe is

infested and imperilled. He sees that men like these are not to be converted by any remedial legislation, and that in their case the only safeguard for society is Force.

No Statesman or Philosopher can perceive more clearly than Mr. Gladstone the true function which Force performs in the economy of Nature. It is by Force that the universe is held together. It is by Force that the moral world maintains itself against the powers of evil by which it is eternally affronted. It is under the shadow of the public Force that the public Peace reposes. True, Force is not a remedy ; but it affords a remedial restraint. True, Force is not a reason ; but we do not reason with the enemies of society—we do not hold parley with the murderer taken in the manner, with the burglar, or the thief. As the last resource of power—the *ultima ratio rei publicæ*—it is fit that it should be the resource adopted last. Like the Grecian Fate, it should ever be left looming in the background. The true ruler of men leaves ordinary life to be regulated by the spontaneous operation of natural causes, by the play of the natural affections, by regard for public opinion, by the sense of right and wrong, which is as much a part of human nature as the appetites of sense. But Law, denuded of its Sanction, ceases to be Law. Bentham has profoundly said that Law and Morality have the same centre, but not the same circumference, the common centre being the happiness of man. The metaphor may be developed. The domain of Law is the solid globe on which we live ;

Morality is the invisible atmosphere by which it is surrounded. It is this atmosphere in which we live and breathe; it is this air which gives dignity to Law, and supplies it with the energies of life. But still we are the inhabitants of earth, and not the denizens of air, and on the *terra firma* of the Law, the ultimate protector of all that man holds dear is Force.

These considerations are not truisms to be tacitly assumed; they are truths of which, at the present crisis, we require to be reminded. On this point the history of the last few months has afforded us a lesson. On the 31st of March, 1880, there was not only 'an absence of crime and outrage in Ireland,' but 'a general sense of comfort and satisfaction, such as had been unknown in the previous history of the country.' Such were the words of the Prime Minister of England. On the 7th of December in the same year, throughout two of the four Provinces in Ireland, right was disregarded; life was insecure; the process of the law could not be enforced; true liberty had ceased to exist; and intolerable tyranny prevailed. Such was the testimony of the Judges of the Land. What was it that had caused the general sense of comfort and satisfaction to disappear? What was it that had substituted for it a sense of universal insecurity and terror? In eight short months there had occurred a Revolution. Why? Because Authority had disarmed itself, and Agitation and Anarchy were immediately in arms. Because

during that ill-omened period there was neither Character nor Force in the Government of Ireland.

Mr. Bright, achieving a victory over his prejudices which reflects upon him the highest honour, has recognised the importance of these momentous truths. He demands a Legislation for Ireland which, 'in mercy to the many, will place restrictions on the few.' He admits that these restrictions would involve so little interference with the true liberties of the subject, that if they were imposed, 'not one man in a hundred would be aware of their existence.' Still, he expressed the hope that the disturbing elements in Ireland would be temporary only, and therefore recommended that the measure of coercion should be temporary also. But Mr. Bright might have bethought himself of what he had previously said. For thirty-seven years he has been a member of the House. During those thirty-seven years no less than thirty-two measures of Coercion have been introduced. Against all these Mr. Bright felt himself obliged to vote; and now, before the Commons of England, he reluctantly admits that he was wrong. And why? Because the real disturbing element in Ireland is no temporary evil. Mr. Bright, when addressing his Constituency, hit upon the truth. He said that the Leaders of the Agitation showed, by the extravagance of their demands, that they were not so much the friends of Ireland as the enemies of England. It is from this enmity to England that every Irish Agitation springs. It is an animosity which no jus-

tice can appease, and no concession can allay. It is in vain that all political inequalities have been removed, all practical grievances redressed. It still survives. It has survived the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church. It has survived the Land Act. True, the hereditary and inveterate disease is slowly wearing out. The different races in Ireland have been gradually fused; the professors of the different religions have been placed on a footing of equality; a prosperous community is being developed; Ireland is being converted into a great Anglo-Irish nation. But still the Anti-English sentiment survives. It survives, it is true, with diminished force and in a degraded form. It is no longer fostered by the dispossessed Chieftain, by the unemancipated Catholic, by the discontented Serf. It finds its leaders in the small shopkeeper, in the idle artisan, in the hired orator, in the liberated convict. It finds its followers among the mere *residuum* of the population. Once it allied itself with the public enemies of England—with the Spaniard in the time of Philip, with the French in the times of the Grand Monarch and the First Republic. Now it no longer consorts with Captains and with Kings. It is obliged to invoke the assistance of the American Filibuster, and is dependent for its sordid and mercenary subsistence on the contributions of the Irish of New York. Once it held the balance between English parties, allying itself with the English Whigs in the time of Melbourne, as it allied itself with the

English Tories in the time of Ormond. Now it whines for the privileges of the Constitution, when arrested in the very act of attempting its destruction. But with the true instinct of a ruling and imperial race, the English are beginning to perceive that the essential object of all Government is to *govern*. They are beginning to see that Free Government does not require that crime and outrage should be let go free. They are beginning to see that Freedom of Discussion does not require that plans of rapine and spoliation should be freely and openly discussed. In spite of their repugnance to Coercion, they recognise the truth, that the perpetrators of midnight mutilations and midday murders should be effectually coerced. They are not disposed to recognise any Parliamentary Privilege to destroy or to degrade their Parliament. They are not disposed to recognise a constitutional right to undermine and annihilate their Constitution. Above all, they are as determined to maintain the integrity of their United Kingdom as the great Republic was to maintain the integrity of the United States.

In the consideration of the Land Question, then, we may discard the Agitation and the Anarchy which was its culminating triumph. In that Agitation the honest and industrious Irish People had no interest; so far as they participated in it they were reluctantly coerced. The Irish Land Question must be determined, not on the principles of Agitation, but on the principles of Justice. And what do the interests of Justice require? Here there

is no conflict, no contrariety of interest. It is not the interest of the Farm Labourers of Ireland that they should be deprived of their most liberal employers. It is not the interest of the Tenant Farmers that they should be deprived of Landlords able and willing to alleviate their distress in evil times. It is not the interest of the State itself that capital and intelligence should be withdrawn from Irish soil. Neither, on the other hand, is it the interest of the Landlords to perpetrate injustice. It is not their interest to be surrounded by discontented and disaffected tenants. It is not their interest to convert the Peasant to a Pauper ; it is not their interest to rack-rent or to ruin. The Landlords, as a class, have no sympathy, no community of interest, with the grinding and the grasping oppressor of the poor. If any remedy against oppression can be devised by the Legislature, such legislation will be gladly welcomed and cordially carried out by the Landed Proprietors of Ireland. Whatever is for the real and lasting benefit of the Tenant is for the real and lasting benefit of the Landlord. But let Parliament remember and act upon the words of the Prime Minister of England. Let it be animated by the noble and imperial virtue which is no respecter of persons. Let it not take advantage of a favourable moment to oppress the wealthy for the sake of flattering the poor. And let it reflect on what Justice to Ireland really means. Let it take to heart the words of the latest and the greatest of the Historians of Ireland. 'Justice to Ireland,' says

Mr. Froude, 'Justice in all times and places, means protection and encouragement to the industrious, the honest, and the worthy; repression and punishment of the idle and the mutinous, who prefer to live at their own wills on the spoil of other men's labours.' And let England also take to heart the warning of the great Historian. Justice in the true sense, says Mr. Froude, has been the last expedient to which England has had recourse to harmonize her relations with the Irish. 'She has taken those who made the loudest noise at their own estimation. She has regarded the patriot orator, the rebel, and the assassin, as the representatives of Ireland. She has thought alternately, and with equal unsucess, how she can coerce or conciliate those who give her trouble.' Let England correct the errors of the past. She is now at the turning of the ways. Let her at length do justice; and at all costs, and at all hazards, let her be resolved to *govern*.

W.

APPENDIX.

MR. GLADSTONE ON THE THREE F's.

(Reprinted from his Speeches in 1870.)

Men little think how immorally they act in rashly meddling with what they do not understand. Their delusive good intention is no sort of excuse for their presumption. They who truly mean well must be fearful of acting ill.—*Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs.*

FIXITY OF TENURE.

I do not think that anything dishonourable, anything that intends an injury to another, has been projected by those who have set up *perpetuity of tenure* for the Irish occupier as their favourite scheme, because we have not a doubt that they have seen that inasmuch as perpetuity of tenure on the part of the occupier is virtually expropriation of the landlord, and as a mere readjustment of rent according to the price of produce can by no means dispose of all contingencies the future may produce in his favour, compensation would have to be paid to the landlord for the rights of which he would be deprived. I have no doubt that they have taken this circumstance into their view; but, at the same time, while this proposition is to be indisputable, I hold that the plan is attended with the greatest *practical difficulty*, even were it on this ground alone. Because the question will be, By whom is that compensation to be paid? It must either be paid by our old familiar friend, the Consolidated Fund—to which it appears to me that the people of England and Scotland would certainly have a word to say—or else it must be paid by an immediate increase of the rents now payable in Ireland, in order to compensate, by a positive augmentation at the moment, the landlords of Ireland for the loss of their chances in the future. Now, I do not know how a measure is to be framed either upon the one basis or on the other. But suppose for a moment that we put the financial difficulty out of view, what would be the *effect of perpetuity of tenure* upon the tenant? As I understand it, the scheme itself amounts to this—that each and every occupier, as long as he pays the rent that he is now paying, or else some rent to be fixed by a public tribunal charged with the duty of valuation, is to be secured, for himself and his heirs, in the occupa-

tion of the land that he holds, without limit of time. He will be subject only to this condition—somewhat in the nature of the Commutation of Tithe Act—that with a variation in the value of produce the rent may vary, but it will be slightly, and at somewhat distant periods. The effect of that provision will be that the landlord will become a pensioner and rentcharger upon what is now his own estate. The Legislature has, no doubt, the perfect right to reduce him to that condition, giving him proper compensation for any loss he may sustain in money; the State has a perfect right to deal with his social status, and to reduce him to that condition, if it thinks fit. But then it is bound not so to think fit unless it is shown that this is for the public good. Now *is it for the public good* that the landlords of Ireland, in a body, should be reduced by an Act of Parliament to the condition practically of fundholders, entitled to apply on a certain day from year to year for a certain sum of money, but entitled to nothing more? Are you prepared to denude them of their interest in the land; and, what is more, are you prepared to absolve them from their duties with regard to the land? I, for one, confess that I am not; nor is that the sentiment of my Colleagues. We think, on the contrary, that we ought to look forward with hope and expectation to bringing about a state of things in which the landlords of Ireland may assume, or may more generally assume, the position which is happily held, as a class, by landlords in this country—a position marked by residence, by personal familiarity, and by sympathy with the people among whom they live, by long traditional connexion handed on from generation to generation, and marked by a constant discharge of duty in every form that can be suggested—be it as to the administration of justice, be it as to the defence of the country, be it as to the supply of social, or spiritual, or moral, or educational wants—be it for any purpose whatever that is recognized as good and beneficial in a civilized society. Although, as I have said

nothing would induce me voluntarily to acquiesce in the continuance of such a state of things as has prevailed, and still to a great extent, prevails in Ireland—it would, I own, be a most melancholy conclusion were we to find that we could not rectify that which is now wrong in the land tenures of that country without undertaking a *social revolution*—a social revolution in which the main characteristics would be the abolition of wealth and property from the performance of duty, and an addition to that lounging class—unfortunately too abundant in this country—who are possessed of money and of nothing else, and who seem to have no object in life but to teach us how to multiply our wants and to raise the standard of our luxuries, even when we have not yet solved the problem, or got to the heart of the secret, how we are to relieve the destitution which is pining at our doors.

Again, perpetuity of tenure must, I think, be further considered from *this point of view*. If the land is to be bought, it should be bought by and for the State, and that which is so purchased should be distributed among, or applied for the benefit of, the whole nation. But the occupiers of land in Ireland, though they of themselves constitute something near a moiety of the people of the country, yet are not the whole people. And it would, I think, be difficult to show why, in favour of these particular persons being occupiers, the whole essence of proprietary right should be carried over from the class that now possesses it to that which, though infinitely larger, is still a class, is not the whole people of the country. But consider again *how this plan is to work*. Let me suppose myself an Irish occupier invested by an Act of Parliament with perpetuity of tenure. If I want to let the property which I have thus acquired, am I to be allowed to let it to a tenant—a mere tenant—or am I not to be allowed to let it to anybody but a perpetuity-man like myself? If I am only to let it to a perpetuity-man, I can only let it to that class of men who are prepared both to cultivate the soil and to pay

me the price of the permanent estate. The *strange position* in which we should then find ourselves would be, that all that active and energetic class which does not require any permanent estate in the land, but exists by the intelligent and profitable application of capital to farming purposes, would be absolutely proscribed; you would not anywhere let a man in to put a spade or plough into the ground unless he was able to purchase the perpetual estate. But, on the other hand, if I am told—"You, a perpetuity-man, will be allowed to deal with the land as you choose—to let it from year to year, to create yearly or any other form of tenancies which you think proper"—then I say the Act of Parliament would contain within it *the seeds of its own destruction*; nay, not the germs only, but the body and substance of provisions which would soon generate the very mischiefs which you proposed to extinguish. We should still have landlords and tenants with relations as ill-regulated as ever. At first they would be small landlords, but not long. The wealth of this country would go forth once more into the market and accumulate great estates, so that—not we, perhaps, but, at any rate, our children, should again have to assemble within these walls, and to deal afresh with the difficulties of the Irish Land Question.—*Hansard's Reports*, vol. cxcix., 350–353.

FAIR RENT AND FREE SALE.

But it is proposed that we should establish permanently and positively a power in the hands of the State *to reduce excessive rents*. Now, I should like to hear a careful argument in support of that plan. I wish, at all events, to retain at all times a judicial habit of not condemning a thing utterly until I have heard what is to be said for it; but I own I have not heard, I do not know, and I cannot conceive, what is to be said for the prospective power to reduce excessive rents. In whose interest is it asked? Certainly not in the interest of the landlord? Is it asked in the interest of the tenant? Shall I really be told that it is for the interest of the Irish tenant bidding for a farm that the law should say to him—"Cast aside all providence and forethought; go into the market and bid what you like; drive out of the field the prudent man who means to fulfil his engagement; bid right above him and induce the landlord to give you the farm, and the moment you have got it come forward, go to the public authority, show that the rent is excessive and that you cannot pay it, and get it reduced"? If I could conceive *a plan more calculated than anything else*, first of all, for throwing into confusion the whole economical arrangements of the country; secondly, for driving out of the field all solvent and honest men who might be bidders for farms, and might desire to carry on the honourable business of agriculture; thirdly, for carrying widespread demoralization throughout the whole mass of the Irish people, I must say, as at present advised—to confine myself to the present, and until otherwise convinced—it is this plan and this demand, that we should embody in our Bill as a part of permanent legislation a provision by which men shall be told that there shall be an authority always existing, ready to release them from the contracts they have deliberately entered into. This is one

demand; the other demand is for valuation of rents; and I beg the House to consider what is meant by *the valuation of rents*. I have heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Galway (Mr. W. H. Gregory)—speaking in the character of an Irish landlord, which he so well sustains—some expressions showing that he looks with no disfavour on valuation of rents. Well, I at once make this admission—if the Irish landlords, if any particular landlord thinks it desirable to have his rents fixed by public authority—I will not say it is desirable on public grounds, but still it may be done. However, what I do wish is, in the first place, that there should be a clear manifestation of the views of the Government, and secondly, of the House, that we are not ready to accede to a principle of legislation by which the State shall take into its own hands the valuation of rents throughout Ireland. I say take into its own hands, because it is perfectly immaterial whether the thing shall be done by a State officer forming part of the Civil Service, or by an arbitrator acting under State authority, or by any other person invested by the law with powers to determine on what terms as to rent every holding in Ireland shall be held. If you are to value rents you must take into your own hands the fixing of every other condition of agricultural holdings, because otherwise in vain do you fix the rent. You fix the rent, but the landlord thinks it too small, and having imposed some onerous condition, he then says to the tenant—“I will relax the conditions if you consent to pay an advanced rent.” *The mathematical result* is, that if you undertake to fix the valuation of rents by public authority you must likewise undertake to fix the whole conditions of every agricultural holding. There is no escape from that conclusion. Well, then, are you prepared to undertake that? We say—“Give shelter to the tenant from loss by eviction, and make that shelter effectual.” This doctrine says—“Give over to the tenant a great, a paramount, a permanent interest in the land.” Am I mistaking

it or not? *My proposition* is that if you value rents you may as well for every available purpose adopt perpetuity of tenure at once. It is perpetuity of tenure only in a certain disguise. It is the first link in the chain, but it draws after it the last. Now look at *its practical difficulty*. We are to value these rents. What an army of public officers are you to send abroad to determine from year to year the conditions of the 600,000 holdings in Ireland—conditions which are settled with comparative ease when settled by private intercourse, but conditions the fixing of which beforehand by a public authority would be attended with ten-fold difficulty. Here I may be told that by the Bill in a certain case we refer the fixing of these conditions to a public authority. ["Hear, hear!"] I answer no; that is a mistake. There is no compulsory reference of the conditions of any holding in Ireland to any public authority. We have said to the landlord—"If you wish to escape from the provisions of the Bill with respect to evictions, you may of your own free will go before a public authority for that sole occasion and for no other." But that is a totally different matter, as the hon. Gentleman who cheered will admit, from a compulsory provision that all persons shall be carried before a public authority for the purpose of fixing the conditions of contract between landlord and tenant. How are these rents to be valued? *What is the test?* The prices of produce? Of what produce? Of one kind of produce or of all kinds? Can any man fix by law any system upon which it will be possible to adjust rents by calculations founded upon prices of agricultural produce of all kinds? Perhaps you will say—"What was done in the case of commutation of tithes?" I will tell you what was done. It was a very rough process, indeed, and it was a process to which the tithe commutators submitted, but to which, you may rely on it, no other powerful class in this country will ever again submit. Besides, the cases differ in this—the tithe of agistment was gone, the

right of the tithe commutator only subsisted in *produce of certain kinds*, and therefore it was not very difficult to get at the prices of these kinds of produce. The landlord's interest is not restricted to wheat, barley, and oats, but extends to all the varied descriptions of produce. There are no records of the prices. I defy you to keep records of the prices. They are sold in every possible way and under every possible circumstance. It is impossible to combine them together so as to found upon them a compensation which you can make the basis of these enormous and complicated arrangements. Again, how is the landlord's rent to vary? Is it to vary according to *the prices of produce*?—because that is the proposal that I have seen. It is impossible, in my opinion, to get the prices of produce so as to found the rent upon them by a public authority; and if you could get them it would be absolutely impossible to apply a standard according to the varying circumstances of each particular holding, and its capacity to produce this or that kind of produce. But what are we to say with regard to *the quantity of produce*? Supposing the quantity of produce is doubled, is the landlord to receive the same price for the increased quantity, or is he not? If he is to receive the same price for the increased quantity, where is the tenant's inducement to increase the quantity? But if the quantity is to remain the same, by what right do you cut off the whole of the landlord's interest in the prospective increase in the quantity of produce? The quantity of the produce may be increased by the enterprize of the tenant, or by other causes—by the cheap access of manures by railway—by improvements in machinery, and by many other things; and none of these advantages can you justify giving over bodily to the tenant, to the exclusion of the landlord, unless upon the assumption of that *one principle* which is involved in perpetuity of tenure—namely, that the paramount interest in the soil is to be transferred from the owner to the occupier, and that the owner of the soil is to

become a tithe commutator only upon a larger scale. Sir, if I state these things, it is that I may provoke *confutation*. I disbelieve in the possibility; but, at the same time, I think that it would be well that the attention of those who have stated all along that the Irish people will be perfectly satisfied with continued occupancy, subject to a valued rent, should really consider what is the meaning and scope and extent of the terms in which they couch their demands, Sir, we have a *social system* established in this country under which two persons have a vital interest in the land. One of them is the landlord, who regards the estate as a whole, and who is very largely concerned in the development of its general prosperity; the other is the tenant, whose position it is desirable to simplify as much as possible, in order that he may be able to devote the whole of his resources and his capital, if he thinks fit, to the prosecution of his trade. But if you once adopt this principle to which I am referring, you cannot retain these two classes upon the land; the man who becomes a mere annuitant loses all general interest in its prosperity.—*Hansard's Reports*, vol. cxcix., 1844-1848.

