

## IRELAND AND THE ENGLISH CATHOLICS.

The sentence pronounced on the first transgression, if severe, was judicial. Uttered by a human tribunal, it would be intolerable, for it was for the bulk of mankind penal servitude for the years allotted to each, terminated by death. But infinite wisdom joined to it such compensations, as that no one who has tasted them would wish his lot other than it is. The sentence that man shall "earn his bread by the sweat of his brow" was not penal only. That which declares that, if "a man shall not work neither shall he eat," has two issues. If the "sweat" is given, the "bread" is the just recompense. If a man is ready and willing to work he has a right to eat.

British law in Ireland has for generations denied to the people this primary and essential right. The Irish landlord has, indeed, in the past, commonly left his serf a bare substance in ordinary times; but when pressure or scarcity came there was no reserve, and the serf begged or starved. An epitome of the whole Irish land system is found in the great Dillon estate in Mayo. This, which extends over 90,000 acres, was a century ago a waste of bog and moor. The gradual clearing of richer lands—the carrying out of the sentence, "To hell or Connaught"—gradually led to the settlement of this vast tract by squatters. The reclamation, such as it was, began, and also the rent. It is impossible to get at the earlier rent roll of the Lillon estate, but it is the general opinion, supported by the evidence of aged tenants, that fifty year ago it was between £10,000 and £11,000. It now stands at close on £30,000, the difference being the confiscated improvements of the tenantry. The process by which the advance was made can be compared to nothing but periodical blood-letting by a skilful surgeon. This does not threaten life; yet it so reduces the subject that, when the pressure of disease comes upon him, he yields at once. The late famine compelled three-fourths of the Dillon tenantry to apply to the "Mansion House" or the "Duchess" relief funds, while the noble proprietor was not heard of. It is true he was not getting his rents. How could he be when he got them ten times over in advance? If a man kills his goose he can't have the eggs also. The enormous rental yielded for so many years by this estate was largely produced by labour in England. The serf hired himself out for one half the year to pay for the privilege of living for the other on Lord Dillon's bogs. The mansion house of Loughglynn has not known the presence of one of the title for forty years, nor has any appreciable portion of the vast revenue been spent in reproductive or any other works. The honey from this vast hive of 4,500 tenants was skilfully withdrawn, to be used or wasted elsewhere, and the toilers were left to starve.

When pressure of want roused the serfs to combination and resistance, the Lord Viscount was powerless. He could not evict nor consolidate. If the tenants were wise they could have made equitable terms. But they trusted to the honour of a nobleman, and were deceived. They went into the Land Courts. Their lord asked them to withdraw the originating notices, promising them the land at Griffith's valuation. They did so; and when the combination was broken up, and the Coercion Act introduced, he broke his promise in the fashion of any common dishonourable mortal.

To repeat, the whole Irish land question is epitomised in this one estate, and it is here particularized to give Lord Dillon the publicity he merits, and the argument the solid foundation of fact. The Irish people claimed through the Land League the first of all rights—the right to live by their labour. The *Tablet* cried "confiscation," "robbery," "Communism." The Catholic people of Ireland demand to be freed from the domination of the Orange-Freemason ring which tortures them. The *Tablet* cries "sedition." It is said that it is a mere waste of time to expose this paper—that no one reads it or cares what it says. This I take to be a mistake. The paper may be intellectually contemptible. But it has behind it the great office and person of a Catholic bishop, and nothing which appears in it can be void of the significance pertaining to this connection. At lowest, the *Tablet* is the straw which shows the way the wind blows, and how it became possible to obtain from Propaganda a document

so injurious and insulting to the Irish Church and people as the late circular.

It is only too evident that obstacles enough to this union exist already. The English Catholic body seem struck with mortal paralysis—intellectual and moral. Thirty years ago it showed more activity and life and hope than now. We had then such men as Charles Langdale (*clarum et venerabile nomen*) in Catholic public life, if not in politics. Has he left no son to undertake the lapsed duties and perpetuate the noble tradition? We had Kenelm Digby painting with unrivalled learning fascinating pictures of the ages of faith, and tracing with wonderful skill the many roads of human life which lead to the city of God. Does no man of his race exist to render the pictures into realities, or show the way in one, at least, of the roads? We had the venerable Charles Waterton illustrating what manner of man it was who bore with patient dignity the ostracism of three centuries from the public life of that England his fathers had made; the Waterton of to-day seems to exhaust himself in collecting editions of a book written many centuries ago, and in endeavouring to elucidate the hopeless problem of its authorship. Then there are Welds and Maxwells, Stourtons and Scropes, Howards and Petres, with many another, of whom it may be justly said that in personal qualities they are worthy of their ancestry. What part do they take in the public life of England—what action to stem the daily advance of paganism, or to to endeavour to restore the empire to the unity of Christendom? The answer is their condemnation. There is not a single English Catholic gentleman in the House of Commons; for it may be presumed that the nondescript member for Berwick "don't count."

Yet this House of Commons is the centre and heart of our civilization. Who influences or guides it controls the destinies of the empires for good or evil. Through it alone can the impulse be given which can effectually raise or depress our national life. It is, therefore, of the first importance—it is evidently essential—that a Catholic party be formed within it, growing out of and acting with the Irish party. This could be easily formed from the English Catholic gentry, for they have wealth, and leisure, and cultivation. Two necessary qualities they have not, namely, freedom from English prejudices, and the courage of their convictions. They are, as has been said, in regard to Ireland, Englishmen first and Catholics after. They have never shown, as regards public life, that they had any conception of their duties, or the disinterestedness necessary to the earlier stages of their fulfilment. It is no excuse to say they were shut out from the representation of English constituencies by prejudice. They could have got seats in Ireland in any necessary number. At the next election twenty suitable men could get placed in the Irish representation, but they would need to be very different from those we have lately had a sample of. We don't want "clever idiots" like Lord R. Montague, nor shams like the late Sir George Bowyer. We want Frederick Lucases, if not in ability, at least in honesty and Catholic spirit. Supposing the late Dr. Ward was as eloquent with tongue as powerful with pen, what an unknown amount of good he could have done in Parliament on such questions as education! His robust and masculine understanding, displaying all that was best in the English mind, would have given him the power of a party. It will yet be recorded as evident proof of the decadence of the English Catholic body, that at the very turning-point of the history of both countries they have not given one man to do a man's work on the side of Catholic interests and public policy.

Enough there were on the other side. Mr. Gladstone, surely in this case a most credible witness, declared on bringing in the Compensation for Disturbance Bill that the lives of 15,000 Connaught peasants depended on its passing; that for them the sentence of eviction was a sentence of death. What did our English brethren in the faith care? At the head of the Catholic nobility, the Duke of Norfolk marched down to the Upper Chamber to vote the unroofing of three thousand humble homes, the quenching of as many hearths. Is his own roof-tree the more secure, his own hearth the happier, for this callous and unchristian disregard of the interests of those who are most truly "*pauperes Christi*?" Does he think he has postponed for one day the inevitable