



THE
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IRELAND.

I.

SEVEN hundred years have now passed since Henry the Second attached Ireland to the English Crown: for all those years successive English administrations have pretended to govern there; and as a result we saw in the last winter the miserable Irish people sending their emissaries, hat in hand, round the globe to beg for sixpences for God's sake to save them from starving. The Irish soil, if it were decently cultivated, would feed twice the population which now occupies it; but in every garden there grow a hundred weeds for one potato. If a landlord ejects an inefficient tenant, and gives the land to some one who will grow potatoes and not weeds, gangs of ruffians with blackened faces drive out the new-comer, or the landlord himself is shot, like Lord Leitrim, at his own door, as a warning to his kind. The Irish representatives in Parliament tell their constituents to pay no rent except when it is convenient to them, yet to hold fast by their farms, and defy the landlord to expel them; while the only remedy which the English Government could devise, since the people would not obey the law, was to alter the law to please them, and to propose that for two seasons at least the obligation to pay their rents should be suspended. What was to happen at the end of the two seasons we were not informed. It was easy to foresee, however, that, like the spendthrift's note of hand, the bill would have had to be renewed with interest. Lord

Leitrim's assassins were known throughout the neighbourhood. Persons present saw the shots fired, yet no one dared to give evidence. Men, otherwise well disposed, will not risk their lives to assist authorities which allow their own officials to be murdered with impunity. Talbot, a detective policeman, was shot in Dublin in the open day. His crime was that he had been exceptionally active in discovering treasonable conspiracies. Kelly, who killed him, was taken with the smoking pistol in his hand. Here, at any rate, there was no room for doubt; but when Kelly was brought to trial it was said that the wives of the twelve jurymen received widows' caps by post. Whether the story is true or not matters little; the murderer was acquitted on the ground that Talbot had lived twenty-four hours after he was shot, that he had, therefore, not died of his wound, but of the unskilful treatment of the surgeon. And the strangest part of the business was that no one was surprised; the law had so long become a garden scarecrow that nothing else was expected—society shrugged its shoulders and laughed; the ruling powers in Dublin Castle were perhaps in their hearts not sorry to be rid of an inconveniently efficient public servant.

This has been the history, except at rare intervals, of seven hundred years, and the question arises whether the experiment of an English government of Ireland has not lasted long enough. An ill-success so enduring must be due to causes which will not cease to operate. As it has been in the past, so it will be in the future. There appears to be some ingrained incapacity in the English nature either to assimilate the Irish race or to control them; and, however politically undesirable it might be to us to set Ireland free, it is doubtful whether we have a right to sacrifice thus ruinously the moral and material welfare of a whole people to our own convenience, when we are unable to discharge the elementary duties of protecting life and property. We may make the best resolutions: so our fathers made resolutions: but they availed nothing, and ours will avail nothing. We have failed—failed ignominiously; and bad as any government would be which Ireland could establish for herself, it could hardly be worse than the impotent mockery with which the English connection has provided it.

The Irish people are said to be unfit for freedom—of course they are, but it is we who have unfitted them. It is our bitterest reproach that we have made the name of Irishman a world's byword. There is no reason in the nature of things why Irishmen, whenever they are spoken of, should suggest the ideas of idleness and turbulence. The Celts of Ireland, before the Teutonic nations meddled with them, were not a great people: they had built no cities; they had scarcely a home among them with stone walls and a roof over it; they had no commerce and no manufactures; they had arrived imperfectly even at the notion of private property, for a chief and his

tribe held the land in common, and shared the produce of it. They quarrelled and fought; war was their glory, and the killing of enemies the single theme of their bards' triumphal songs. But contemporary nations were not so very far in advance of them: English life in those times has been described by high authority as the scuffling of kites and crows; before Charlemagne, France and Germany and Italy were but stages on which each summer brought its score of battlefields. The Irish were no worse than their neighbours, and they had the germs of a civilisation of a peculiarly interesting kind. Their laws, however afterwards corrupted, were humane and equitable as they came from the first Brehons. They became Christians sooner than the Saxons. There were schools of learning among them, where students gathered from all parts of Europe; and Irish missionaries carried the gospel into Scotland and Germany. Their literature speaks for itself: the ancient Irish hymns and songs compare not unfavourably with the *Edda*; their Latin hagiology, their Lives of St. Patrick and St. Bride and St. Columb, contain, amidst many extravagances, genuine and admirable human traits of manner and character.

The Danish invasions destroyed all this. At the time of the English conquest the island had become a den of wolves: Giraldus Cambrensis and the Irish annals tell the same story. But the element of better things was still in the people, and under wise treatment might have blossomed as it blossomed elsewhere. Under the spell of English cultivation it has borne thistles instead of figs, and for grapes, wild grapes. The history of political blunders is not an edifying study. We preserve the good work of poets and artists, we leave the bad to be forgotten; and the management of Ireland by successive generations of English statesmen might be cheerfully consigned to a place where they would never more be heard of. The same hand, unfortunately, is still busy at the same office of mischief; and though there is small hope that it will cease from its baneful activity, yet a course of failure, prolonged as it has been through so many ages, is worth examination, if but as a scientific curiosity.

A continuous principle there must have been to account for the sameness of result. Yet there has not been a continuity of system. We have tried many systems. We have been tyrannical and we have been indulgent, we have been Popish and we have been Protestant. We have colonised Ireland with our own people, taking the land from the Celtic tribes and giving it to strangers; and, again, we have repented and made what we have considered reparation. We have repeated these processes time after time, and all that we have effected has been to alienate our own colonists, without recovering the confidence of the Irish. We have piped to them, and they have not danced; we have mourned to them, but they have not believed in our sorrow. Conscious in ourselves that we have

meant no ill to the poor people—that we have desired only to see them free and happy, so far as their freedom has been compatible with our own security—we ask in wonder what more we could have done? Unhappily, we have left unaccomplished, and scarcely attempted, the one return which a conqueror is bound to make to those whose independence he has taken away for his own convenience. *We have never given Ireland a firm, just, and consistent administration.* We never have tried to do it in the past, except for an interval so brief that there was not time for the result to be seen. We do not any more attempt to do it at present. There is no inherent difficulty. We have ruled India well: we might rule Ireland well if we chose; and yet it is impossible for us to choose. A spell more powerful than was ever wrought by wand of enchanter warns us off, and condemns us to travel helplessly round and round on the track which was marked by the steps of our forefathers. The holy Brigitta inquired of her good angel ‘in which Christian land most folks were damned.’ The angel pointed to a country in the western part of the [then known] world, and ‘there she saw the souls falling into hell as thick as hail-showers.’

The name of this land, so unhappily distinguished, the saint either never knew or left untold. But at the beginning of the sixteenth century it was inferred that she must have meant her own Ireland, so miserable, so hopeless it appeared three hundred and fifty years after the Conquest. Then, as now, politicians were perplexing themselves over the problem, asking eagerly for a medicine which neither they nor their ancestors could find, and driven to suppose that there was a fatality about Ireland—that ‘the herb which would heal her wounds did never grow.’ Another three hundred and fifty years are gone, and it is the same story. The herb has not grown yet. And under England’s husbandry it seems as if it could not grow. If for a moment anywhere a few green blades have appeared, our instant effort has been to tear them up as weeds. One common principle can be traced from the first in Anglo-Irish policy. We have insisted on transferring to Ireland our own laws and institutions, whatever they might be. We never cared to inquire whether they suited the Irish conditions. We concluded that because they suited us they must be good everywhere. We have been a free, self-governed people, therefore Ireland must have freedom and self-government—if not the reality, then some counterfeit or parody of it to save appearances. Popery, Feudalism, Parliaments, trial by jury, the English land system, Anglican Protestantism, the Act of Uniformity, and lately, again, modern toleration, the extension of the suffrage, and a free press—these one after another we have established and disestablished in Ireland as the evolution of our own constitution brought changes among ourselves. We have flattered ourselves that we were bestowing on Ireland the choicest of our own blessings, forgetting

wilfully that free institutions require the willing and loyal co-operation of those who are to enjoy and use them; that the freedom which the Irish desired was freedom from the English connection; and that every privilege which we conferred, every relief which we conceded, would be received without gratitude, and would be employed only as an instrument to make our position in the country untenable.

At the Conquest the Irish tribes were governed by elective chiefs, independent one of another, and generally at war. The Irish Church, though orthodox in doctrine, paid neither Peter's Pence nor obedience to Rome. Needy Anglo-Norman barons saw an opportunity of improving their fortunes and doing heaven a service by carrying their swords across St. George's Channel. The Pope's blessing gave the expedition the character of a crusade. Henry the Second at first hesitated; but, finding it necessary to earn his pardon for the murder of Archbishop Becket, put his hand to the work. As the country was subdued, it was treated as England had been by William—parcelled out under the Norman lords; and the Irish chieftainships were superseded by military rulers who held their land from the English sovereign by feudal tenure. The authority of the Pope was submitted to without opposition. It was the one exotic introduced by us which took root and prospered. The Church and the invaders at first worked together in maintaining order and law, and for a time the state of Ireland was improved. The feudal system was a discipline of obedience in all classes of society. Liberty was submission to just authority; and during the two centuries which followed the Conquest towns were established with municipal institutions on the European model; monasteries were built, and cathedrals and churches and baronial castles. Stone houses were scarcely known to the Celts. In 1170 Baron Finglas says that there were not four castles in all Ireland; at the Reformation there were many hundred. The finest architectural remains, ecclesiastical or secular, are due to the Anglo-Normans. Ireland was being trained into order, and for those two hundred years was happy, according to the proverb, in having no other history.

But the Normans were few; their kinsmen both in England and France were busy fighting Saracens in Palestine or Spain, or working out their own problems at home. The Plantagenet kings had too much work on their hands to attend to a country of which it was enough to know that they were titular lords. A Lord President in Dublin represented the sovereign, but he brought over no force with him to make his power a reality. The invaders, cut off from home, grew into the habits of the country of their adoption. Their authority was the more easily admitted the more independent they made themselves. They governed by Irish customs, they learned the Irish language, they married into Irish clans. They held their ground, but it was by becoming Irish themselves. There is a phrase in use

in Ireland applied to families which have known better things, but have receded into Celticism and barbarism. The simile is borrowed from the land which, having been once reclaimed, has relapsed into its natural moisture, and such families are spoken of as having 'gone back to bog.' So it was with the Norman Irish in the fifteenth century. They went back to bog.

The better sort of them struggled for a while. The sea towns were points from which communication was kept up with the outer world. A 'Pale,' as it was called, including four counties, was drawn round Dublin; there were smaller Pales round Cork and Waterford; and within these lines English law and manners still prevailed. There was a Parliament in Dublin after the English pattern, with a first edition of the penal statutes. Within the Pales no Irish might be spoken, no Irish dress might be worn. At last no Irishman of the old race might enter without special permission. But spiritual influences cannot be kept at bay by Acts of Parliament. The Irish element which had been crushed at the Conquest was reoccupying the country by subduing the hearts of its garrison. Beyond the Pales the chiefs and barons ruled openly each by his sword, independent, if he was strong enough to defend himself, or if he was too weak, then in alliance with some more powerful neighbours. The great Anglo-Norman earls, the Geraldines of Kildare, the House of Desmond (the Munster branch of the same clan), and the Butlers of Ormond—each ruled in their own district by conniving at Irish manners, or by openly adopting and imitating them.

So the first attempt by England to civilise Ireland by feudalism went to wreck. It succeeded so long as the Normans retained the nature which they brought with them and ruled as a superior race. It failed when they ceased to be supported from home, and were left exposed to a contagion too strong for them. We have a glimpse in Froissart of an Irish interior as described to him by an acquaintance who had been a prisoner there. The Dean of St. Patrick's might have improved his picture of the Yahoos from it. Occasionally the anarchy became intolerable. An English king would take over an army, and kill a few hundred or thousand wretches, and go home again. Attempts such as these were but like stones thrown into the sea: the water closes over them, and all is again as before.

Thus on the accession of the Tudors, Ireland had become once more Celtic—Celtic with a Norman cross, which only made it the more dangerous. The anarchy was as complete as it had been at the Conquest, but it was anarchy organised into fighting condition, with arms and fortresses. Loyalty to England there was none, either within the Pale or without it. England's difficulty was already understood to be Ireland's opportunity. The Earl of Kildare took up Lambert Simnel and crowned him in Dublin. The English Council considered that Irish treason could best be cured by making concessions to it. Kildare

was sent for to court and flattered, and made Lord President, and so Lambert Simnel was got rid of. But concession produced its natural effects: such effects as melted fat produces upon a fire. Fresh violence followed. The Dublin Parliament became troublesome, and there was a turn of vigour. Sir Edward Poynings, a soldier, was sent over to strap the Parliament into a strait-waistcoat. It was left standing for decency's sake, but its teeth were drawn by an act forbidding the discussion of any measure which had not been first approved by the English Council. The Parliament was made into an imposture, and though it cannot be said that imposture always fails, yet when it does fail it fails badly. Had Henry the Seventh possessed means and inclination to take Ireland resolutely in hand, he might have restored order there as any English Government might do, and might have done at any period of history; but the work would have been troublesome, and the new dynasty had other things to attend to, and for another forty years coercion and indulgence followed in alternate decades. When the Kildares became unendurable, their rivals, the Butlers, were placed in office instead of them; when the Butlers could not stand without support from England, it was found that Ireland could best be managed by humouring 'Irish ideas,' and that the Geraldines represented those ideas. 'All Ireland,' the English Council was told, 'could not govern the Earl of Kildare.' 'Then,' answered Wolsey, like a modern Prime Minister, 'let the Earl of Kildare govern all Ireland.' Ireland, Wolsey thought—Ireland, the young Henry the Eighth thought with him—would be loyal to England if she were allowed to manage her own affairs in her own way. If English law did not suit the people, then they might live by their own laws. Unhappily it was a policy which reason might approve while it was disowned by fact. Loyal Ireland would not be till the truth was brought home inexorably to her, that the bond which fastened her to England could never be broken, nor could England with the best intentions persist long in a course which it was soon evident must end in a violent separation.

Luther's Reformation came and the quarrel of Henry with the Pope. The Catholic Powers would not tolerate heresy, and Europe was divided into hostile camps. The Irish leaders held themselves emancipated from obedience to a sovereign out of communion with Rome. The Earl of Desmond began to correspond with Charles the Fifth. . . . The Geraldines of Kildare openly rebelled. Irish ideas thus expressed could not be borne with. Lord Thomas Fitzgerald and his five uncles had to be hanged at Tyburn, and the fiction of an Irish Parliament, held tight in leading strings, was required to follow the English example and declare the Pope's authority to be at an end. Henry by this time understood his work. He had a strong hand, and he was not afraid to use it. He bribed the chiefs with peerages and with the confiscated abbey lands. He persuaded or overawed into

compliance a certain number of the bishops. Between force and address he carried his point, and had Henry lived ten years longer, and had the conviction been driven fairly into the Irish mind that in essentials no difference of ideas would be tolerated, Ireland's later history might have worn a fairer complexion. Henry had not meddled with the Church's doctrines—the priests could sing their masses undisturbed, if they left the Pope unprayed for—and it is likely enough that if their creed had been left alone they might have remembered that the Pope, after all, had been forced on them by the Normans, and that they were happily rid of him. But Edward's Council chose to go into Calvinism, and, as usual, must drag Ireland along with them. Then came Mary and put back the Pope into the Service Book, and the monks into the ruins of the monasteries; and when the crown came to Elizabeth, Ireland broke into flame from end to end.

The Irish administration of the Great Queen deserves to be studied, as exhibiting in epitome all the faults of the historical English method of dealing with the problem, and the consequences fully developed and rendered clearly visible. What Ireland wanted was first a vigorous police, and next some effective spiritual teaching, delivered in earnest, and therefore capable of being believed. Elizabeth furnished neither one nor the other. It was necessary to have some Church or other which the law recognised. The Church of Rome she could not come to terms with, for the Church of Rome declared her illegitimate and a heretic; so she set up an Anglo-Irish hierarchy with a liturgy and articles. Ireland had her act of uniformity and her oaths of allegiance precisely as in England. But the ecclesiastical establishment was a mockery, and Elizabeth never meant it to be more. The clergy had no protection; they could not reside in their benefices; the parish churches went to ruins; her laws were laughed at, for she would not allow them to be executed. Her fixed idea was to keep the people quiet by avoiding practical interference with them, and letting them live in their own way with an outward appearance of loyalty—a pleasant theory, so pleasant that statesman after statesman adopts it, nothing daunted by past failures; but to a people like the Irish it is simply an invitation to rebellion. Chief after chief rose in revolt against Elizabeth. Her viceroys, to save expense, set the bear and the ban dog to tear each other, as one of them expressed it. Toleration had not disarmed the anger of the Catholics. The Earl of Desmond raised the Pope's banner. The Butlers, the hereditary enemies of the Geraldines, were let loose upon him, and in the fury of the struggle the whole of Munster was wasted. Tens of thousands of men were killed, tens of thousands of women and children crawled into the woods and perished of hunger. So frightful was the desolation that it was said 'the lowing of a cow or the whistle of a ploughboy was not to be heard from Waterford to Dingle.' Such was

the fruit of indulging Irish humours and neglecting or refusing to discharge the duties which belonged to Government. But there was no improvement. The war had cost little, but that little was too much. Ireland had been chastised, and it might perhaps take the correction to heart. The old system was to continue. London companies offered to colonise the desolated southern province with English settlers. Elizabeth would not allow the estates of the Irish owners to be confiscated. Lord Grey, who was then President, declared himself ready to make 'a Mahometan conquest' of the whole island. Cruel surgery it would have been, but in the long-run merciful if the Queen intended to keep Ireland subject to her. But Lord Grey was rebuked and removed; and wars continued ever fiercer and more destructive to the very end of her reign. She had hoped to preserve the country for its own people. She might have succeeded had she maintained an adequate army of police; but the burden would have been heavy for the English taxpayer, and if Ireland was to be self-governed and to pay its own expenses, the alternative was another Norman occupation in a new form—a plantation of loyal Scotch and English farmers in sufficient numbers to control the disaffected.

When James the First came to the throne, the experiment was tried. Ulster had been the scene of the latest troubles. The greatest part of it was forfeited to the Crown. Many thousand Protestant families were introduced and set down upon the northern counties. Their presence and the severe example produced its natural effect. The land began to be cultivated; industry introduced order and prosperity; rebellion ceased, and there were thirty years of peace.

But the Irish were waiting their time. They knew the meaning of the presence among them of alien proprietors. That they would ever under any circumstances acquiesce willingly in the English domination was and is a sanguine illusion. There were two ways only in which that domination could be maintained, either by magistrates with an effective force behind them, as we now govern India, or by a garrison of colonists rooted into and supported by the soil. Experience had shown that from the first method they had nothing to fear. It was too costly to begin with; and England, proud of her own freedom, would not tolerate a vigorous despotism so close to her own shores, carried on in the name of her own sovereign. Protestant colonisation was the real danger. If they could ruin or cripple the settlers they would be secure. An English viceroy created the opportunity. The Ulster colonists were chiefly Presbyterians. Lord Strafford had many of the qualities of a great ruler; but he was a Tory and a High Churchman. He had come to Ireland with schemes which went beyond the welfare of the miserable island under his charge. He had as slight respect as Lord Grey for Irish ideas. He too understood the means by which they could effectively be combated. He aimed

at extending the Ulster principle, but by introducing settlers better inclined to the English monarchy than the northern Calvinists. Perhaps he imagined that English Churchmen would have a better chance of bringing Papists into conformity. At any rate he hoped so to organise Ireland that he could maintain an army there which might be useful to his master at home.

The Irish problem was sufficiently difficult in itself without introducing into it ulterior aims. Strafford's brilliant ability commanded for the moment extraordinary success; but it was for the moment only. The Ulster men distrusted his politics and his Church propensities. The Irish distrusted him; for he had compelled the proprietors in the west to produce their titles to their estates. Titles such as an English lawyer could recognise they had none to show, and he was suspected of intending to expel them to make room for a fresh importation of Anglican settlers. He raised an army for the defence of Charles against the Scots, but it was an army of Celts, and it was used for a darker purpose.

It is curious to see for the first time in history the English Liberal party raising capital out of the wrongs of Ireland. A common enmity makes strange bedfellows. In Strafford's impeachment by the Long Parliament, his violent handling of the old Irish proprietors formed an important element. The Long Parliament before the year was out understood their nature better. Then, as always when any gleam of hope has presented itself, the Irish idea, the most intense of all their ideas, has been to recover the land from the Protestant settlers. The civil war in England gave the chance; the cause for which Strafford had raised his army gave Sir Phelim O'Neil a pretext for asserting that he was acting in the king's interests and under the king's commission; and in the memorable October of 1641 a conspiracy was secretly organised for an Irish day of St. Bartholomew. The intention was the complete eradication of the colonists. Forty thousand men, women, and children actually perished, either by the sword or by famine and cold. Their houses were burnt, and those who were not killed were turned adrift naked to starve.

The Irish pretend now that there was never any massacre at all. They call it a Protestant fiction, as they call the Bulls of Adrian the Fourth and Alexander the Third, Norman fictions. They might as well pretend that there was no civil war in England. There is not a fact in history more completely authenticated. The evidence taken in 1642 before a Commission in Dublin lies in the library of Trinity College, Dublin. It has not been analysed and calendared, out of deference, I suppose, to Irish susceptibilities. Irish patriotism, if it is sincere in its disbelief, should rather insist on a fresh Commission to examine and report upon it. Could it be proved that the English Government permitted or enabled an enormous calumny to be imposed upon the world, to justify the confiscation of the Irish soil, they would establish

a claim for compensation, even now after two centuries of Protestant ownership, which the conscience of mankind would indorse.

On the Irish insurrection of 1641 the later history of the country entirely turns. Cromwell ended it. The representatives of the Ulster families were replaced ; all the rest of Ireland, except Connaught, was divided among the troops who had conquered it, and for the few years of the Protectorate there was a real government, such as there had never been before, and never has been since. Doubtless it was a hard thing to seize the property of an entire nation and give it to strangers. It is a hard thing, also, to compel an unwilling people to submit to a rule which they detest. But the hardest thing of all is the hesitating so-called policy which maintains the unpardonable grievance of domination, yet feeds a hope of ultimate deliverance by yielding and weakness in detail, and drives the people when maddened by disappointment into fury and fresh rebellions.

The Norman plantation had created order after the feudal pattern, which lasted for a hundred and fifty or two hundred years. It had then run to waste, and was swallowed in the general wilderness. Again, the work had been done, and this time thoroughly. The new settlers were Calvinists of the sternest type, no lukewarm Episcopalians, half-fledged Romanists, Laodiceans neither hot nor cold, but soldiers of the Reformation, of the sort without whom neither Anglican, nor Arminian, nor mild advocate of the *via media* could have had ground to stand on—such men as had fought the Guises in France, and Alva in the Low Countries, and Tilly and Wallenstein in Germany, Covenanters, Puritans, men who had a real belief, by which they would live and die. Once in seven centuries an opportunity had been found and used to make an end of the Irish hydra. The work was done, and thenceforward it had but to be let alone to maintain itself.

Unluckily there were two Englands—the England of the Commonwealth, and the England of Charles the Second and the Bishops. Oliver died, and Charles and his Bishops came in again, and the Irish Catholics clamoured for what they called justice. They declared that they had all along been loyal subjects of his father. His father's murderers had crushed and plundered them, and they demanded to have their lands given back to them. The answer ought to have been that the Crown could recognise no loyal service in the murderers of 1641. Once for all Ireland had been made Protestant, and Protestant it was to remain. But compromise was the order of the day—all sores were to be closed, and all quarrels forgotten. A complete restoration was not possible. A partial restoration was allowed instead of it. Just enough was done to weaken the plantation, to concede the principle that the Catholics had been wronged, and to encourage them in the hope and determination to recover the whole of what had been taken from them. The usual language was then used, that the arrangement was final, and that thence-

forward there was to be no change. The Protestants were to yield part of their possessions to be secured in the rest for ever. On these lines was drawn the Act of Settlement of 1662, one more of the fond half-measures which have been the delight of English statesmen, and have been the certain preludes of increased misery and confusion.

The colonisation had been made, however, so effectively, that the Act of Settlement alone would not have materially impaired its value. But it was exposed at the same time to another and deadlier mischief. The High Church party were in the ascendant; the colonists, having been soldiers of Cromwell, were almost all Nonconformists; and Nonconformity was under a ban; and Jeremy Taylor and his brother bishops were allowed to close the Calvinist chapels, imprison the ministers, and disable the Puritan population from holding any office of any kind, from magistrates to parish constables, unless they submitted to the Church. It was not to be treated thus that the Cromwellians had grappled with the Irish Fury, pared her claws, and chained her in her den. With a consent almost universal (for Lord Clarendon says that in 1680 not ten of those families were left in Ireland), the stern Puritan soldiers sold their grants to English speculators, and sought a more congenial home beyond the Atlantic; where their grandchildren a century later gave us reason to regret the prelatical zeal which had sent them thither. With them went the only element which could really have leavened Ireland. In the Cromwellian the Irish Catholic encountered a faith as intense as his own; and the Calvinism which naturalised itself so easily among the kindred Celts of the Highlands, of Wales, and of the Isle of Man, might possibly enough, if so recommended, have been accepted in Ireland. But it was not to be. They went, and they left in their places a body of enterprising adventurers who came over to improve their fortunes. The new comers were not like the Ironsides, but they were made of sensible Saxon stuff. They had bought their estates on the security of the Act of Settlement, and they went to work manfully to improve them. Even encountered thus the Irish difficulty would not have been insurmountable. Again there were twenty-five quiet years. In that time the towns had risen from their ruins; the harbours were full of ships, the soil was fenced and ploughed and planted. Cromwell had left Irish trade unhampered, and English jealousy had not yet meddled with it. There was no need for Parliaments, there were no eloquent orators spouting from patriot platforms, and Ireland really prospered. Judge Keating, summing up what had been done in 1690, could speak of 'buildings' rising everywhere, of 'trade and commerce,' of 'vast herds of cattle and sheep equal to those of England,' 'great sums of money brought in by those who came to purchase,' 'manufactures set on foot in divers parts, whereby the meanest inhabitants were at once enriched and civilised,' 'overflowed and

moorish land reduced to the bettering of the soil and air,' 'so that it could hardly be believed to be the same spot of earth.'

These were the fruits which the Cromwellian settlement, lamed and emasculated as it had been, had still been able to produce; and the English Government, if not the Irish people, ought to have been gratified. But the people had been taught to believe that the land, with all its improvements, would soon be their own again, and they waited and watched for their opportunity. In England came the Catholic revival; the king was Catholic, the court was Catholic. The nation, it was hoped, was sick of its Puritan fanaticisms, and would soon be Catholic too. Those who directed the English policy concluded that the time was come when compensation must be made in full to the race who fought so long and had suffered so disastrously in the Catholic cause. Justice was to be done to Ireland, and of course at the expense of the Protestant landowners. She was to be governed according to Irish ideas, and the idea uppermost was to carry out completely the principle of concession which had been admitted in the explanation of the Act of Settlement.

Dick Talbot, a pattern specimen of the Irish blackguard, who rarely spoke a sentence without an oath, or spoke the truth except by accident, was chosen by the king to clear out the landlords, having been made Earl of Tyrconnell for the occasion, and appointed viceroy to succeed Lord Clarendon. The storm was soon raised. Tyrconnell said openly that the Act of Settlement, so far as it affirmed the confiscations, had been robbery, and that the soil of Ireland belonged to the Irish. The tenants were encouraged to withhold their rents. Land disputes in the law-courts were decided uniformly against the Protestant settlers. Their stock was stolen, and the police were not allowed to protect them, for fear the peace might be disturbed. Their own liabilities were not diminished; they had the land tax to pay, and the interest on their mortgages, and all their other expenses. Their cattle were houghed, they were themselves shot at, or their houses entered and their families outraged. The avowed object was to make their situation intolerable and their estates valueless to them; while the Government, whose duty it was to maintain the law, were in sympathy with the aggressors. There is nothing new in Ireland. It is interesting to observe how very nearly the present situation was anticipated.

A few years of such experiments would no doubt have given Tyrconnell the game. If the people are at war with the landlords, and the administration of the day takes the people's side, the landlords must of course surrender. So it would have been in Ireland had James the Second remained on the throne. The Protestant colonists, if left entirely to themselves, might perhaps have held their ground successfully; but the weight of England would have been thrown into the scale against them—an absurd position, which,

however, has repeated itself more than once in that country, and will repeat itself again. But events moved too fast. The Revolution came. The Stuart dynasty departed, carrying with it the Catholic revival. The English Government was Protestant again; and from the new king the Protestants of Ireland could look for justice.

Even so, had Tyrconnell been moderate, William would have agreed to a compromise extremely dangerous to the Protestant interest; but the viceroy saw, or thought he saw, a constitutional opportunity of asserting the Irish national independence, and so at one stroke winning the whole campaign. The English might change their own sovereign if they pleased to commit treason. They could not compel the Irish to commit treason. William might be king across the Channel, but James was still king in Ireland with the Catholic nation at his back. The Irish Parliament was called together; the single really national Parliament which has ever met in that country. With an affectation of Liberalism, prophetic of future combinations, it abolished distinctions of creed, and proclaimed opinion free; but it declared every Protestant proprietor who did not come forward in James's support to be guilty of treason, and to have forfeited his estates. The whole effect of Cromwell's conquest was destroyed at a blow. This was too much. Could the Irish have maintained their legislation by the sword, all history would have applauded them. England had never been intentionally cruel; but the alternations of weak indulgence and spasmodic violence had been worse than cruelty. She had taken possession of Ireland. Her duty had been to govern it, and except Cromwell no English ruler had ever seriously tried to govern it. Unhappily for themselves, the Irish, though they can conspire and agitate, and occasionally murder, have never in their own country been worth much in the field. They fought and lost two battles, and the English yoke was again riveted on their necks. As the Catholics had twice tried to extirpate the Protestants, so their own religion was now proscribed in turn. The Penal Code both of England and Ireland, borrowed with ingenious irony from the Edict of Nantes, forbade thenceforward the succession of a Catholic to real estate. Thus at last there was to be an end of the difficulty with them. They must either conform or leave the country, or dwindle into serfs. The Irish Parliament was allowed to stand, but the Protestant peers and gentry were alone members of it. The Catholics were all excluded. Under these conditions, with their enemies tied up and padlocked, the colonists were left to take care of themselves.

And this was supposed to be government—self-government, the best of its forms! To err on one side or to err on the other was England's fate or England's folly; but in both the cause was the same—an insolent and careless neglect of its own obligations, a determination to escape trouble, to pass unpleasant duties over to others,

to have the advantage of possession without the expense and responsibilities of it.

The Protestant gentry were individually men of character and intelligence; but the Protestants were but a fifth of the population, and their interests were not identical with the interests of the four fifths who were disfranchised, but directly opposite to them. If Ireland was to be governed by a local Parliament, the Penal Laws were inevitably necessary; but parliamentary government, when it means the supremacy of a privileged minority, is not the best form of government, but the worst. The landowners would have been admirable instruments of a vigilant and wise executive. With irresponsible authority either individually or collectively it was unsafe and unjust to trust them. But parliamentary government was an English institution, therefore Ireland must have parliamentary government. An unpaid magistracy was an English institution, therefore Ireland must have an unpaid magistracy. So with trial by jury, with the Established Church, and the rest. Ireland was to be a copy of the English model; and instead of a copy it became a parody. Ill, however, as in many ways the Irish Parliament used its powers, the English Government used considerably worse the powers which they reserved to themselves; and if not happy under her own Protestant gentry, she would have been less miserable than through England's interference she actually was.

The Irish Protestants were not looked on with much favour in England. Trouble and expense had been incurred to secure them in possession of their estates. The colonies, according to the theory of the time, existed for the sake of the mother country. It was not good to allow them to be too prosperous, lest their rivalry should be dangerous; and for the sacrifices which she made in defending them the mother country was entitled to indemnify herself. If Ireland had a Parliament on one side of the Channel, England had hers on the other. The ministers of the day had to consult the parliamentary majority, and the majority represented the interests of the constituencies. The Irish colonists, after the war was over, had gone on with their improvements. Their wool crop was abundant and the best in Europe. Their water-power was unlimited; and everywhere, even in the wilds of Kerry, they had started manufactures where it was woven into cloth. Their forests furnished ship timber, and Cork and Dublin began to fill with vessels built in Ireland and manned by Irishmen. Drovers of Irish cattle were landed in Bristol. Irish bacon and butter, even Irish corn, made its way into the English markets, threatening the farmers with ruin. Merchants, manufacturers, shipowners, landowners, clamoured for protection against the Irish cockatrice which had been hatched at England's cost; and no Ministry could encounter the combined indignation of such powerful interests. Irish industry was deliberately destroyed. An extension of the Navigation Act

ended their shipping. The Woollen Act killed their manufactures; even the wool itself they were permitted to sell only to England, and at a price which England was to fix; while agriculture was placed under every disadvantage which could be decently inflicted upon it. Industrious habits, the one remedy for all the woes of Ireland spiritual and material, were thus at the start ingeniously blighted, and the mass of the people condemned to poverty, out of which no effort of their own could raise them. The intense injustice produced a natural animosity which united Protestant and Catholic against the common oppressor. All means were thought legitimate to defeat the provisions of so abominable a code. The harbours and coves round the coast became the depots of a universal smuggling trade; and before the middle of the last century the country had become a general institute for the education of the entire people in a defiance of the law. I should recommend the Sultan to study Irish history, that he may be ready with an answer when Mr. Goschen next lectures him on the maladministration of the Turkish Provinces. We may have repented of some of our sins, but the confession of the Irish Secretary in this present year seems to show that, however ashamed we may be of the misdeeds of our fathers, our repentance has not yet been productive of particularly improved results. The Sultan might recommend us to study the parable of the mote and the beam.

The trade legislation was but the beginning of sorrows. Had Church preferment been competed for in an open market, no doubt there would have been in England a similar jealousy of Irish scholars and divines. English patrons happily had the English appointments in their hands, and could protect themselves. No protest was necessary to prevent Fellows of Trinity from being advanced into the high offices of the Church of England. Ireland suffered, however, in another way and in a worse way. The Irish Church became a receptacle for persons whom English ministers desired to promote, yet at home did not dare to promote. Swift's story of the highwaymen who killed the bishops elect, stole their letters patent, and were consecrated in their places, is no extreme caricature. Even in the present century, after the lesson of the last rebellion, a correspondence passed relating to one of the Irish sees which in any future history of Ireland should hold as conspicuous a place as the largest type can give it. A certain prime minister wished to give an Irish bishopric to the younger son of a certain noble family. The Irish Primate, when the name was mentioned to him, replied that 'the young man's character was notoriously infamous,' and that he would rather resign than consecrate him. Yet the English Cabinet persisted. The Primate's scruples were got over, I know not how, and the young man of notoriously infamous reputation was forced upon the Bench. Mr. Gladstone, when he disestablished the Church of Ireland, spoke of it as a missionary institution which

had been tried and failed. Under such conditions its failure is not surprising.

There were other ways, too, in which Ireland was used as a convenience. England had a Pension List for honourably distinguished services. Ireland also had a Pension List—for services dishonourably distinguished. On the Irish Pension List are found the names of royal mistresses, favourites, poor foreign relations, or corrupt senators whose votes had been bought. It was a frequent subject of complaint in the Irish Parliament, and the complainant was silenced by being himself admitted as a recipient of the polluted bounty. The Viceroy's letters for seventy years contain reports humorously uniform, at the close of each session, of the members of the two Irish houses who had been corrupted, and of the terms which had been agreed on.

Less than all this would have ruined a country already prosperous. It was not to be expected that Ireland would thrive under it. With fair treatment, the colonists could at least have improved the condition of the peasantry, and thus their own relations with them. The action of the English Government left them no interests in common, unless it was a community of resentment. There was another point also in which the Protestants were treated with unintentional but more real injustice. The Penal Code had been adopted as a supposed necessity. The Irish Acts were transcripts of the English, and the English Parliament was responsible for them. Policy may excuse such laws, if the creed or institution proscribed has been fairly shown to be an irreconcilable enemy. It is fatuity to place such laws on the statute-book and to leave them unenforced; for of their nature they can never be forgiven, and therefore, in common prudence, should be carried out till their end is attained. Catholics now refer to those laws with indignation, and Protestants with shame. It is natural that it should be so. Catholics might remember, however, that the arrow with which they were wounded was borrowed from their own quiver. In every country where they have had the power, Protestantism has been placed under precisely the same disabilities. If circumstances could be conceived which would justify a Protestant Power in retaliating, those circumstances existed in Ireland, although the experiment certainly was of a kind which, if tried, should not have been allowed to fail. But it pleased England to leave the odium of the Penal Laws on the colonists, while she herself was to interfere with their execution. We had provoked the resentment of the colonists; it was convenient to secure the gratitude of the native population by appearing as their protectors. When the object was not so immediately sinister, it gratified our feelings of humanity to prevent oppression; and it served to smoothe our diplomatic relations with Catholic allies on the Continent. But the effect was to produce the utmost amount of evil and least possible

degree of good. The Protestant landlords have been reproached, like the Established Church, with having failed in their mission. It may be asked whether England ever allowed to either of them a chance of succeeding.

For another fault they cannot be themselves excused. There had been still left in Ireland a considerable number of Dissenters, some the descendants of the original Ulster settlers, and others who had purchased from the Cromwellians. In the North the majority of Protestants were Presbyterians, and were the very bone and sinew of the English interest. Jeremy Taylor's traditions, however, still governed the Establishment; and while England was destroying Irish industry, the passion of the bishops and gentry was to enforce the Act of Uniformity. So intense was the animosity that even Swift affected to believe that the Presbyterians were a real danger to Ireland. They were long subjected to every sort of persecution. Their schools were closed, and even their chapels, except in particular districts. They were shut out from public employment. The Tory landlords ejected them from their farms at convenient opportunities. At length too many of them turned their backs on a country where industry was frowned on and trade blighted, and themselves feared and hated as schismatics and Republicans. Every one of these men (could the Anglican gentry have but known it) was of priceless worth to them; but they were blind and could not see; and a second flight of hardy Protestant yeomen winged their way across the Atlantic, to be heard of again at Bunker's Hill and Lexington. It was not merely the loss of so much life-blood to the Protestant interest, but the small estates were sold, and, as there was no longer any competition for land in Ireland, were bought up by the large proprietors, whose domains grew more extensive and unwieldy as the numbers decayed, and of whom an ever-increasing proportion became absentees.

To these conditions England's policy and its own want of wisdom had by the middle of the last century reduced the 'colony' which wiser men had so carefully planted. And yet, blighted and blundering as it was, Protestant ascendancy represented the principles of order and the authority of intelligence over ignorance; and the period of which English politicians affect to be most ashamed was that in which Ireland did to some extent really wear the aspect of a civilised country. The two rebellions which shook Great Britain in 1715 and 1745 did not disturb the peace of Ireland. Crippled, insulted, plundered as they were, Arthur Young found thousands of gentlemen reclaiming land, introducing improved systems of agriculture, planting, and building. English manners, even the graces of English country life, reproduced themselves; and instead of mud cabins and naked beggary, there once existed an Irish 'Auburn.' Excellent schools were established, where brilliantly gifted men were trained to do honour to their native land. Strike the Anglo-Irish names

from the rolls of fame in the last century, and we lose our foremost statesmen, scholars, soldiers, artists, lawyers, poets, men of letters. Voltaire was not a person to be taken in by plausible appearances. I commend to the believers in the progress which has been brought about by what are now called Liberal opinions, the following passage from the *Essai sur les Mœurs*. Voltaire, speaking there of Ireland, says: 'Ce pays est toujours resté sous la domination de l'Angleterre, mais inculte, pauvre, et inutile, jusqu'à ce qu'enfin dans le dix-huitième siècle, l'agriculture, les manufactures, les arts, les sciences, tout s'y est perfectionné, et l'Irlande quoique subjuguée est devenue une des plus florissantes provinces de l'Europe.'¹

To speak thus of poor Ireland now would be impossible, even in mockery. The prosperity which Voltaire witnessed was the result of Protestant ascendancy. The emancipation of the Celts has brought with it the return of misery.

But by this time the dragons' teeth which England had sown about her Empire had sprung up, and her insolent colonial system was to end. The American States revolted. The Irish Protestant gentry, too naturally, but in an evil day for themselves, raised the flag of Irish patriotism. They broke their trade fetters; they armed, and wrested from their oppressors the Constitution of 1782. Dreaming that they could make allies of a race whom neither flattery could cajole nor reparation could reconcile, they repealed the Penal Laws; and in repealing them they revived the old traditions, and blew into flame the hopes which had been smothered and lain dormant since the Boyne and Aghrim. The English Liberal party, not to be behindhand, and to share the gratitude of the Catholics, agitated for their admission to the franchise. Grattan had lighted the fire of an Irish nationality. Alas! the Irish nation, if a nation it was again to be, was not to be composed of the shining regiments of volunteers who had marched through Dublin and Belfast behind banners of liberty. These fine enthusiasts were the unconscious instruments of their own ruin. The Irish nation, in the days of reform and government by majorities, was to be the nation of the Celts, and could be no other. Too late they saw the error; but the tide was too strong for them, and once more the Irish of the old blood rose in arms to make an end of British authority. For a time the Presbyterians of Ulster, having their own wrongs to remember, were inclined to make common cause with them. Happily, the alchemy had not been discovered which could combine Catholic Celt and Scotch Protestant. The glamour of the unnatural union disappeared before Vinegar Hill and the barn of Scullabogue; and the northern Protestants, who had caused more fear in Dublin Castle than Lord Edward Fitzgerald or Father Murphy, or even the French fleet, recoiled from such allies in disgust, and became Orange and loyal.

¹ *Essai sur les Mœurs*, cap. 50.

Concessions to Irish agitation lead necessarily to rebellion, and rebellion can only end in one way. The Irish are taught to believe that England is afraid of them. Their demands rise to something which cannot be granted, and then they rise in insurrection. They do not know that England has no fear of *them*. She is afraid, but not of an army of peasants led by blustering patriots. She is conscious to the heart of her own misdoings; she dreads the public shame of having again to put Ireland down, and she precipitates the catastrophe by the weakness with which she tries to avert it. 1798 was but 1641 and 1690 over again; in all the three insurrections the object was the same, to recover the confiscated lands. It was a miserable business, and it was miserably ended. In the useless endeavour to cover our own disgrace, English opinion has extenuated the ferocity of the Irish, and ridiculously exaggerated the 'atrocities' of the Protestant yeomanry. The impotent peace which was concluded by Cornwallis left the fire smouldering to be blown again into flame, and the moral authority of the Protestant gentry almost extinguished. It was a crisis the meaning of which is only now beginning to be understood. Ireland ought to have been completely conquered, but the most entire subjugation would have availed nothing unless we had been prepared thenceforward to maintain a real government there: and we had not realised, we have not even realised yet, that it is our duty to do anything save to put an end to Protestant ascendancy.

The one indispensable requirement in Ireland is authority armed with power to make the law obeyed. This principle in an objectionable, but still a real, form, Protestant ascendancy had represented for three quarters of a century, with the effect which had been observed by Voltaire. But Protestantism as such is no longer entitled to a place of exclusive superiority, nor is Catholicism as such any longer exchangeable with a spirit of revolt. Authority has to find some other form for itself if the English connection is to be anything but a curse to Ireland, and what that form is to be has yet to be considered. The Union, which was to have settled everything, has settled nothing, and has created only fresh difficulties. The ruling power of the Irish landlords ended with the Parliament on College Green. The unjust reflections on their action in the Rebellion had not improved their relations with their tenants; they lost heart, and they lost their personal interest in their country. Their estates became more neglected, absenteeism more shameless; and such of them as continued to reside grew notorious chiefly for wild manners and reckless extravagance. Much of this there had always been. The air of Ireland was never favourable to sobriety of temperament, but there had been along with it the high qualities of a ruling race, which after the Union disappeared. The functions of the landlord were reduced to the shooting his game and the exaction of his rent;

the population multiplied and became more and more miserable; while the Irish members in the House of Commons, since Catholic emancipation, have held in their hands the fate of Ministers by controlling the balance of parties; they have thus offered temptations which neither Whig nor Tory has had virtue to resist, and by extorting concession after concession have now almost completed the destruction of Cromwell's work, and made their beggared and ungovernable country once more the opprobrium of English administrations.

We remember Mr. Gladstone's Upas-tree with its three branches. According to Mr. Gladstone Protestant ascendancy has been Ireland's poison-plant. One of these branches was hewn off ten years ago. The second was cut half through, and it appears that his present mission is now to make an end with this.

The Anglican Church ought never, perhaps, to have been established in Ireland. An institution which was neither Catholic nor Protestant, but a combination of the two adapted to a peculiar condition of the English temperament, was as ill fitted as any institution could be for purposes of conversion, especially when confronted with a creed which was bound up with the national traditions and aspirations. The efforts of the bishops in expelling the Presbyterians might have been advantageously dispensed with; and of all the instruments of mischief to the Protestant interest, they were perhaps in their way the most effective. Yet Mr. Gladstone might have remembered, in reproaching the Irish Church with its failures, that it might have succeeded better than it did if it had received fair play. It was not the Irish clergy who appointed bishops of 'notoriously infamous character,' and they had deserved and won for themselves at the time of the disestablishment the affection of millions who did not belong to their communion. It was not desirable, it was not possible, for them to retain their exclusive privileges; but being what they were, their overthrow as the branch of a Upas-tree served chiefly to weaken English authority, which one day will have to be asserted again. To disestablish the Church in obedience to the dictation of agitators for immediate political convenience was but to strengthen the elements in Ireland inveterately and irreconcilably opposed to the English sovereignty.

The same must be said of the Land Bill of 1870. The intention of Cromwell was to cover Ireland with a race of Protestant Saxon freeholders who would permanently take root, and control and assimilate the Celtic peasantry by superior force and intelligence. The shifts and changes of policy at the English court, ecclesiastical intolerance in the heads of the Irish Church, and the scandalous commercial jealousy by which Irish industry was discountenanced, had defaced and mutilated the original purpose. The small freeholds had been absorbed in the overgrown estates of the peers and county families; the Protestant landowners became, like the Spartans, a privileged

aristocracy in diminishing numbers surrounded by a nation of helots. When the helots were emancipated and by their numbers controlled the representation, the ownership of land became a mere investment of money or commercial transaction; and to attach a power to it, to drive from their homes families able and willing to pay their rent, whose forefathers had lived in the same spot for immemorial generations, was to give the landlords rights which, if unwisely exercised, might cause a revolution in our whole system of landed tenure. Even in England, where confiscations have been unknown for centuries, and the tenures of the proprietors have never been challenged by rival claimants, such an authority, when exercised only for the pleasure and interest of the owner, becomes at times intolerable. Not a mile from the place where I am now writing, an estate on the coast of Devonshire came into the hands of an English Duke. There was a primitive village upon it occupied by sailors, pilots, and fishermen, which is described in Domesday Book, and was inhabited at the Conquest by the actual forefathers of the late tenants, whose names may be read there. The houses were out of repair. The Duke's predecessors had laid out nothing on them for a century, and had been contented with exacting the rents. When the present owner entered into possession, it was represented to him that if the village was to continue it must be rebuilt, but that to rebuild it would be a needless expense, for the people, living as they did on their wages as fishermen and seamen, would not cultivate his land, and were useless to him. The houses were therefore simply torn down, and nearly half the population was driven out into the world to find new homes. A few more such instances of tyranny might provoke a dangerous crisis. In ages less enlightened than ours the right itself did not exist in its present shape. The serfs and villains under the feudal system held their farms originally at their lord's pleasure; all that they possessed belonged to him if he chose to claim it, and by a word he could strip them bare. But time and custom created rights where none had before existed. When families of villains had remained for centuries at the same spot, and the lords for any reason wished to dispossess them, the English Courts of Law decided that so long as the customary rent was paid they could not be ejected without reason shown; and thus even under the despotism of the Norman nobles the peasant tenures became copyholds and eventually freeholds. That was a wise, humane, and rational arrangement. Land is not, and cannot be, property in the sense in which movable things are property. Every human being born into this planet must live upon the land if he lives at all. He did not ask to be born, and, being born, room must be found for him. The land in any country is really the property of the nation which occupies it; and the tenure of it by individuals is ordered differently in different places according to the habits of the people and the general convenience.

All this must be freely admitted ; and it applies with peculiar force to Ireland. The form into which landowning has drifted in England is but one of many possible arrangements. Perhaps in Ireland's present state the happiest method would be one in which the State should be the owner and the landlord (if we still pleased to call him so) should be the State's agent, with ample powers, but responsible to the Government for the use of them, holding his position like the governor of a Crown colony, or the captain of a man-of-war, to be continued in office and promoted if the estate under his charge was wisely managed, to be dismissed if he was found unjust or incompetent. But this is theory. Governments as they are now constituted are unfit for so invidious a duty. Land is bought and sold under the guarantee of the law. The purchaser must receive value for what he has purchased in good faith, and any change to be hereafter introduced must be the result of the gravest and protracted deliberation. '*La propriété c'est le vol,*' says M. Proudhon, and it is possible that hereafter society may be constructed on that principle. But the alteration will be the work of centuries, and may be postponed to the millennium. To confiscate or to propose sudden and unheard-of restrictions upon the property of individuals under an impulse of political enthusiasm is *le vol* also, and a breach of faith besides, and the government which tries it does not deserve to survive the experiment. The purchaser of land is entitled to his money's worth. If, for political reasons, the State interferes to prevent him from collecting his rents, the State must compensate him. But he is not entitled to more. If he desires to expel solvent tenants who disagree with him in opinion, or because he wishes to improve his estate, or to enlarge his park or his shooting grounds, he in turn must compensate them ; and so far there is no fault to be found with the famous Land Act of 1870. It was a fair corollary from the existing condition of Irish social institutions. The tenant's solvency was the test of his right to remain. If he could not, or would not, meet his engagements, the landlord was robbed of what belonged to him, and might appoint a fitter person in the tenant's place. In itself, therefore, the act was a just one. But, like so many other Irish reforms, it was introduced with language which gave it a double meaning. Mr. Gladstone's '*Upas-tree,*' his bold admission that his Irish policy was due to Fenianism and the Clerkenwell explosion, turned a measure right in itself into so much fuel for disaffection ; it encouraged hopes which can never be gratified, save with the final release of Ireland from the English connection ; it raised incendiaries and assassins to the rank of patriots, and encouraged them to go on with their work by telling them that if they were only violent and mischievous enough they would have their desires. If it be answered that what Mr. Gladstone said was true, and that under a constitution like ours it is only by such means that justice is ever practically done,

we can but say so much the worse for the constitution ; but the fact, if fact it be, will not prevent the confession from producing its natural consequences.

The 'Upas-tree' was a singularly unlucky metaphor. It corresponded precisely to the fixed idea of the Irish that the land had been unjustly taken from them, and it encouraged them to believe that Mr. Gladstone shared their conviction. The Irish agitators regarded it as a step towards a repeal of the Act of Settlement. Mr. Gladstone insisted, when he brought his Land Act forward, that it was not intended to convey any right whatever of property to the tenant. He has discovered since, or his colleagues have discovered for him, that if he did not intend to convey a right of property to him, he at least intended to confer on him a proprietary right. The tenant himself and the local money-lender took the same view of it from the beginning. The tenants have raised loans everywhere on the security of their occupancy. The interest on these loans has become a second rent, and has been the chief cause of the present distress. One useful result has come of it. The cottier tenants have shown what their fate would be if, by any means, they were raised into the condition of a peasant proprietary. The present landlords would have been 'evicted,' only that their places might be filled by the local capitalists of the country towns, who in a few years would have foreclosed their mortgages. And what mercy the wretched peasantry might expect from men of their own blood who had them in their power may be read in the history of the middlemen. No harsher tyrant over the poor was ever known than an Irishman a degree above them in social rank. An experiment which would destroy so many beautiful illusions might be worth trying completely if it were not so expensive.

A statesman who understood Ireland would never have spoken of Upas-trees unless he was prepared to sanction a revolution. The patriot orators in the last ten years have profited by Mr. Gladstone's hint. The cry has been steadily, 'The soil for the Irish people ! Pay no rent if you can help it ; and keep your grip upon the land.' The policy has been to make the property of the landlords worthless, and their position so dangerous that they would find their estates not worth keeping. Lord Leitrim's murder was part of the same conspiracy—if not prompted by the leaders of the agitation, yet an outcome of the spirit prevailing. The English administration looked helplessly on. When a Government is not afraid to exert itself, it will find in Ireland as elsewhere sufficient well-disposed people who will stand by it and maintain the law. But where the anxiety is merely to keep the outside of things tolerably smooth, such persons will not expose themselves in a thankless service. The assassins of Lord Leitrim were notorious, but a witness who had told the truth would have been shot as a traitor to his country, and would only have fallen uselessly as another unavenged victim. And this state of things was allowed to

go on. Lord Beaconsfield had a majority which made him independent of Irish support, and might have made him careless of Irish enmity. An honest effort to put down agrarian terrorism and a frank appeal to England for support would have created a respect for the Conservative Ministry which might have kept them in office to the end of the century. Some of us were fond enough to hope in 1874 that such an effort was about to be made, and that Ireland would cease to be a national disgrace. 'The wise man mindeth his business, but the fool's eyes are in the ends of the earth.' Lord Beaconsfield was no fool, but Ireland was too poor a stage for his high-vaulting ambition, and was left to go its own wild way, till Mr. Gladstone's return to power reopened the revolutionary chapter.

The secret history of Mr. Forster's Compensation Bill will perhaps never be known. Mr. Forster's part in it is clear enough. He was appointed Secretary for Ireland, knowing little or nothing either of the country or of the passions of the people. He found that there had been a bad harvest, that there was a real or professed difficulty in the payment of rents, and on the landlords' part, in some quarters, an abuse of their powers of eviction, which he, as the head of the Irish executive, was called on to support by armed force. He wished, as he said, to make the law respected; but it was necessary for him first to be assured that he had justice on his side, and he therefore proposed that over about half the country the power of these hard landlords, whom he considered to be only a few, to extort their rents by forcible means should be suspended for two seasons, in cases where the tenant's disability could be shown, to the satisfaction of a county court judge, to be due to misfortune. It seemed to him so natural, so obviously right, so plain a carrying out of the precepts of the Gospel, that he never anticipated that it could do any harm or even meet with an objection. The rich country gentleman on one side, the Connemara peasant with his starving family on the other! What could be more desirable in the eternal interest of Dives himself than that he should be compelled to show mercy to Lazarus? And yet no responsible English minister even committed himself to so unfortunate a suggestion. There is no occasion to thresh over again the straw which has been already beaten into dust, or to point out for the thousandth time the complicated injustice which Mr. Forster's equity would inflict. If a benevolent State is to claim the right of supervising contracts, and deciding where an act of God requires them to be cancelled, it will have work enough upon its hands. The principle cannot be confined to Irish landlords. It is either unsound in itself, or its application is universal.

But I confine myself to the political aspect of Mr. Forster's action as it affects Ireland. He supposed himself to be dealing with an accidental state of things, which in a couple of years would have passed away. Had he been tolerably acquainted with Irish history,

he would have known that he was taking an irrevocable step on the most critical and inflammable of all Irish questions. He was telling the people that in the opinion of the Cabinet the Irish landlords had not the same right of property in their estates which they had in England or elsewhere. He might pretend that the act was to be temporary only, and confined to particular districts. He never asked himself whether at the end of the two years the reluctance to pay rent would not be as emphatic as at present, and immeasurably more difficult to overcome, or whether, meanwhile, every occupier in Ireland would not raise the same objection, and claim the same protection. We have been told of the legitimate application of the principles of the Land Act of 1870. If Mr. Forster's proposal is a development of the Land Act, then, if it had been carried, it must have developed equally naturally into a transfer of the land from the present owners to the occupiers. He was telling the Land League that they were right, that they had but to persevere and that they had won the battle. Mr. Gladstone said, in excuse for the Bill, that Ireland was already 'within measurable distance of civil war.' To enforce the landlords' claims again when the two years were over would have made civil war a certainty, if the then inevitable demand for further change should be refused.

All this was obvious to every one who knew Ireland and the Irish people. Already, between the landlords and tenants themselves, such mutual confidence and good feeling as survived has been destroyed. Their relations were already severely strained. They must now each of them fall back upon the rights which they suppose themselves to possess, and a struggle has begun which cannot end till one or other has given way. The tenant has been told by the Cabinet, and by a vote of the House of Commons, that, whether he pays his rent or not, he has an equitable property in his holding; and he will defend what such high authority has declared to belong to him. The landlord, threatened as he has been with an interference which may mean the loss of everything which he possesses, will rely upon the law as it now stands, and the refusal of the Peers to allow it to be changed, and will insist upon his due. The form which the conflict will take is uncertain, and depends, probably, on the course which Mr. Parnell and his friends consider most politic. With cards in their hands so favourable, they may be careful how they play their game. If left to themselves, the people would certainly have recourse to their usual methods. Evictions would be resisted by force. Tenants willing to pay their rents would be threatened, cattle would be houghed, and agents and landlords shot at. Mr. Biggar's open commendation of the killing of Lord Leitrim in the House of Commons suggests that, if rifles are used again for a similar purpose, some at least of the popular leaders will not disapprove. Mr. Forster may congratulate himself that he has brought on a crisis in the Irish

land question more momentous than any which has occurred since the renewal of the Act of Settlement after the treaty of Limerick. His bill was one of those measures of conciliation, so called, of which there have been so many, and which have been the invariable preliminaries of a catastrophe. He considered, perhaps, that he was producing something original. The dress may be changed, but the figure inside it is a very old acquaintance indeed.

But there is another and very serious question. What did Mr. Gladstone mean by sanctioning this act of his Irish Secretary? Mr. Gladstone does not know Ireland well, nor its history well; but he has attended to both, he has formed views about both, and to some extent must have understood what he was doing. It may have been that he was merely careless, that he wished to please his Irish supporters, to pass pleasantly through the remainder of the Session, and to save himself from being troubled, for a few months at any rate, with Irish disturbances. But Mr. Gladstone is not a person to act in so serious a matter without a clearer purpose; and expressions have dropped from him which betray a feeling of another character. The landowners were a branch of the Upas-tree, a surviving symbol of Protestant ascendancy. The House of Commons was reminded that Irish land was not like other property, that money held in trust might not be invested in Ireland. Mr. Gladstone intimated, too, that if he could have had his way ten years ago, a clause in his original Land Bill would have made the present proposal unnecessary. It would seem, therefore, that he at least did not look on Mr. Forster's suspension of rent paying as merely temporary, but as the preliminary of a permanent change, equivalent to the disestablishment of the Church—as if he was approaching step by step to some disendowment of the Irish landlords as he had disendowed the clergy, and was preparing for revolutionary alterations. Mr. Gladstone is an enthusiast for liberty, and considers, from the point of view of modern Radicalism, that Ireland ought to be governed according to Irish ideas. But as with Tyrconnell, so now with Mr. Gladstone—before the ideas of the Irish can be carried out, the prejudices of Englishmen on the security of property must be encountered and overcome. The Premier, with his forty-eight years' experience of parliamentary life, must have known that the House of Lords would refuse to pass his Bill. Very probably he anticipated the extent of the majority. It is to be presumed, therefore, that he has considered what he intends to do. He has brought about a situation in which the two Houses are at issue on a subject which touches the quick of Irish feeling. If he leaves things as they are, the language which he used about the Fenian outrages is an invitation for a repetition of them. This much respect the Irish are likely to show to a vote of the House of Commons, that where it has been given in their favour they will consider it to justify them in anything which they may please to do, and the civil

war which he described as within measurable distance will be brought a good many degrees nearer. Civil war indeed, century after century, has been the inevitable outcome of attempts to caress the Irish into loyalty. They are led on to hope that they are to have their own way. They find that they are not to have it after all, and then they rebel, and a great many of them have to be killed. Any way we are at the first act of an extremely interesting political drama, and who can say where we shall find ourselves at the end of the fifth? Mr. Gladstone will not willingly allow himself to be foiled, yet if he perseveres he may bring on the struggle, so long foretold, between democracy and the rights of property, and in a great Empire like ours, with such enormous interests at stake, it is not difficult to foresee on which side the victory will be. However this may be, another apple of discord has been flung into Ireland, there to spread its poison. Cruel stepmother has England been for seven hundred years to that unhappy island, and cruel still she remains. One by one we have thrust our political inventions upon her, and called it governing. We are now giving her our latest discovery, that there ought to be no such thing as governing, that the power of man over man is to be abolished, that every one must look out for his own interests, with a fair stage and no favour. 'And Cain answered and said, I am not my brother's keeper.' From the ruined fields and wasted potato gardens, from a million miserable cabins where human beings have lived under our charge for twenty generations more like wolves than men, the silent cry appeals to us—Take charge of us, rule us, guide us, help us out of our wretchedness; and the remedy, it seems, which we are to try next, is to be the extension of the borough franchise. The Irish require order, and we give them anarchy. They ask a fish and we give them a scorpion. Let no one say that we live in an age of scepticism. The faith of England in the present object of her worship is worthy of all admiration; but if we offer sacrifices to liberty, we should offer them at the expense of ourselves, not of others. It was England which introduced landowning and landlords into Ireland as an expedient for ruling it. If we choose now to remove the landlords or divide their property with their tenants, we must do it from our own resources; we have no right to make the landlords pay for the vagaries of our own idolatries. But liberty, as now understood, is a local divinity, peculiar to the modern English and Americans, and will never save Ireland. Protestant ascendancy is gone. But what Protestant ascendancy really meant must be realised in some new shape, or there is no hope.

In Ireland, as everywhere else in this world, there is a minority of sensible, loyal, well-intentioned people of all creeds who understand what are the real conditions under which their country can prosper. A Government which will win the confidence of such men as these, and try to do what they would wish to see done, instead of bidding for the Irish vote in Parliament by submitting to the dictation of

pseudo-patriots and patrons of assassination—a Government which would make the law respected and obeyed, which would hang murderers caught in the act, would insist on hanging them, and, if juries would not convict, would call on Parliament to suspend trial by jury in Ireland, and pass an Act for trying of criminals by a commission of judges—such a Government would repeat the miracle of St. Patrick and drive the devils out of the country. As soon as authority had been properly asserted, and a resolution to do justice cannot be misinterpreted into cowardice, the land laws might then be dispassionately revised, with a resolution to consider only what would tend most to make the people of Ireland really prosperous. To treat land, with the present privileges attached to the possession of it, as an article of sale, to be passed from hand to hand in the market like other commodities, is an arrangement not likely to be permanent either in Ireland or elsewhere. But changes, if changes can be made, must be deliberate and tentative, and carried out with a resolved superiority to terrorism. Agrarian outrage, at all hazards and by any means, must be brought to an end; and the future state of Ireland depends entirely on the courage of a Ministry to propose, and the willingness of Parliament to allow, such measures as may be necessary for the purpose. It depends, therefore, on the virtue of the Liberal party. If they can resist the temptations of the Irish vote, they may have a storm to encounter, but they will have the support of every single person in the two kingdoms whose approval they ought to desire. If not, if Ireland is still to remain the plaything and the victim of the English constitutional system, there is nothing to be looked for but the continuance of the chronic misery which the fatal contiguity of the two islands has created from the hour of Henry the Second's conquest.

J. A. FROUDE.

A REAL 'SAVIOUR OF SOCIETY.'

THE principle of participation by workmen in the profits of employers, which was first tentatively put into operation by the Parisian house-decorator Leclaire, in 1842, has since that time made signal progress. According to the most recent information¹ upwards of forty-six industrial establishments in France, Alsace, and Switzerland alone are now working upon this principle. The material advantages accruing both to employers and employed from systems of participation have been distinctly recognised by English writers on political economy—Babbage, Mill, Fawcett, and others—but the intellectual and moral benefits which attach to the best existing methods of applying the principle have not, in this country at least, as yet attracted a degree of public attention at all commensurate with their importance. A lecture² addressed to an audience of working men in Cambridge on the 9th of December, 1879, by Mr. W. H. Hall, contains, in a biographical form, an excellent sketch of the development of Leclaire's institution, and faithfully reflects the spirit which animates it. From this lecture—the only existing English source for the facts which it communicates—I received a strong impulse to make a personal examination, on the actual scene of Leclaire's labours, into the most recent results there attained. On making my wish known, through Mr. Hall, to the present heads of Leclaire's house, I received from them a most cordial invitation coupled with an offer to place their time and information unreservedly at my disposal. When I presented myself to these gentlemen in Paris, they proved in every respect as good as their word. I was allowed free access to the accounts of the establishment and to every source of information for which I chose to ask; my long string of questions, too, were answered with thorough-going fulness and unwearied patience. It is entirely owing to the kindness of MM. Redouly et Marquot, managing partners of the house of Leclaire, and of M. Charles Robert, president of the mutual aid society connected with it, that I am enabled to make known, in the most authentic shape, the present condition of perhaps the most beneficent industrial foundation now extant. To M. Marquot, who received me

¹ *Bulletin de la Participation*. Paris, Chaix et cie., 1879. Pp. 107-112.

² Reported in full in the *Cambridge Independent Press* of the 13th of December, 1879, and since republished as a pamphlet by the Central Cooperative Board.