

and in considering this question, we must not forget that circumstance. There are in Ireland no less than 533,000 distinct farm tenancies, of which no less than 450,000 are under 50 acres, and no less than 50,000 more are between 50 and 100 acres, showing that the great bulk are under fifty acres, and no less than 500,000 out of the total 533,000 are under 100 acres. Although there are exceptions, as we know, principally in one of the provinces of Ireland, but also in the case of many estates scattered through other parts of that country, yet the bulk of those 533,000 holdings are yearly, and they are yearly in a country in which the custom has been that the tenant shall make the improvements, a custom which is wholly incompatible with the conditions of yearly tenancy. Now, Sir, while that is the number of Irish farm tenancies, let us see to what extent the ownership of farm lands prevails. In Ireland, one in every 257 persons, owns farm lands, while in France one in every eight persons owns farm lands; in central and northern Europe, the tenure of land is widely diffused; and while we have seen a very gradual growth and a very imperfect development, in the continental countries of Europe, of the principles of popular and responsible government—while in that regard they are far behind the United Kingdom, yet we have seen, since the days of the French revolution and the Napoleonic age, large advances made—much larger advances than have been ever dreamed of in England towards diffusion of the tenure of land, and the abolition of that most objectionable portion of the feudal system. In the Rhine Provinces, including Westphalia, there are 11,000,000 acres of cultivable land—and how many proprietors? 1,157,000 proprietors, or one to every ten acres of land; and if you read the history of the contentment and comfort, the work and labor, the energy and industry—the indomitable industry—that is displayed in many of these countries by the proprietors of these small areas, you must be convinced that the only thing that enables the Government of these countries to be carried on at all, burdened as they are with enormous expenses, with an imperfect development of constitutional government, with great military armaments, and with an oppressive system of conscription and military service—the only thing that gives the people heart and hope, and enables them to struggle on at all, is that wide diffusion of the ownership of land than which there is nothing better calculated to promote the stability of the people, to whom the land belongs. Take the State of New York, in which there are 22,200,000 acres of farm lands, and in which the holdings are large, as is natural in a new country, where there is so much land undisposed of as there is on this continent. There the owners of the land, in 1870, were 216,000, against 21,000 in Ireland, including the owners of church lands. Look at two portions of Ireland, which may be selected as examples: take the agricultural counties of West Meath and Cavan, which comprise 1,360,000 acres, and in which there are 612 owners of less than 50 acres in that whole district; in the counties of Galway and Mayo there are 2,760,000 acres, and there are only 225 owners of less than 50 acres. The number of small owners is insignificant in England, but that number is computed to be about ten times as large in proportion as the number is in Ireland, and that in a country of which I believe the greatest practical blemish to-day is its own land laws. I believe there can be no doubt that the greatest blemish in England and Scotland to-day is the condition of the ownership of land; but even there that difficulty was diminished relatively to the condition of things in Ireland. Now, Sir, there can be no doubt that the old penal laws, which among other relics of barbarity prohibited for a long time Roman Catholics either from owning or inheriting lands, had much to do with the creation of the present state of things as to the landholding in Ireland, and that state of things being once created and marked deeply upon the country, it became of

course proportionately difficult to obliterate it. The result was a practical serfdom; the people who cultivated the lands were only left with enough to subsist on in a miserable manner. All concede that there were many landlords in Ireland who granted proper leases, and behaved with propriety towards their tenantry; yet in the main, the practical result was that the whole profit of the lands, with the exception of a poor, miserable subsistence to the tenant who worked them, went to the landlord, and also that where improvements were made, an early opportunity was taken to increase the rental of the lands to the extent to which they had become capable of producing, by virtue of the improvements which the tenant and his family had made. This was a state of things which of course did not merely diminish, but destroyed, that hope of bettering himself, which is the spur by which you can expect men to rise, and under the influence of which you can expect happiness and contentment to be diffused. The first or one of the earliest writers on the subject of land holding—Young, I think—says: "Give a man but nine years' lease of a garden, and he will turn it into a desert; give him a freehold of the naked rock, and he will turn it into a garden;" and I believe that not untruly represents the relative condition of things between the short holder under the customs that prevail in Ireland, and the proprietor. Now that situation would have been bad enough, if the rents so exacted from the tenantry were rents in any proper sense of the term; but the whole produce of the soil goes, not to enable the unfortunate people to clothe themselves, but to live in rags, not to feed themselves, but to keep starvation from them, and above that, the whole of the produce of the soil is taken by landlords who do not live in the country, because a certain measure of improvement and prosperity would necessarily have arisen from the expenditure on the soil by those enormous rents. But to make a condition miserable enough, God knows without it, still more miserable, the bulk of those who received these rents were absentee landlords; and so it happened that, speaking once again in the main, not merely a fair share and increment of the production of the soil, but the whole produce of the soil of Ireland, with but wretched livings for those who raised it, went away from Ireland—was rather a tribute paid by Ireland to foreign countries, than legitimately applied within the land itself, and which would have occasioned the development of trade and manufactures, which would have given more employment, agriculturally as well as otherwise, and produced some mitigating circumstances at any rate to relieve the darkness of the picture to which I have referred. I say it happened there was luxury for the absentee landlords, misery for the resident tenant, as the rule, and that in a country of which it has been said, not I believe rhetorically, but in sober truth, that if you wiped out the tenant's improvements you would convert nine-tenths of Ireland into a desert again. I have said enough to show that the question of the land is at the core of the Irish question, and to show how great was the importance of any measure, such as the Irish Church Act, which should have tended even in a moderate degree to unite the diverse interests of the occupant and of the land he occupied, and to create a land proprietary in Ireland. That measure was followed within a year or two by the Land Act of 1870, an Act which was, no doubt, a useful Act, and which was, probably, in effect, I have no doubt, quite as strong and sweeping a measure as the public opinion to whom I have referred, and the people of the United Kingdom would suffer to be passed at that day, but which in consequence of that public opinion not being sufficiently appreciative of the situation, was far behind what the necessities of the situation called for, and both the Church and Land Act were brought about, not from a sense of the need of