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# OBSERVATIONS

ON



# THE STATE OF IRELAND

IN APRIL, 1880.

BY

"RABIRIUS."

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"Non avaritiæ prædam, sed bonitati instrumentum, quærere."

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DUBLIN:

HODGES, FOSTER, AND FIGGIS,

PUBLISHERS TO THE UNIVERSITY.

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1880.

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### ADDENDUM.

£189,720 is the sum actually paid over (page 23) to land-owners as a loan for works of improvement. The amount applied for by them is £1,200,000—the grant of most of which is sanctioned.

Page 24—£76,000 is the amount of presentments sanctioned by the Government to the present date. The total amount voted was £785,760.



## PREFACE.

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THERE is, probably, no portion of the civilised world to which the tale of Irish distress during the winter of 1879-80 has not been borne by the agency of the newspaper press; and it is honourable to our common humanity, that in every quarter of the globe the sad tidings have evoked an earnest and active sympathy, shown by the expression of much kindly feeling, and the contribution of abundant material aid, which has been in a very considerable degree instrumental in arresting the progress and effects of a destitution so great that grave apprehensions of a partial famine in some of the poorer counties were very generally entertained.

Such apprehensions will not be deemed unreasonable by those who reflect that, at a time now little more than thirty years past, which many well remember, and of which the story is familiar to all—a failure in the potato crop was followed by a famine in Ireland, and by its worst consequences, starvation, disease, and the deaths of thousands of the inhabitants. And as history records the previous occurrence of several more or less severe visitations of the same kind, there is reason to fear that there may be causes actually in operation which place the country in danger of a recurrence of these calamities; and it would seem to be the

duty of the Government, and the interest of the people, to inquire into the existence and nature of these causes, and either to remove them, should it be possible to do so, or at least, to provide sufficiently against the possibility that results of so fatal a character as those they have already produced, should ever be repeated in the years to come.

With that object, it is here proposed to examine into the origin, nature, and progress of the distress now existing, the state of public feeling regarding it, and its influence, apparent and real, on that feeling; and to offer some remarks on the scope and probable value of certain remedial measures and proposals.

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# CONTENTS.

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## PREFACE.

---

### CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
Irish population—Mainly agricultural—Distribution of holdings— Normal condition—Effects of bad seasons—Credit system— Debts produced by it—Seasons of 1877-8-9—Distress predicted —Action of Landowners ... ..	9

---

### CHAPTER II.

Land agitation—Assisted by bad season—Attitude of clergy— Views of landlords—Endangered cause of charity—Duchess of Marlborough's Fund—Mansion-House Fund—Other Funds —How distributed—Good done by Sub-Committees—Pre- cautions taken—Amount expended (April 23rd, 1880)—Go- vernment should help—What Government has done—Loans for works—Local Government Board—Poor-Law measures— Abuses—More money wanted to prevent famine ... ..	15
--	----

---

### CHAPTER III.

Anxiety of public—Danger of—Extreme views advanced—Causes to which agitators ascribe distress—Their plan to prevent it— Steps to carry it out—Why they are popular—National senti- ment—Extravagant theories and language—Danger of ex- citing Irish people—Attitude of farmers explained—Their action constitutional—Agitation not dangerous in England— Case of farmers should be considered ... ..	26
---	----

## CHAPTER IV.

Farmers' grievances—Rents—Sometimes excessive—Why—Land-hunger of the people— <i>Irish World</i> —Middlemen—Sub-division—Practice of older landlords—Advantage of good estate management—Bad landlords—Encumbered Estates Act—Effect of—Wholesale eviction—Rent raising—Discontent—Ulster custom—Other customs—Common usage—Contrast of good and bad landlords—Conduct of latter made legislation necessary—Land Act	...	...	...	31
---	-----	-----	-----	----

## CHAPTER V.

Land Act deemed insufficient—Amendments required—Perpetuity—Valuation first enunciated by O'Connell—Improvements—No advance on O'Connell's opinion—Principle for just legislation—Protest of small occupiers against large ones—Free sale—Better state of feeling probable—Attitude of owners	...	...	...	...	...	39
---	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	----

## CHAPTER VI.

Objection to Land Act—"Retrograde Legislation"—Free Trade—Tenure—English land system—Its effects—Accumulation of landed estate—Restrictive effect of system injurious—Reform demanded—Irish tenants cannot wait—Bright Clauses—Encumbered estates—Condition of owners unsatisfactory—Purchase of estates by Government—Experiment in "Free Land"—Land Law Reform—Its use to Ireland—Would not satisfy agitators—Property in Land universally valued most—Number of owners should be increased—"Free land"	...	45
---	-----	----

## CHAPTER VII.

Causes of distress—Swinford Relief Committee—Sub-letting—Over population—Neglect by owners—Reckless letting—Rents of pauper tenants a small matter—Want of Employment—English wages—Loss of same—Decrease of English farm-labourers—Cause of—Law of settlement—Imperial grant justified—County of Donegal—Mr. Tuke's report—Failure of wages—Sustaining power of each class of tenant—How pauper districts are created	...	...	...	51
--	-----	-----	-----	----

# CONTENTS.

vii

## CHAPTER VIII.

	PAGE
Periodic distress explained—Methods of remedy—Emigration— Why unpopular—Clergy against it—Opposed by agitators— Why—Irish in America—Their attitude—Danger to the country—Communism—Communist feeling in Ireland—Pro- posed migration from poor localities—Large farmers likely to hold to their farms—Large farms might be profitably divided—But not by over-populating them—Waste lands— Reclamation expensive—Process slow—Could not relieve poverty—Success hitherto the exception—Country could sup- port a larger population—Production should be increased to do so—Capital and enterprise wanted—Government works useful—But not “relief” works—Grants to encourage in- dustry—Industrial education and improvement in workman’s condition required     ...     ...     ...     ...     ...	56
<hr/>	
CONCLUSION     ...     ...     ...     ...     ...     ...	66



OBSERVATIONS  
ON  
THE STATE OF IRELAND  
IN APRIL, 1880.

CHAPTER I.

Irish population—Mainly agricultural—Distribution of holdings—Normal condition—Effect of bad seasons—Credit system—Debts produced by it—Seasons of 1877-8-9—Distress predicted—Action of Landowners.

THE Irish population is chiefly composed of tenant-farmers occupying less than fifty acres of land, the extent of their holdings in populous districts usually ranging from four to fifteen acres—while in many parts of the country there are considerable numbers of still smaller occupiers, some possessing little or no more land than that on which their cottages stand.

By the census of 1871, the proportions were :—

Holdings under 1 acre	...	...	48,448
„ from 1 to 15 acres	...	...	246,192
„ over 15 to 30 acres	...	...	138,647
„ over 30 acres	...	...	159,303
Total			592,590

In such a climate as that of Ireland, the position of the people comprised in the first two classes is one in which

actual want can only be avoided by hard work, frugality, and some forethought. To those of the third class they are also essential, in order to secure a reasonable degree of comfort. Accustomed from youth up to these conditions, those who have farms of a reasonable size find, in favourable seasons, no difficulty in living by their produce; the smaller occupiers and cottiers supporting themselves in a greater measure by the wages of their paid labour, either at home or in England, to which country large numbers of them go every year, during those months when labour is in demand there. They also keep pigs and fowl, and commonly rent patches of "conacre" from larger landholders.

But in unfavourable seasons, when a late spring, a cold summer, or a wet and stormy harvest, diminish, often by more than one-half, the yield and value of the crops, the following year is invariably one of hardship and privation.

Most of these people, however, poor as they may be, are able to obtain credit from their neighbours, from rural money-lenders, or from the traders with whom they habitually deal, and in this way continue to procure a sufficiency of the necessities and petty luxuries they usually consume.

For a good many years past, indeed, and in the prosperous times especially, there has been a very great extension of the credit system among the poorer classes, owing to the influence of the local traders, who vied with each other in endeavouring to "push" a business, by pressing on their customers every description of goods, on credit.

But this system, valuable to the poor, when confined to bad years, became ruinous when extended into good ones. The business then done was not confined to necessities of life and simple luxuries, but embraced goods of a less necessary, more costly, and sometimes unsuitable and useless kind.

More strong drink was consumed by the men, much more tawdry finery of every description worn by the women, and, worst of all, even people, previously thrifty to penuriousness, drifted into the fatal habit of putting off the daily calls, for which they neglected to provide, to a morrow, which was pretty certain to add to them cares and burdens, perhaps heavier, of its own.

It is natural and desirable that all, and women especially, should wish to be well and neatly clad, but the taste lately developed has been less for good and serviceable articles than for showy and inferior imitations of the dress of the moneyed classes.

Those who have attended our Quarter Sessions Courts are able to realize the amount of the debts thus incurred, and of the pressure they brought to bear, not only on men who had at no time any margin for increased expenditure, but even upon farmers who had been in a position, by the exercise of economy, to lay money by.

There has also been a marked increase, for similar reasons, in the consumption of tea, coffee, sugar, and wheaten bread, as compared with the plainer, but not less wholesome, diet of oatmeal, potatoes, and milk, which had previously prevailed; and however little the difference in cost may seem, it was not without effect on the resources of a people to whom extreme frugality is a necessity.

That this state of things was unsound and ruinous, the first lengthened period of depression was certain to demonstrate, and the arrival of that period was not long delayed. The unfavourable harvest of 1879, following a cold spring and wet summer, completed the third bad season in succession. At its outset, the losses of the two previous years had so diminished the resources, and damped the energies of

the Irish farmers, that the breadth of land under the two principal crops relied on by the peasantry, oats and potatoes, had decreased very largely—this decrease being greatest (in the case of potatoes more particularly) in the poorer localities. It is estimated that the additional loss caused by the badness of the season amounted in the potato crop to about one-half of the produce over the extent actually planted. Oats, too, which had promised well, and would have been much above the average yield, was deteriorated by the wet and stormy harvest, and other crops in proportion. Hay was short in quantity, much of it lost by floods in low situations, and much ill saved. A sudden and heavy depreciation took place in the value of sheep and cattle, caused partly by American competition, but chiefly by the depression of trade in England, and disease in sheep was generated by the wet and cold, entailing almost ruinous losses on holders of that description of stock. Pigs also decreased both in numbers and value to the amount of about half a million of money—a loss falling almost entirely on the smaller farmers.

The important part which wages earned in England form in the resources of the population of the poorer and more thickly inhabited districts has been already pointed out. The low state of trade in 1879, and the losses sustained by the English farmers, greatly shortened the demand for labour, and by lowering wages, lessened still more the sum earned by the Irish labourers. It has been estimated that the total falling off under this head reached very nearly a quarter of a million.

All this came at a time when a season much better than the average would have been required to meet the deficit, and cover the debts, of the two preceding years.

The result was, general dismay, and a universal feeling of

insecurity and apprehension. The credit system, completely exhausted, came to a sudden and decided stop. Country dealers and money-lenders called in their accounts, whenever they found it practicable to do so, at the very time when it was most difficult to meet them, and firmly refused to run any more risk, for which, under the circumstances, and considering the large sums due to many of them, they are scarcely to blame. Banks, too, grew timid, pressed for the recovery of outstanding debts, regardless of consequences, and refused to make advances just when such accommodation was most urgently required.

At a comparatively early period in the season, all those best acquainted with the circumstances of the peasantry, knew, and publicly stated their opinion, that without an unusually good harvest, great distress was certain to prevail; and as the prospects of such a harvest grew less and less, they reiterated the voice of warning. With the progress of the year it became every day more evident that a serious crisis was at hand, and that in the poorer localities the time was fast approaching when there would be no food for the people, no money to procure it, and no demand for the labour by which that money might be earned.

The attention of the public was drawn to this state of affairs, by appeals made through the medium of the press by correspondents of all ranks and classes, who wrote to state fact and stimulate enquiry—a demand responded to by leading newspapers in Dublin and London, whose correspondents visited, and carefully reported upon the condition of all the poorer parts of the country, the result being to show that immediate action was necessary. Even in those places where the poverty was not visible on the surface, and where the residents and non-residents were both inclined at first to

question the reality of its existence, a closer examination discovered a sad state of things. Men having in their possession a reasonable stock of farm produce, sheep, cattle, oats and potatoes, were often found to be utterly crushed by debts exceeding the value of all they possessed.

Many of the leading landlords and other influential men in the country were already preparing to meet the difficulties which lay before them and the people. They, in most cases, declared their intention to grant considerable reductions in the rents due, and coming due to them, and devised various plans of improvement, in roads, rivers, sewers, water-courses, and drains, to provide labour for the unemployed, and enable them to earn the wages of which they were in need. Their exertions did much to relieve want and destitution, and they would have been more successful in doing so, and would, by their exertions, have earned the gratitude of the poorer classes, and established more friendly relations, and a better understanding with them than had ever before prevailed, but for a condition of public feeling on political matters to which it is necessary here to refer.

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## CHAPTER II.

Land agitation—Assisted by bad season—Attitude of clergy—Views of landlords—Endangered cause of charity—Duchess of Marlborough's Fund—Mansion-House Fund—Other Funds—How distributed—Good done by—Sub-Committees—Precautions taken—Amount expended (April 23, 1880)—Government should help—What Government has done—Loans for works—Local Government Board—Poor Law Measures—Abuses—More money wanted to prevent famine.

FROM the commencement of the year 1879, the seditious movement, never entirely extinct in Ireland, and which Irish-American agency has kept continually stirred up, displayed signs of increased and increasing activity. The previous seasons, as we have seen, had been bad, and the discontent thereby produced amongst the agricultural classes began to afford to the organisers and leaders of the movement a powerful lever, which they were not slow to grasp and handle with energy, ability, and effect.

Addressing themselves chiefly to these classes, they set up all through the country an agitation with the object, at first secretly understood, but later on openly avowed, of entirely depriving the landowners of their property, and re-distributing it amongst a portion of the people, somewhat vaguely described as the "tillers of the soil."

When the indications of a third bad season became evident, they were eagerly welcomed by the agitators, who saw in them the promise of additional influence and power to themselves; and one speaker was so audacious and blasphemous as to return thanks to heaven that "the elements were fighting for them."

At the same time they ingeniously, and for some time

successfully, sought to conceal from the clergy, the upper classes, and the orderly portion of the people, the real character and objects of their meetings, now becoming every week more numerous, by announcing that they were held "for the relief of distress," and inviting their presence and co-operation for that purpose. Many of those who were in this manner prevailed upon to attend them, must have been not a little astonished and disgusted at the sentiments expressed, and the projects unfolded for their approval by the speakers.

A good many of the Roman Catholic clergy were led by their sympathy with the poor to appear at the earlier of these meetings, and a few of them, mostly, but not all, of inferior rank, used language hardly less violent than that of the other orators.

The heads of the hierarchy, however, seem to have very soon recognised the dangerous nature of the agitation, and the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin was one of the first to warn his flock against it.

Afterwards, when the revolutionary character of the movement had more fully declared itself, the clergy made many efforts to stem the tide, but with little or no success. In some few instances they were even treated with great disrespect by the agitators with whom they came into collision; the names of Garibaldi and Mazzini were mentioned approvingly, and the assassin Hartmann, held up as a model to be imitated (more successfully) in Ireland. But the principal leaders, perceiving that the people were not, as yet, educated up to this pitch, were too astute to commit such errors. Adopting, instead, the same tone of cynical irony with which they professed to bring treason and sedition within "the lines of the Constitution," they expressed their regret that they did

not meet with the welcome and approbation of the clergy, for whom they declared their profound esteem and regard, at the same time that they systematically undermined their influence, disregarded their advice, set their authority at defiance, and opposed and defeated their candidates at the poll.

Those who have been accustomed to lead, will, however, rarely resign themselves willingly to follow, and many men would rather put themselves at the head of a movement of which they disapprove, than submit to be dragged along at its tail. There are tokens visible that some of the clergy are not indisposed to execute a change of front, in order to accommodate themselves to the last advance. It is significant to find that the Roman Catholic Bishop of Meath, who, more than a year ago, clearly and ably explained, and as forcibly condemned, the mischievous tendencies of the "policy of exasperation," has now freely accepted the great apostle of that policy as the representative of the county under his pastoral jurisdiction, and has gone so far as to direct the Catholic chapels there to be made use of for the collection of a fund to defray the expenses of his election.

The gentry, in general, escaped the snare set for them by invitations to the "distress meetings." An attempt was made to secure the attendance of some leading proprietors near Ballina at a meeting, by sending them copies of moderate and reasonable resolutions, quite different from those which were really to be proposed, but failed in its object.

Several members of Parliament honourably refused to bid for popular favour by being present on these occasions. Col. King-Harman, M.P., although a "Home Ruler," was the first to speak out. He declined to attend a meeting got up amongst his constituents at Dromore West, pointing out

the manifest contradiction between the ostensible purpose and real aim of the meetings, and the bad consequences which had already begun to follow them; and Mr. Bagwell, in a letter to the *Times*, declared that they "were called for the express purpose of denouncing landlords wholesale." Other landlords wrote in a similar strain, drawing attention to the absurdity of asking them to attend at what were really demonstrations against themselves and their order, and to the ridiculous position in which compliance with such a request would place them. They also severely censured the heartlessness which, instead of honestly trying to relieve the distress of the poor, would use it for selfish purposes. Although the agitation was thus early shown in its true colours, it was little checked. We shall speak more fully of it later. As we have observed, it had the injurious effect of destroying all good feeling and gratitude to the landlords for their exertions on behalf of the suffering people. It might, also, by the constant exaggeration of the extent of the failure of crops, and consequent loss, have cast doubts on the reality of distress, and so arrested the flow of charity, but for the strenuous and untiring exertions of persons who were by position and character placed above the reach of suspicion, and whose appeals to the charity of the world met with the noble response already described.

Foremost amongst the persons engaged in the good work, was the Duchess of Marlborough, wife of the Viceroy, whose high rank and private worth inspired universal confidence, since fully borne out by the able, judicious, and impartial manner in which, assisted by a Committee, which includes many Irish ladies of position, she has distributed the large sums entrusted to her management throughout the island, in many of the poorest portions of which her name is as a "household word" amongst the destitute.

Another, and still larger fund, equally well managed, was formed under the auspices of the Lord Mayor and Corporation of Dublin, and known as the Mansion-House Fund.

The spirited proprietor of the *New York Herald* also started, with the magnificent donation of £20,000, a collection, which soon reached large proportions, and is called after the American journal.

A political body, known as the "Land League," and under the control of the agitators we have referred to, also commenced collecting a fund for charitable purposes, in addition to that which they had already set on foot for political objects. Their leading agent, Mr. Parnell, made a tour in America to collect money for both funds, and to stimulate political excitement in the two countries for that end, as well as in preparation for the General Election, which it was known could not be much longer deferred.

Large sums were also sent from various quarters to the Roman Catholic Bishops of Ireland.

The city of Philadelphia contributed specially a considerable fund; and American aid came from every part of the States ungrudgingly. A vessel of the American Navy has also been freighted with seed potatoes and provisions for this country, and Western farmers are contributing produce of several kinds.

It is right to mention, that our Australian colonies are in the very front rank of those whose generosity and charity have been exerted in behalf of Ireland.

To carry out the distribution of the several Funds, local Committees, consisting of the principal inhabitants, were formed in all the districts where assistance for the poor was required; and on their representation of its necessity, and application to the Central Committees, grants were made to them.

The Duchess of Marlborough's Committee selected the Poor Law Unions as the basis of these Sub-Committees, the managers of the "Mansion House" and other Funds adopting the parochial system.

In practice it would seem that the same local Committees administered grants from all the Central Funds, an arrangement obviously desirable to prevent clashing and confusion, and the work is in general fairly, honestly, and efficiently done.

There is always some risk in undertakings of this kind, that those who have charge of the actual outlay of the money may be influenced, by private considerations, to give it rather to those in whom they are personally interested, than to the people whose poverty gives them the strongest claim to it.

Lest this might occur with the Charitable Funds, detailed instructions were issued for the formation of the Sub-Committees, directing that, in all cases, persons should be placed upon them to whom no such suspicion would be likely to attach.

A further danger is, that people who are not in need of relief, or can do without it, will compete with those actually suffering from want, in applying for it. Various precautions were taken to prevent their doing so. Orders were issued that relief should (except in cases of sickness) be given in meal only, that being the staple food of the people, which, though eagerly sought for by the hungry, might be supposed to offer less attraction to those not entirely destitute, than money payments would. In all cases, enquiries were made by the members of the Sub-Committees into the individual instances of poverty, so far as it was possible, and Inspectors visited and reported on the action of these Committees.

Although, therefore, there are probably in every district

some persons who, in spite of the vigilance exercised, are receiving relief without being, strictly speaking, entitled to do so, they seem to be comparatively few in number, and most of them objects of charity, though not in danger of absolute starvation.

There is, on the whole, little to be found fault with in the general management of the business of relief under the Funds; and those who have contributed and administered them may reflect, with gratification, that it is chiefly through their liberality and exertions, that the wants of all the most destitute portion of the Irish people have hitherto been effectually relieved.

The work, however, is not yet over.

Up to this date (April 23, 1880) the two principal Committees have expended :—

Mansion House Committee	... ..	£112,838	14	6
Duchess of Marlborough's Committee		94,562	0	0
		<hr/>		
		£207,400	14	6

If we estimate the expenditure of the other Funds and sources of relief at £75,000, which is probably not below the mark, we obtain a total of £282,400 14s. 6d.

When we consider the enormous multitude of people now on the books of the several Sub-Committees, and that they have been supported in most districts from the closing weeks of January to the present date (April 23,) this sum will not appear large, either in proportion to the extent of the distress relieved, or to the resources of the Empire; and we have a striking confirmation of the correctness of the opinion, that the easiest, cheapest, and most effectual way to deal with sudden and wide-spread distress is, to feed the people.

But as the necessity for doing so will certainly not be over until the incoming harvest, or the month of September, it is clear that, with a rate of expenditure similar to that which has been required up to the present time, a further sum of about £375,000 will be needed.\*

It cannot possibly be expected that future voluntary subscriptions to the various funds will reach this sum, and the balances remaining to their credit are comparatively small. There seems to be but one way to meet the difficulty. This is, by a free grant from the Imperial Treasury in aid of the funds.

Never was there a time when such a grant could be given more opportunely, usefully, and safely.

The machinery for its distribution is all complete, ready, and in working order; and the committee lists and books supply at once a basis for future operations, and a check upon possible dishonesty, wastefulness, and extravagance. With a proper system of control and inspection, the foundation for which is already established, no considerable danger of waste or misappropriation need be feared, and no scheme that can be devised will enable Government to get over the remaining portion of a critical period in a manner at once so easy, cheap, popular, and effective.

It will be seen that their measures up to the present time, though well-intended, have been more expensive and less effectual.

At the outset of the season, the Government required and received from the "Local Government Board," a report on

\* The employment given by the outlay of the loans to landowners and public bodies will enable a large number of labourers and their families to be taken off the relief lists, and should lessen the above estimate by nearly one-third.

harvest prospects, and the possible necessity of unusual precautions, to ensure the adequate relief of the poor.

The Board, while admitting the inferiority and deficiency of the harvest, and the scarcity of fuel, do not seem to have considered any demand likely to arise on the resources of the Unions, to which they would prove unequal; but, in order to prevent the strain on the Poor Rates, already very severe, from becoming intolerable, they advised the promotion of employment for the large number of persons who wanted and were unable to obtain it.

Thus, though the proportions and intensity of the distress were certainly magnified by the agitators, which created incredulity about them in many quarters, the Local Government Board seem to have fallen into the opposite and more dangerous error of underrating them, which they most undoubtedly did, as regards the more populous and pauperized localities, where the means afforded by the Poor-Law would have been entirely unequal to the work to be done, and where, therefore, fatal consequences might have followed, but for the prompt action of the Relief Committees. We need not dwell on this mistake, which has already been discounted at its full value by the disturbing party, but we find here an additional reason for conceding the grant already recommended, and of which the justice as well as expediency will be pointed out further on.

The recommendation of the "Local Government Board," that means should be devised to give the people employment, was immediately acted on by the Government.

They made arrangements for the loan of money to landowners at a very low rate, for the execution of various specified improvements, suited to ordinary unskilled labour. These loans were availed of to the extent of over £100,000, and in

some places the outlay of the money is producing a good result, in promoting industry, and lessening the calls on the charitable funds and local rates.

Special baronial sessions were also ordered in the Unions scheduled as "distressed," and the magistrates and ratepayers were empowered to proceed with the immediate execution of such useful public works as might seem best adapted and situated to give employment where it might be required. The money was to be advanced by the Government, and repayment spread over a term of years, owners paying one half, as in the case of Poor's Rate.

A large sum of money\* was voted in this manner. It is to be expended in the months between spring and harvest, and is expected to be valuable in employing small farmers, who have no work of their own to do at that time.

Additional Poor-Law Inspectors were appointed, with instructions to visit and report upon the state of the "distressed" Unions, and suggest any steps which might be necessary for the more effectual carrying out of the Poor Relief Acts, and stringent directions were given for the appointment of additional Relieving Officers in the Unions where they were found to be needed.

Special provision was also made to allow landholders to be relieved out of the Workhouse, which was previously illegal. This permission was made use of in several Unions, in some instances, it is to be feared, in a very indiscriminate manner, which must unduly increase taxation, and may lay the foundation of future embarrassment. A Bill, introduced by Major Nolan, and accepted by the Government, enabled Boards of Guardians to buy seed potatoes and oats, to be given to poor occupiers unable to buy them, as a loan, repayable in two

\* £76,000.

years, and chargeable on the holdings. An immense quantity of seed was given out in this way, and numbers who could not have got their crops down otherwise, now did so, and new and approved varieties of potatoes and oats were imported specially for their use, in addition to what was bought for them in the local markets, which this demand rendered more lively, thus serving the farmers generally. Much seed of both kinds was also given gratis by grant from the relief funds. It is to be regretted that there was a good deal of abuse in this matter by the re-sale of the seed by those to whom it was given. The instances in which this occurred bore, however, but a small proportion to the whole number of recipients of seed. These measures have all been useful, but the action of the Relief Committees has done the most good in abating destitution and preventing actual starvation.

The public mind has gradually become tranquillized as the apprehension of famine grew less; but it must be repeated, and cannot be too strongly urged, that the feeding of the poorer people must be continued until the autumn, and that MONEY WILL BE WANTED, and should at once be found, for that purpose. There is much reason to hope, and little to doubt, that it will be found, and that the close of the year will bring with it, the close of the present distress. The alleviation of existing ills is, however, only half the task to be accomplished, and the discovery of means to prevent or remedy future ones is the remaining, and not less serious part of it. The study of the symptoms now before us may afford some useful suggestions towards that purpose.

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## CHAPTER III.

Anxiety of public—Danger of—Extreme views advanced—Causes to which agitators ascribe distress—Their plan to prevent it—Steps to carry it out—Why they are popular—National sentiment—Extravagant theories and language—Danger of exciting Irish people—Attitude of farmers explained—Their action constitutional—Agitation not dangerous in England—Case of farmers should be considered.

WHEN general anxiety is excited, and public sympathy roused, by the sufferings of the people, and a strong desire and determination to relieve those sufferings and provide against their repetition are created, the public mind is apt to be led astray by its own impatience as well as by false guides, and to follow the unwise course of rejecting sober and sensible precautions of the solid and useful kind as tardy and unsatisfying, fixing its attention on theories, attractive but untenable, and on those specious but unpractical schemes, which, if the attempt to put them into execution be made, surely end by aggravating the evils they were foolishly expected to cure.

Such proposals are not wanting now, and as they are fraught with danger to the nation and to society, they should be taken account of in time to obviate the injury they are capable of inflicting. The most conspicuous of them is that put forward by a class of persons, to whom reference has already been made, and who, as we have seen, include amongst them many men of indefatigable energy, and a few of considerable ability. Their proposal consists in the simple but comprehensive plan of sweeping away at once the whole system of landed property, expropriating and abolishing all landlords, re-distributing land, and totally severing

the connection of the country with England, in which they profess to find the source and origin of all its ills.

They have not stopped at theory, but have proceeded to give practical effect to their views at meetings, where, as already described, they have attacked the landlords with unreserved and often scurrilous denunciation, tacitly suggesting what they feared, or were not yet prepared, to advise, the exercise of violence and outrage towards them, and towards others who did not fall in with their own views—invariably winding up with an earnest recommendation to pay no more rents willingly, and to resist all measures for their recovery—a course which they boldly asserted to be justifiable on social, moral, and religious grounds.

That such a doctrine should command loud applause, create intense excitement, and even find some sincere believers, amongst a people like the Irish, and in the present state of Ireland, can surprise no student of human nature.

To a man burdened with debts, and aware that he will find it difficult, even by exercising his utmost energy, to discharge them, it would be welcome news that no legal or moral obligation bound, and no compulsion could oblige, him to do so, and the tempter who brought him such a message might do so with the confidence that no extraordinary exercise of diabolical ingenuity or metaphysical subtlety would be required to triumph over human weakness subjected to so extreme a trial. There has never been, perhaps, a time or a country, when the heavy pressure of poverty did not make that portion of the people who suffered most from its effects receive with welcome the insidious and delusive projects of those who held out to them the attractive proposal of a confiscation of property, for the purpose of a re-distribution, in which all should have a share.

The enthusiasm with which similar theories are now received, is therefore easily explained; but the movement which has aroused it springs also from a second source, which adds doubly to its intensity.

This is the sentiment of nationality, which the promoters of the movement have adroitly taken into their service, stimulating specially the form it commonly takes in Ireland, of hatred to England, and consequent unreasoning prejudice against all English institutions, and dislike and disloyalty to English Government. Hence, on these occasions, landlords, rent, property, and government, are, in bursts of turgid oratory, consigned to eternal perdition amid thunders of applause, in addition to which the more excitable and evil-disposed of the audience signify their approval by an accompaniment of coarse and pithy phrases of similar import; and while it is arranged that the rights of landowners are to be resisted passively (or even actively, in case of any attempt to enforce them), at home, the representative institutions of a free people are to be made use of (under protest) for the "strictly constitutional" attack by which England is to be encountered and defeated in her own Parliament—a fitting prelude to the more glorious victory which Irishmen, "prepared to shed the last drop of their blood," are hereafter to gain over her in the stricken field.

To Englishmen, and other persons living out of Ireland, and not intimately acquainted with its circumstances and history, all this violence of language, and that of action, which sometimes goes along with or follows it, seem to prove that the whole country is in an utterly lawless and hopeless state, and that at any moment an insurrection, or attempt at revolution, may be expected. These dangers are, indeed, not wholly imaginary or impossible. A few years ago, the

presence of some military adventurers, supplied not very largely with American funds, was sufficient to produce an abortive insurrection; and it would be a mistake to underrate the immense amount of injury to the resources and progress of the country, which it may be still possible for unscrupulous persons to effect by a similar outbreak, were it to take place, and to be allowed to obtain even a limited and temporary success. Now, as on that occasion, there are a large proportion of the poor, unsuccessful, and discontented, amongst the town population, and the idle and improvident in the rural districts, who would be quite in earnest in such an undertaking. What kind of masters they would prove to be, should they, by any conceivable possibility, succeed in getting the upper hand, is, probably, pretty thoroughly realized by the other classes, and makes it more unlikely that they will ever be allowed to do so.

The rapid and utter collapse of the outbreak shows this, and goes to prove what is certainly the fact, that the bulk of the holders of the land are averse to violence. So far as the more independent of the farmers are concerned, there is a great deal of unreality and make-believe about the demonstrations which have taken place, and their part in which, although marked enough, is, in reality, very much a game of brag.

If they could make use of all this excitement to secure the legal reforms and advantages they seek, it would be a good stake won, and there would, in their opinion, be still time enough to prevent things going too fast or too far.

In taking this view, and carrying it out practically, it must be admitted that they are acting very much in conformity with the practice by which most great constitutional reforms have been won in England, where they have often

been heralded by rioting and language not much less violent than anything we have lately heard of.

But there, the attachment of the Englishman to his native land, to her institutions, and (subject to the reforms demanded at the time) to her laws, the innate and inextinguishable pride with which he cherishes the sentiment that, after all said and done, his country is the first and freest in the world, and his firm conviction that her liberties and her future rest upon a basis too solid to be disturbed by any commotion, however violent, form a safeguard of the strongest kind, which, as we have seen, is wanting in Ireland, where the prevalence of an opposite feeling lends a far greater bitterness to all agitation.

While deprecating this bitterness, and the reckless manner in which it has been fostered and used for party and personal purposes by unscrupulous political adventurers, it is advisable, at the present time, to take into careful and immediate consideration the attitude of the Irish farming population (comprising, as they do, the greater part of the inhabitants), and to enquire what the grievances are of which they complain, as to rent and tenure, and whether any, and if so, what connection exists between them and the present distress.

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## CHAPTER IV.

Farmers' grievances—Rents—Sometimes excessive—Why—Land-hunger of the people—*Irish World*—Middlemen—Subdivision—Practice of older landlords—Advantage of good estate management—Bad landlords—Encumbered Estates Act—Effect of—Wholesale eviction—Rent raising—Discontent—Ulster custom—Other customs—Common usage—Contrast of good and bad landlords—Conduct of latter made legislation necessary—Land Act.

THE first in importance of these grievances is generally stated to be the amount charged as rent, for the use or occupation of land.

It cannot be doubted by anyone who has made himself acquainted with the subject, that there are numerous instances in most parts of Ireland, in which the amount so charged by owners has, especially of late years, been excessive.

That it has been so is owing to three causes—the circumstances of the country, the state of the laws, and most of all, to the peculiar character of the Irish peasantry.

Little enviable as others may consider their condition (as already described), their own ambition soars no higher, and the possession of a piece of land, on almost any terms, is the object of their strongest desires, their hopes and fears, for which they will toil, plan, struggle, conspire, and, unhappily, sometimes even assassinate. They will also offer, for the interest or "good-will" (an expressive term in Ireland) of a tenant, who may vacate his holding for any reason, sums amounting to very many years' purchase on the rent paid for it, and, apparently, quite disproportionate to its real value, and to pay these, will get into debt and leave themselves entirely without farming capital. This, indeed, many of them

scarcely seem to think necessary, being always ready to enter upon the possession of a farm without any more of it than their individual labour may supply—so that the number of competitors for land is literally almost co-extensive with the adult male population. This description may appear exaggerated, but I find a curious illustration of its correctness in a programme laid down by a writer in that remarkable Irish-American organ, *The Irish World*,\* one paragraph of which informs us, that—

“The men of to-day have discovered that there is such a thing as Land, and that EVERY MAN born into the world, within the sea-girt margin of Ireland, has an *inalienable right* to a MAN’S SHARE of that land.”

What “a man’s share” of the land would be, in a few decades, with a population increasing like the Irish, may be imagined.

To that portion of the “men of to-day,” who form the majority of the labourers and poor inhabitants in many American towns and cities, the “discovery” may be new, and they certainly have never shown much anxiety hitherto to occupy their share of the land America has so freely offered them. But their Irish ancestors had apparently not only made the discovery, but done their utmost to act upon it, by clutching eagerly at such a share of the soil as it was in any way practicable to obtain.

It was in their time, and in this way, that the “middle man” system sprang up, which formerly did so much to impoverish the country.

Speculators then leased large tracts of land from the owners

\* For the whole passage, and further detailed information on this subject, see Mr. P. Bagenal’s clever pamphlet, “Parnellism Unveiled.”

(generally absentees) and let them out in small portions to all comers, at the highest rate they could exact; and every farmer and landholder, who, from want of intelligence, industry, or capital, failed to make his land pay, followed their example.

This system gave way at once under the first serious check which it received, from bad seasons and arrested prosperity, and the greater carefulness and vigilance of landlords have almost entirely put an end to it; but the subdivision of land to an undue extent, which it left behind it could not be so easily got over, and improvement in the habits and circumstances of the tenants on such properties has, even after the removal of the "middle man," and under the most careful management, been very slow.

The tendency to subdivide and sublet, particularly by insolvent and unthrifty tenants, still exists, as a natural accompaniment of the great desire for land, and constant care must be exercised by owners in order to prevent it.

Notwithstanding this extraordinary competition for the possession of land, and the temptation it has offered to improve their incomes by rack-renting, the vast majority of Irish landlords, the older ones in particular, never availed themselves of it to extract exorbitant rents. This was, no doubt, partly because they were aware that to do so would be impolitic in good seasons, difficult, if not impossible, in bad ones; but much more, because their tradition and practice had been to deal fairly and even generously with those under them, from whom they expected, and in general received, gratitude and respect, sometimes, no doubt, an unreasonable degree of submissiveness. Up to the year 1848, changes in the ownership of land were few and gradual, and the new purchasers endeavoured, almost invariably, to follow the best traditions of the class they joined.

On most of these older properties the land is still held at rates which have had but a very moderate increase during the present century, in proportion to the rise in value of the produce of the soil, and while the rent was regularly paid, the tenant, with hardly an exception, has never been disturbed, or deprived of his farm, or any part of it; and upon them the majority of the tenantry have not only been able to provide for the necessities of their daily life, but to save money for the advent of the inevitable "rainy-day," or for the purpose of portioning their daughters, or adding, when possible, to their farms.

They have been prevented from flitting away their lands by subdivision, from allowing the incubus of "squatter" paupers to gather upon them, from destroying their productive quality, by burning and similar injurious practices—they have had, as far as the owners were able, accommodation afforded them by the making of public and private roads, main drainage, and works of a like useful character; and it may not unfairly be assumed, that had an arbitrary and sudden abolition of rents taken place, the tenants on these estates might, in the end, have been in a worse condition than when they had to pay reasonable rents, but at the same time had the constant care and intelligent supervision of those whose business it was to promote, in every way, their solvency and comfort, knowing these to be the best security that those rents would be punctually paid.

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that, on this account, existing laws do not stand in any need of reform.

An arrangement, by which the industry, security, and prosperity of a great portion of the people are liable to be injuriously affected by the capricious action of any man, or small body of men, cannot be sound, rational, or conducive

to the public good, and illustrations of the evil brought about in that manner have never been wanting. There have always been a certain number of Irish landlords, usually of the smaller kind, who have been accustomed to squeeze all they could out of the soil and its cultivators, whom they kept in a state little removed from chronic starvation. These men are responsible for the outcry against landlords, which is, in their case, but in that only, fully justified.

It is well known, and much to be regretted, that a very large accession to their numbers was produced by the sweeping change in the ownership of land which took place after the famine years by the institution of the Encumbered and Landed Estates Courts. The effect of the operation of these Courts, which was to throw into the market an unprecedented amount of property, often on terms ruinous to the unfortunate owners, induced a crowd of petty capitalists, and many large ones, to speculate in land, which they bought up, not as previous purchasers had done, with the hope of acquiring the position and status of landed proprietors, but, in most instances, solely with a view to make the utmost possible profit of the transaction, and realise the largest interest on the money they invested. The traditions of the older landlords, the comfort, advantage, and happiness of the tenants, were without significance for them. And it was almost universally observed, that those who had accumulated their money in the same neighbourhood in which they purchased land, local shop-keepers, farmers, money-lenders, &c., became the most harsh and grasping in their new capacity. Nor was this the only evil complained of. As small tenants can never pay as much rent, and do not offer as good security, as large farmers and graziers, it became no unusual occurrence for proprietors of the less scrupulous kind to evict them wholesale from their

holdings, and let the land they had occupied, in large tracts, either to tillage farmers, or, as more usually happened, for grazing purposes. Even amongst the older proprietors there were some who now followed this course, defending it on the ground that during the famine years they had been reduced almost to ruin by non-payment of rent, and heavy poor's rate, and that they were protecting themselves against such a contingency in the future. Although bad landlords, old and new together, still remained a minority of the owners of property, their dealings gradually fostered and intensified a feeling of discontent and dissatisfaction with the land system throughout the country. This is not surprising, as their proceedings, in addition to the positive injury they inflicted on their own tenants, were at once a challenge and a temptation to all other landlords, and therefore a standing menace and danger to the tenantry of Ireland. To men, whose estates were let at a moderate rate, with perfect security to the occupiers, it was clearly a challenge to see a neighbouring owner claiming and exercising rights while they had practically surrendered, by leaving them always in abeyance, and to know that his land, of no better quality than theirs, was let to solvent holders at from one-half to two-thirds more, or even a greater difference, especially if (as often occurred) the owner was a wealthy man, and they themselves, perhaps, sorely in need of money, and it was evidently a temptation also, which they mostly, to their credit, resisted.

In several counties of the province of Ulster, where owner and occupier were in general united by the tie of a common religious belief, the tenantry had established a precedent in their favour, which gave them much more security than was enjoyed elsewhere. This was known as the "Ulster Tenant Right," and had much of the force of law; and the tenant's

title to the value of his interest, and his right to dispose freely of it to the highest bidder, were always recognised as legally belonging to him by the landlords.

In other parts of the country the practice and custom was, that tenants should pay only a fair rent, and should, while paying that rent regularly, enjoy security of tenure, and the exercise of the owner's legal power to set his estate at the highest market rate, or to resume possession of it from a rent-paying tenant, was always regarded (in the case of resident occupying farmers) as an intolerable hardship.

Thus, the fact of being in occupation came to be considered as conferring a right to remain so, subject to the payment of such a rent as might be considered reasonable, and this occupation, or "tenant right," was the object of sale and purchase, extravagant sums, as has been stated, being frequently paid for it.

Most landowners out of Ulster objected to any formal recognition of the right, fearing it might lessen the value, or interfere with the management, of their property, but they did not, in consequence, raise their rents, or eject their tenants, reserving usually, only a *veto* on the transfer, to prevent the entry of insolvent or objectionable persons on their estates, which did not interfere with the general custom.

Ireland, therefore, presented to the observer the spectacle of a country in which all the more important, enlightened, and respected men of the upper classes had, by their common usage, virtually surrendered the power of exercising rights to which they were entitled by the letter of the law—while, at the same time, many of the inferior and less public-spirited owners were engaged in trying to put into active execution all the legal provisions for the enforcement of these very rights, their conduct in doing so being contrary to custom and public

feeling, and evidently to the disadvantage of the commonwealth, and the special and private injury of a great number of their countrymen, and therefore calculated to prejudice the cause of law and order, and to bring undeserved odium on Irish landlords in general.

When the letter of the law is in this manner brought into conflict with approved custom and established usage, and danger and injury to the public interest ensue, the result, under free institutions, will always be the same. The law will give way, slowly, perhaps, and with struggle, opposition, and delay—but not the less surely. It did so here. The old Land Law was altered and modified, and the “Ulster” and other customs confirmed and legalized by the passing of the “Land Act,” which, at the same time, recognised and established the “occupation right” of the resident agricultural tenant, placing a certain value upon it, which the owner was bound to pay in the event of his exercising the power of resumption or “disturbance.” Powers were also given to tenants of all classes to recover the value of improvements made by them, and to assist them, under certain circumstances, in the purchase of their holdings.

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## CHAPTER V.

Land Act deemed insufficient—Amendments required—Perpetuity—Valuation first enunciated by O'Connell—Improvements—No advance on O'Connell's opinion—Principle for just legislation—Protest of small occupiers against large ones—Free sale—Better state of feeling probable—Attitude of owners.

THIS measure fell far short of what the Irish tenants considered necessary for their protection, and since then, every aspirant to their favour has found the best passport to that distinction to be some new "Land Bill," or some proposed extension of the provisions of the old one; and the present agitation is supported by the farmers, as already stated, because they think it may favour the grant of such an extension, of which they have now for many years entertained the expectation.

Although this expectation has led to the ventilation of many impolitic, unjust, and visionary projects, it is not without a substantial basis in justice and expediency.

Both of the great English Constitutional parties have at last accepted, more or less willingly, the principle of the "Land Act," and having done so, they are bound to carry it to its logical conclusions. One of the most obvious of these is, that the "tenant-right," having been once admitted, there can be no sufficient reason for giving the landlord an arbitrary <sup>POWER</sup> ~~right to~~ compulsory purchase of the tenants' interest.

"Les droits sont, ou il ne sont pas : s'ils sont, ils entraînent des conséquences absolues."\*

\* Thiers.

The consequences which follow from the admission of this right, should therefore be legally established, subject only to the conditions of occupancy, on the fulfilment of which the right depends; also, as an "occupation right," in which these conditions are mutable by the arbitrary act of one of the parties concerned, would be of no value, they should be guarded, not only, as at present, against infraction by the occupier, but also against invasion by the owner—the chief and usual form of which has been capricious increase of rent.

So far back as the time of O'Connell, that remarkable man formulated these demands as "Compulsory Valuation and Fixity of Tenure," perceiving thus early that one is but the complement of the other, and that in them was centred the want and wish of the Irish tenant.

After his time, the question, during many years, branched off into the matter of "compensation for improvements," great complaints having arisen, that, where these improvements were made by the tenant, which was very generally the case in Ireland, he ran the risk of losing the value of them by the exercise of the owner's legal power of eviction or rent raising. Some of these complaints were unfounded, or at least exaggerated, but a great many were just, and there can be no doubt that a substantial grievance and hardship existed. It is not necessary to enter into the consideration of the matter here, the clauses of the "Land Act" relating to it being fully adequate to their object, and the really vital part of the question being that which we have been engaged with.

It does not appear that the outline of reform indicated by O'Connell has been materially changed or improved upon by the numerous speakers and writers who have taken up the subject since.

It has, indeed, as a leading popular organ observes in a late issue, been "thoroughly thrashed out;" and in devoting so much space to it here, the object has been to discover, if possible, a principle by which the understanding of the matter may be simplified, and the grain separated from the enormous mass of chaff which covers it.

This principle we have endeavoured to show is, that "Tenant Right" should be the legal definition and consolidation of the best usage approved by Irish public opinion and feeling. In this way we may hope to get clear of the numberless intrigues and side issues which are being continually originated by persons who are seeking to derive from the proposed reforms advantages for themselves, to which they have really no claim, and the grant of which would sometimes involve grave injustice and public injury.

One of the most conspicuous of these is the clamour raised for "Tenant Right" by a class of persons to whom it was properly refused by the "Land Act," which practically limited the grant of it to farmers whose valuation did not, at the time the Act was passed, exceed £100 yearly. The limit might, perhaps, be widened with advantage, but it really includes the whole of those who were by custom allowed the enjoyment of "Tenant Right," on the principal estates in Ireland; and it also comprises (as will be seen by looking back to the tabular statement of their numbers) the vast majority of Irish landholders, and all who have any real grievance to complain of.

Notwithstanding that it does so, a number of the large grazing and tillage farmers, who are quite outside the bounds laid down, joined in the cry for an amendment of the Act, with particular insistence on their right to have their own cases included in its operation, and "fixity of tenure" given to them. As they were, most commonly, men of considerable

wealth, much energy, and tolerable education, they were allowed to take a leading part in the movement by farmers' clubs and similar bodies.

Some were originally small farmers, who had, by their industry and thrift, become wealthy, adding acre to acre, and absorbing their poorer neighbours, until they attained a position in which they could make their own terms, being, at least, as independent as the owners from whom they rented their lands. There were also wealthy graziers, often occupying tracts from which smaller tenants had been evicted—traders, residing in towns, and turning their surplus cash by farming, land-jobbers and farming speculators, Scotch as well as Irish, who, having quite recently managed to get hold of large quantities of land, now wanted also to get, on their own terms, a permanent hold upon it, to which neither prescriptive right, custom, good policy, nor common honesty, gave them any claim.

The tenants who were, on all these grounds, justly entitled to expect legal protection, were not, in all cases, so blind as not to perceive the amount of injury which might accrue to their cause from the advancing of such groundless pretensions, unsupported as they were by even the low motive of expediency; and a vigorous protest was made against them by the "Tenants' Defence Association" of Ballinasloe, in the early part of last year, and great stress laid on the necessity of shutting out the class of persons referred to from the operation of the Land Act, or any new measure of the same kind, by a limited valuation clause. Their claims ought to be rejected with the reprobation their dishonesty deserves.

Laying aside, therefore, these and the other unjust or impracticable proposals which have, from time to time, been made, the first remedial measure now required is to perfect

the "Land Act," on the principle enunciated, giving full and permanent security to the resident occupier, and protecting him effectually against arbitrary increase of rent, while clearly defining the broad distinction which has always been recognised as separating him from the land-holding speculator and monopolist, who should not be given the right of keeping, as his own property, the tracts of land, however broad, which he may have succeeded in getting into his possession, but should receive the grant of "Tenant Right," only within the limits of a residential farm, not exceeding the valuation to be specified in the Act.

The difficulty of fixing the rent is thought, by many practical men, to be the greatest obstacle to this settlement of the question. Here, again, the practice of well-regulated properties will guide us. On these, valuations were sometimes found to be desirable, and competent persons were employed to make them, with instructions to fix the rents at a standard which would allow the tenants to pay them without injustice to their families and themselves. There can be no reason why a Government department, taking evidence on both sides in case of dispute, should not do this equally well, and command more confidence, so carrying into effect the "Compulsory Valuation" which O'Connell, himself a landlord, as well as an able, practical lawyer, first devised. As the tenant would then have a valuable and tangible interest in his holding, it is evident that he should be confirmed in the further right claimed, that of an unrestricted power to dispose of it, sufficient security being provided against any attempt on his part to evade, while doing so, his obligations to the owner.

In this way a large class of people, comprising some of the most useful and industrious of the population, would be placed in a position to become more solvent and independent

than they now are, and, therefore, probably better citizens, and more earnest supporters of social order; and it might reasonably be expected, that additional strength would be given to the country to struggle with, and overcome, these attacks of scarcity and poverty, hitherto periodic, from which the vicissitudes of business and of the seasons may make it impossible entirely to escape. As this settlement of land tenure would be as nearly final as such arrangements can be, we might also hope that the disturbed and unsatisfactory state of public feeling, which now enables every farmer, who cannot meet the most legitimate demands upon him, to parade himself as a victim of oppression, and, by doing so, obtain undeserved sympathy, and makes men look for greater benefit from political juggling than from persevering industry, would cease to exist, and the country would be saved from the heavy pecuniary loss, and greater moral injury, so sustained. To the settlement of Land Tenure here recommended, the majority of Irish landowners have been, and probably still are, opposed, including even those whose own action has been in accordance with the principle on which that settlement is based. This is very natural. Men seldom willingly surrender a right or privilege, even when they have never exercised it, and would scruple to do so. And, in the opinion of competent authority, the original Land Act diminished the market-value of estates considerably, without producing that security for the payment of rents, which was predicted to be one of the benefits which would be bestowed by it on the landlords.

It is likely, however, that the completion of the measure would give this security, and that a rise in the value of property would follow. So valuable and extensive a reform should also do much to diminish seditious agitation, as has

been pointed out, and as the interests of owner and occupier would no longer be opposed, we might hope to see them working in concert for the public benefit, and owners selected, as they naturally would be, to become the leaders of the people and the exponents of public opinion.

It is, therefore, earnestly to be hoped that the landowners' opposition will shortly, both on public and private grounds, be withdrawn.

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## CHAPTER VI.

Objection to Land Act—"Retrograde Legislation"—Free Trade—Tenure—English land system—Its effects—Accumulation of landed estate—Restrictive effect of system injurious—Reform demanded—Irish tenants cannot wait—Bright Clauses—Encumbered estates—Condition of owners unsatisfactory—Purchase of estates by Government—Experiment in "Free Land"—Land Law Reform—Its use to Ireland—Would not satisfy agitators—Property in Land universally valued most—Number of owners should be increased—"Free Land."

A GRAVER objection is, that this legislation is "retrograde," or in opposition to the principle generally believed to be the foundation of the wonderful commercial and industrial progress of England in our own time, that of "free trade," or of removing all artificial restrictions upon the dealings of man with man, and it is right to explain the origin of this opposition.

In treating of the Irish Land Question, it has been usual to consider it (as in the present instance) entirely with relation to the circumstances of the tenant farmers, and, consequently, under one aspect only, that of tenure, an arrangement of which, on the broad and simple basis here suggested, would satisfy their immediate needs in the matter of reform.

But there are other aspects of the question, no less serious, with reference to which the demands for reform are hardly less urgent.

The most prominent of these is that of the ownership of land.

When we come to examine into it, we find that, while manufacture, trade, and commerce were being gradually freed from every one of the trammels which hindered their expansion, legislation was for centuries directed to providing every means which human ingenuity could devise, by which the land of the kingdom could be accumulated in the hands of the smallest number of persons, by which every possible difficulty should be thrown in the way of its transfer or redistribution by them, and by which even their own control over it should be limited and fettered. We find here no vestige of Free Trade, freedom of contract, or freedom of action in any shape, but in their place an obsolete, artificial, costly, and complicated system, affecting every one concerned in the ownership, transmission, and transfer of land.

The evils of such a system are obviously not confined to owners, but re-act upon the occupiers; and, while it continues to prevail, it is vain to expect that there will be any real freedom of contract between them. The owner is not free to pursue either his inclination or his advantage, being hemmed in by restrictions and limitations on every side, and the freedom of the occupier is little more than liberty as to the undertaking what he may find it impossible to perform.

It is not proposed here to enter upon the further investigation of this side of the general question. It has for some time past occupied the attention of politicians in England, where only the extraordinary industrial and commercial prosperity of the country could have kept it so long in

abeyance, and has been ably dealt with by recent speakers and writers, whose reasoning goes to prove that a radical reform, amounting nearly to abolition of the present system, is, in the interest of all parties, imperatively required.

In Ireland, with so little manufacture or commerce, it would be still more valuable.

But it does not need much experience in politics or legislation to know that reforms, however necessary and ultimately certain, may be indefinitely delayed.

This delay, the interests of the Irish tenantry cannot longer endure, and therefore it is, that "retrograde" legislation, in the matter of tenure, is made necessary by the existence of obsolete laws of ownership, and that, until the more or less distant period, when a radical reform of those laws shall allow the gradual operation of economic causes to effect the more natural distribution of the land, the palliative measures of "perpetuity of tenure" and "Valuation of Rent" are essential to secure the occupiers in the undisturbed enjoyment of their farms and homes.

Although this is of the first necessity, there is no reason why a simultaneous movement should not be made towards a more natural and advanced condition. A step of this kind has been already taken in connection with the first measure of security of tenure, the Land Act of 1870, by the introduction of the "Bright Clauses." But the technical difficulties of the old land legislation have stood in the way of their action, and their effect has been but small. The arrangement made at the Disestablishment of the Irish Church for the sale of farms to the tenants has been more successful, a large number of them having become purchasers, and their progress has been so satisfactory as to afford encouragement for the extension of the system.

There is now in Ireland a very large amount of landed property on which tenure might be exchanged for ownership with advantage to all who are interested in it. This comprises the numerous estates saddled with heavy charges, annuities, and mortgages, and the owners of which, although perhaps as great losers by the present state of the land laws as any class in the community, have not hitherto received much favour from any party. They were, as we have seen, sacrificed wholesale by the earlier operation of the Encumbered and Landed Estates Courts, and the tenants lost, instead of gaining, by the change.

The leaders of the revolutionary party have, at present, announced their intention to ruin as many of them as possible, by depreciating the value of their property, on the alleged ground, that they can in that way make better terms for the tenantry. This result is very uncertain, and it seems an insufficient pretext for committing an injustice, and inflicting a hardship on any class of men, small or large. Encumbered owners are already very much between hammer and anvil—between tenants who will not pay unless the season be good, and creditors who must be paid, however bad it may prove. To this condition some of them have been reduced by the same improvidence and abuse of credit which have impoverished so many of the farmers, but the majority have received their property with heavy charges on it, and seen no way of getting free of these except by the sale of the entire estate—a proceeding which, as the law now stands, entails great cost, and, the number of purchasers being limited, generally, great loss also. They, therefore, reluctantly retain possession of property to which they cannot do justice as owners, and which keeps ruin suspended over them as by a hair, which every bad season threatens to cut.

The pressure on them is as real of its kind as that on the multitudes who clamour for bread, but cannot be relieved in the same manner, and they belong to a class more solicitous to conceal difficulties than to parade them. Were it open to them to dispose of their land, easily, cheaply, and quickly, in lots to suit purchasers, it would be easy for them to escape from the anxieties to which they are now exposed, and they are, therefore, amongst those who must eagerly look forward to the reform which shall establish "Free Trade in Land." In the meantime, the great advantages which a rich and powerful Government possesses in borrowing money should be turned to account by inducing them to sell, which a fairly liberal offer would be likely to do, and the properties so purchased by the State should be re-sold to the farmers, allowing them a certain term of years for the repayment of principal and interest. These might form the basis for the establishment of a "Free Land" system, as they might, without injustice to any one, be declared free from all the legal fetters which affect older properties, and held, on a simple method of registration and tenure, such as has been followed successfully in our colonies, liberating them for ever from the bonds of settlement, limitation, and entail.

Land Law Reform then, to the extent so far advised, and by the peaceable, gradual, and constitutional methods indicated, would certainly have its effect in decreasing the probabilities of future distress in Ireland. It would encourage those who have capital, the greatest want of the country, to invest it there, in the development of the one great industry, that of agricultural production. It would remove the barriers which interpose between classes, and which prevent their working together for the public good, and would remove the grievances which estrange the subject from the Government,

and it would be likely to increase largely the reserve of production which it has heretofore needed but a slight additional demand to exhaust, and so would probably enable the country to tide over seasons of difficulty, without being reduced to the humiliating necessity of appealing for external aid.

It is true that it would not prevent the continued existence of a land-owning class.

This should be a point in its favour.

It has been an accepted maxim in the most civilised countries, that wealth, however acquired, could not be placed in a security more eligible, safe, and honourable than that obtained by the purchase of a part of the soil of the country. The man who has been able to make such purchases largely is everywhere a person of importance. He has not only accumulated riches, but has so disposed of them, that the safety and prosperity of the country are, by that disposal, become matters of the greatest personal moment to him, his income depending mainly on them. Hence, he usually occupies an honoured position, and is felt to be the man who would naturally be selected to represent the general interests of the country at home and abroad. And it is certain that everywhere the land-owning class have been second to none in devotion, courage, ability, and patriotism.

To extend the number of this class would seem the obvious interest of every nation ; but exactly the opposite has been done in England, where, as we have seen, the operation of the present law tends to keep the land in the smallest possible number of hands, and to prevent the possibility of capital finding its natural way to this most desirable investment.

And one of the secondary results of the same law is the toleration accorded to those revolutionary and destructive theories which propose the abolition of landed property, and

which in Ireland would demolish a system of government to which even writers belonging to foreign and sometimes hostile nations have been obliged to concede their tribute of admiration and esteem.

Freedom from the restrictive action of this law is the real need of the country. With it, property in land would become not indeed the "inalienable right" of the proletarian and pauper, but the crown and reward of industry, thrift and perseverance, by the exercise of which every man, however poor, might hope in time, if so inclined, to acquire and enjoy his share of it—without violence, without invading the rights of any one; but by the honest method of paying for the article wanted a better price than an artificially contracted market now allows its owners to obtain.

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## CHAPTER VII.

Causes of distress—Swinford Relief Committee—Sub-letting—Over population—Neglect by owners—Reckless letting—Rents of pauper tenants a small matter—Want of Employment—English wages—Loss of same—Decrease of English farm-labourers—Cause of—Law of settlement—Imperial grant justified—County of Donegal—Mr. Tuke's report—Failure of wages—Sustaining power of each class of tenant—How pauper districts are created.

THERE are, however, causes for the increase of poverty and periodic return of destitution in Ireland, which cannot be eradicated by any changes in the laws affecting land.

The following extract from the printed Appeal of the Swinford (County Mayo) Relief Committee, appears to present, in an aggravated form, features, some of which will be found common to every distressed district. An examination into

these will enable us to form an opinion on the general subject, and perhaps suggest some remedies for the evil :—

“ These poor lands are let at the highest figure that can be obtained  
 “ by rack-renting, aided by that competition which has ever been the  
 “ bane of the Irish tenant . . . . . The fatal system of sub-letting,  
 “ carried out to the last degree, has stocked the locality with an im-  
 “ poverished population. *Hundreds of them own barely the spot on*  
 “ *which their wretched hovels stand.* Huddled together in a state of  
 “ unmixed misery, each family surpassing its neighbour in the miser-  
 “ able appearance of themselves and their houses. Their yearly food  
 “ depends on the produce of a patch of potatoes, the rent, seed, &c.,  
 “ of which are paid for by the few pounds earned in England during  
 “ the harvest months. Employment at home there is none. It is  
 “ needless to say that when blight destroys the potato crop, their all  
 “ is gone, and only the workhouse, or public charity, remains to save  
 “ them from starvation.”

The “ rack-renting ” would be put an end to by the measures already advised.

But it is evident from this description, that it has but very remote connection with the worst evils pictured so graphically. The “ fatal system . . . . . which has stocked the locality with an impoverished population,” has done much more mischief; but what has been most wanting, is that proper and careful management of the property by the owner, which we have before described as so valuable to the tenants themselves, and the country generally. One of the principal duties which the proper administration of estates entails on owners or their agents, is that of keeping a watchful eye and constant check on this “ fatal system of sub-letting.” We see what are the consequences when this duty is ignored.

There are, unfortunately, a very considerable number of cases in which it is neglected, through carelessness, want of foresight as to consequences, and even wilful intention. Some owners will, through benevolence, allow every man who applies

to them, leave to take up his abode on their moors and waste lands. He throws up a "hovel," like those described, and "founds" a family. He, probably, promises to pay one or more pounds for the privilege allowed, which he also, probably, does not pay. In bad years, such owners must employ these people, or pay a ruinous rate to support them.

There are also a good many small owners of land of an almost worthless description, who manage to squeeze a precarious income out of it in this way; but they watch early and late to close on every penny their wretched tenants earn; and as the arrangement invariably increases the poor-rate in their district to an amount equalling their "rent roll," they are literally levying a tax on their neighbours.

As to these poor tenants themselves, the amount of their rent, although its exaction is a hardship, has really not very much to do with their prosperity or misery. The rent of the "hundreds, who own barely the spot on which their wretched hovels stand," may be a rack-rent; but it makes only a very small item in the yearly cost of supporting a family. To provide for that, neither "Fixity of Tenure," fair rent, nor even becoming proprietors of their "wretched hovels," would assist them. What they must have is employment, and we are told that "employment at home there is none." It follows, then, that they must go to England or elsewhere to obtain it; and the fact becomes apparent that many of these villages and districts, the state of which is so appalling, are nothing more nor less than lodging-houses and hospitals for English labourers out of work, and the wretched homes of their families at all times.

In this, again, we may trace the effects of the want of "Free Land" in England. That it is which leaves the country without a rural population, and obliges it to have

recourse to Ireland to provide labourers for the prosecution of English industries, and the cultivation of English soil, leaving to Ireland the burden of providing for them at home, when their masters dispense, for any reason, with their services, and of taxation for their maintenance, when that most intolerable injustice, the law of settlement, sends them back, worn out and helpless, to their native shores.

It is clearly the aggregation of these labourers and their families in certain localities in Ireland, far distant from the usual sources of their support, which makes those places haunts of chronic distress and centres of occasional famine; and we have here a proof of the justice and fairness of the proposal already made, that Imperial resources should furnish the amount the charitable funds will need to defray the expenses of feeding these poor people until the return of the harvest.

Turning to the County of Donegal, the clear and careful statement of Mr. Tuke (*Times*, March, 1880) shews that even where no complaint is made of harshness or neglect on the owners' part, the undue aggregation of small holdings produces effects little less deplorable than those just depicted. He says, "On one estate of £5,000 a-year, the rents do not average £5, and in the districts in which we were, they do not average £3." Learning this, we need not be surprised to hear that there are in the County of Donegal 60,000 to 70,000 people destitute, and accordingly he says of the causes of distress—

"The failure of the potato is only one, and that, perhaps, the least important. It is to the failure in the receipt of wages rather than of the potato crop, that the present distress must be attributed. Much inquiry has convinced me, that without the addition of employment, for a considerable portion of the year, it is impossible for the holders of small farms, of from four to five acres and under, to exist, and

"bring up a family on them. On farms of from ten to twenty acres, men may live, and bring up a family ; but they will generally be poor. Some, with good soil, may do well, but it is on farms of from thirty to fifty acres that these men, with their wonderfully frugal habits, will thrive, and even grow rich."

The experience of every man, acquainted with rural Ireland, will confirm the correctness of this statement. It is possible for men, with four and five acre holdings, to be thriving and comfortable in the less populous and more wealthy counties, where, as Mr. Tuke says, they can have the addition of employment during a great part of the year, and where, as Mr. O'Brien observes, "such holdings are the most convenient way of housing the labourer ;" but it is the *aggregation* of them, as in Donegal or Connemara, which creates the pauper district.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

Periodic distress explained—Methods of remedy—Emigration—Why unpopular—Clergy against it—Opposed by agitators—Why—Irish in America—Their attitude—Danger to the country—Communism—Communist feeling in Ireland—Proposed migration from poor localities—Large farmers likely to hold to their farms—Large farms might be profitably divided—But not by over-populating them—Waste lands—Reclamation expensive—Process slow—Could not relieve poverty—Success hitherto the exception—Country could support a larger population—Production should be increased to do so—Capital and enterprise wanted—Government works useful—But not “relief” works—Grants to encourage industry—Industrial education and improvement in workman’s condition required.

WE may, therefore, fairly assume that the chief cause of distress and periodic famine is the increase in the population of certain poor localities, out of all proportion to the productive power of the land they live on, the wages they can earn in the district, or the resources of the neighbourhood. Among the secondary causes are unfavourable seasons, depressions in trade and commerce, slackness of demand for labour in general, exactions or neglect and bad management of landowners, and the laws restricting “free trade in land.”

The two last of these we have considered.

No precautions will prevent fluctuations in trade and commerce, or hinder the occurrence of bad seasons. Their effects can only be guarded against by the careful inculcation of prudence and economy on that portion of the people who are in a position to practise those virtues.

But for the masses of labourers, cottiers, and small farmers, who lead a hand-to-mouth life, sometimes deepening into starvation in the poor and over-populated districts, there can be no effectual or permanent help, except their removal from

places where they have neither food nor employment, to regions where both will be within their reach—in other words, emigration, that great agency by which man has brought under his control, and turned to his use, the larger portion of the habitable globe.

There is no novelty about this suggestion, and in many quarters it has already been met with marked disfavor.

For this there are several causes. There can be no doubt that the emigration after the great famine of 1847 has saved the country from experiencing a much greater breadth and intensity of distress than now exists.

But owing to the extreme poverty (far beyond anything now to be met with) and ignorance which prevailed among the peasantry at that time, and the much greater difficulty and hardship of the American and other passages, an inconceivable amount of misery was endured by the emigrants, and a very considerable loss of life incurred. Thus, although those who went, have, on the whole, done better than those who stayed behind, a painful impression was left on the minds of the people.

This, and their well-known attachment to their native land, are the sources of a great repugnance on their part to anything like an extensive emigration movement.

This repugnance is shared in a great degree, and therefore promoted, by a very influential and intelligent body of men, the Roman Catholic Clergy. Springing, as they do chiefly, from the people, they take the feeling in the first instance from their early associations; and as it is usually stated and believed that the hold of the Catholic Church on the emigrants is greatly weakened, and their devotion to her beliefs and practices lessened, theology and religion lend their strength to the original impulse. As the incomes of the clergy are

also made up virtually by a capitation tax, and therefore diminish with the decrease of population, an unconscious bias against emigration, as creating such a diminution, can hardly fail to prevail amongst them.

The dislike to it is also, much less honestly, encouraged by the agitators, and other popular politicians, to the utmost of their ability.

The very origin and mainspring of their apparent power and influence is the prevalence amongst a considerable number of the people of the discontented temper, which almost invariably accompanies a distressed condition. To ameliorate that condition by lawful and practical means would be a worthy ambition, but it is not theirs.

To maintain it in a chronic state, with themselves the exponents and prophets of the discontent it generates, suits their purposes better, and cannot be more effectually accomplished than by misleading the people as to the real reasons of the evils they suffer from, ascribing them to misgovernment or oppression (in Ireland always a welcome explanation), appealing to their weakness by describing all their misfortunes as "grievances" arising from the misconduct of others, and steadily decrying and discrediting all honest efforts to relieve them, while holding out delusive hopes of a cure for their ills by remedies which accord with their follies and prejudices, but would be either impossible, or irreconcilable with honesty, morality, or policy.

Although emigration is thus denounced from every platform, and disliked by the people, the Irish have, when circumstances rendered it unavoidable, been ready enough to take up their residence in the colonies, and still more so in the United States, and although they seem to lose there that extravagant eagerness to possess land which distinguishes

them at home, their numbers increase with equal rapidity, being now nearly double that of the home population.

In spite of these facts, their popular orators here, and occasionally in America itself, always speak of their residence there as banishment, transportation, exile, or in similar terms of disparagement, and would seem to believe that it is better for the people to lead a pauper existence (even under the much abused English rule) in Ireland, on a precarious diet of potatoes and salt, with such additions to it as English wages may sometimes supply, than to avail themselves of the advantages which the "Free and Enlightened Republic" is able to offer.

It is curious that a people so vain of their country and institutions as the Americans are, and with so considerable a sense of humour as they possess, do not seem to have hitherto noticed the absurdity of this behaviour.

One "gentleman of great intelligence" (and probably some humour also, which seems to have escaped his interlocutor) did indeed gravely recommend a leading agitator to take the Irish people over bodily to America, and so escape from British mis-rule altogether. The proposal, one not more impracticable than many which have been favourably received in Ireland, was met with all due respect, but naturally, dismissed wholly on patriotic grounds.

There is reason to believe that the Americans are gradually becoming alive to the danger threatening their own freedom and institutions, from the increase within their boundaries of a people who seem as little likely to assimilate with their citizens as with those of England, where so many of them are now settled. Their energies may, for a time, find vent in such harmless safety-valves as the Fenian fiasco in Canada, or the abortive insurrection subscribed for in Ireland.

But organisations of an extensive kind, amongst a people who keep distinct from their fellow-citizens, and who are numerous and rapidly increasing, turbulent, excitable, and ready to contribute money freely, and use their physical and political power recklessly at the dictation of adventurers who know how to appeal with sufficient dexterity to their passions and impulses, cannot but be a subject of serious uneasiness to the rulers and the other inhabitants of the great Republic.

Even there, with all its immense resources, boundless tracts of yet unclaimed land, and openings for enterprise and employment on every side, the occasional depressions which must everywhere occur in trade and industry, have shown that the possibilities of a Communist movement are lurking; and it is ominous that the popular and accepted Irish-American organ also represents that movement.

In America, as in older countries, statesmen may have to find an answer to the question—

What is to be done with an unemployed population, tending every day to increase in numbers and pauperism? Admitting that the “*droit au travail*” is a fallacy, and impossible, you will concede the “right not to starve.” And as this involves their gratuitous support for an indefinite period, at the expense of the remainder of the people, what steps will you take to check the growth, and bear the pressure, of so terrible a public burden?

Space does not admit of our going further into these questions here, and, as in this country an answer to them adequate to the needs of the time can be given, they are perhaps beyond the scope of this inquiry.

The development of Communistic theories amongst the poor and the idle in Ireland is, however, one, and not the least, of the evils for which the present excitement is to

blame. It has been promoted in some places even by the giving of relief. The idea has not been wanting amongst these people that the Government and upper classes *must*\* provide for them, and they have had counsellors who diligently impressed this on them, and advised them to take all they could get, and NOT be thankful. Much of the gratitude which the generous charity bestowed on them would otherwise have elicited, has in this way been stifled.

This should not, and will not, stop the action of beneficence towards them, but it is one proof more of the necessity for a vigorous effort to lessen the risk created by local overpopulation and its consequent pauperism.

Whatever method of encountering this risk future statesmen may devise, there is at present only one which is naturally obvious and easy here, a well-arranged and comprehensive system of emigration from the distressed localities.

So clear is this to every one, that the agitators themselves have been unable to deny it. But their plan for getting out of the difficulty is characteristic. It consists of proposing a general *migration* of the inhabitants from these poor districts to the less populous counties, in which all the large farms and "reclaimable waste lands" are to be divided amongst them.

How to get rid of the present holders of these large farms, is a question the difficulty of replying to which will certainly strike any one who takes up these ideas seriously.

To sweep them away, root and branch, along with the

\* In Sir C. Trevelyan's account of the state of Ireland after the great famine, the same idea is described as prevailing even to a greater extent. The farmers in many places would not sow or even *till* their land, *expecting that the Government would do it for them.*

landlords is an easy answer. But, as yet, this is kept in the background.

To "cause these lands to be thrown on the market" is the answer given, and it does not seem to carry us much further than the original proposition. As long as the present occupiers can make any reasonable profit out of their farms, they will be the very last men in the world to "throw them on the market," some of them, on the contrary, asking for "Fixity of Tenure," and, as they are able to make their own bargain with the owners, they will take good care that room is left for such profit, even if a further fall in stock or farming produce should take place.

We may admit that it would be advantageous, as increasing production in a ratio much larger than the concurrent consumption, if many of these large farms were divided into more manageable areas, and more capital expended upon the land—and the increase of the class of farmers Mr. Tuke speaks of, men holding from twenty to fifty acres, whose "wonderful frugality enables them to thrive, and even grow rich," would be a national benefit. To replace some of the large holders with men of capital and intelligence, occupying farms or estates of from 50 to 200 acres, and giving regular employment to labourers and small occupiers, might be desirable. But this is just the kind of change that cannot be effected except by natural and economic causes, although obstacles to it may be removed by the reforms already recommended.

And if we cannot at once lay our hands on the men we want, and plant them throughout the country, surely no man of sense or understanding would seriously propose to oust the present occupants of the large farms—men who pay their way, and contribute to the wealth of the country, to put in their

stead depôts of improvident pauperism, like that of Swinford, or even aggregations of petty farmers, who can neither live by their land, nor find a market for their labour, like that of Donegal.

We have spoken of the miserable state in which many small holders already are on moors and other such qualities of soil.

Reclaiming waste land is one of the most expensive processes known to modern industry. It is never attempted in new countries, where the prospectus of a fresh location invariably sets forth the number of corn crops that can be raised without manure, by merely scratching and seeding the soil. In an old country it only pays because the reclaimed land is near a market, and not always then, and there are, probably, few investments in which more money has been unprofitably sunk. If tried with the object of providing holdings for the poor in Ireland, it could only be done by giving funds to support the labourer for the first few years, with much risk that they would never be repaid. A few of the more industrious and prudent men might succeed, but it would be a very long time before they could, even with their land free, escape from the class to whom bad years bring destitution. The difference would be great, indeed, between the return they would receive for their labour and that of their families from such an undertaking, and the value of that labour in a more suitable and more favoured country, and that difference would be the price paid for the privilege of remaining within the circle of their native shores. Many, no doubt, would be willing to pay that price, and if funds can be found, the experiment might be tried, but it would be more likely to enlarge than lessen the area liable to distress, or will never rank as a likely means to decrease the number, or improve

the condition of the great majority of the Irish poor. Hitherto, almost the only successful instances of reclamation by small tenants, have been in those cases where they occupied good or middling land adjoining the reclaimable tract, and drew from it their subsistence while devoting to the work of improvement the time and labour they were able to spare.

It should be understood, that in advising emigration as the only means available for thinning out over-crowded districts, so that there may be room for the remaining inhabitants to live with some approach to comfort, we advocate it only to that extent, and without maintaining that there is any excess of population in Ireland generally, which we do not believe, holding, on the contrary, that a much greater number of people could be supported there without difficulty. But this can never be, until capital, from whatever quarter it may come, has been freely and energetically used to develop the resources, which can be made productive only by its application. Land, as we have shown, must be left free for its operation, which might be expected to double the present rate of production. Mines and fisheries, capable by themselves of employing a large population if once in working order, must be rescued from their neglected state, and set going with that vigour which only capital can impart. At the same time, no exertion should be spared to discourage the growth of pauper settlements, which could easily be done by so adjusting taxation as to punish the proprietors who are responsible for their existence.

There are also many directions in which the judicious use of the money, which a rich and powerful Government has at its command, would do great public service. Works of a kind which would not only give employment, but promote it when completed, might be begun—such as the construction of

harbours, docks, and railways, the improvement of rivers, the utilization of water-power, &c. These should not be "relief" works, where little pay is given, and less value returned, degrading the labourer into a beggar, but should be reserved for men able and willing to give "a fair day's work for a fair day's wages," so raising the workman in his own estimation, and giving him a standard which will tend to prevent his staying where he cannot find means to live up to it.

It may not be unreasonable to expect, in atonement for neglect and mismanagement, of which, though long past and gone, the traces have not yet disappeared, that Ireland should now receive from the Government of the Empire, some of that special assistance, at one time given freely to the commerce and industries of England, but of which success has long rendered them independent.

If by such grants (and the experiment is worth the cost) the languishing trade and industries of Ireland could be pushed into life and activity, and an opportunity afforded to the people to obtain the industrial training and education not now within their reach, and to see that there are means of support open to them far more liberal and as available as those with which only they are now acquainted, a sensible advance would be made towards raising the country from the lamentable condition with which we have been occupied, and which has too long been associated with the name of Ireland.

## CONCLUSION.

IN the foregoing pages we have endeavoured to give, as accurately as possible, some account of the present state of Ireland, of the distress endured there, and the excitement which prevails, and to show how much may be considered sound, and how much is untenable, in the proposals, popular and unpopular, which have been made for ameliorating the general condition of the country.

In doing so, we have confined ourselves to recommending only what seems reasonable, just, and practicable; but we have pointed to reforms which must come, sooner or later, and which, extending beyond the boundaries of this country, embrace within their range that great nation with whose destinies those of Ireland have been, and apparently must ever be, so closely united; and we have indicated the existence of difficulties and dangers, which, menacing as they do the very life of society in other empires, are neither unknown nor without significance within these kingdoms. The two subjects go naturally together. Reform is the safety valve, by the timely use of which states are saved from the perils threatening them from within. The progress of freedom, throughout the civilized world, during the ages that are past, has been, not indeed everywhere steady, but always continuous. In those countries where the reforms it called for were conceded immediately that their necessity was perceived, it has been as the process of the sunlight across the earth, all-embracing, vivifying, and majestic. Where those reforms were resisted, and their necessity denied, it was like the fitful leaps of an over-mastering fire, heating only to devour and destroy, and

followed by a long and dreary period of desolation, before new and more healthy growth could begin. The history of England has been mainly of the former kind. Under the peaceful security of institutions expanding with her own growth, she has been able to look, without anxiety for her safety, on the blaze of revolution abroad.

But, in the march of liberty, there is no more finality for England, than for other nations, and signs are not wanting, that she no longer keeps her forward place in the van of that great movement, but has begun to lag behind.

The work of regaining her former position is one of the deepest interest to all her people. If what has been written here shall, in any degree, however small, assist in that work, it will not have been penned in vain.

