

'But, Peerjan, if all Italy was one country, would it be as big as Belgium?' inquired the baker.

'Not possible, Peerjan,' said the smith, laughing.

'Not possible. What do you say that for? I will soon show you that it is possible. You must know that between Spain and Italy there is nothing but the sea; well, there are no hills in the sea to interfere with the view; it is a flat plain. Where is the wonder, then, that I could see Italy from Spain?'

'Just,' remarked the baker, 'as we can see over the Scheidt from Antwerp to S. Aeneken.'

'Just so,' replied the Priest; 'the only difference is that Italy is farther from Spain.'

When Peerjan got upon his old stories of the war, he did not stick at a few lies to enhance his fame. He had repeated them so often and so confidently, that the good man at last came to believe them himself.

Teresa, in the meanwhile, is hobnobbing from Fehrabek on the meadow, to Laarboeven, a neighboring hamlet. She is going, doubtless, to see her son Martin, who is in the service of a farmer there.

'Well, well,' she murmured to herself, 'what will be say to it, my good boy; and the farmer too, and his wife and children who think so much of him. Ah, who would ever have thought it of my Martin? But don't I see him there by the fence with Farmer Andries? Yes, yes, it is he.'

'The laborer, of whom Teresa had caught sight, was a great, tall fellow, strongly built and broad across the shoulders, with a head of thick, frizzed hair. He would be a luckless wight who should fall into such hands; yet he had an open, gentle countenance, and his blue eyes gleamed with the light of a good and peaceful heart. It was the temper of a lamb in the body of a lion.'

'Martin,' said Teresa, as she came up to him, 'can you walk with me a few steps along the road? I have but one word to say to you.'

'Surely, mother. What's the news?'

'You shall hear; but come with me.'

When they had left the field, Teresa said:—

'Young man, you must go to Rome.'

(To be Continued.)

THE LAND QUESTION OF IRELAND

(FROM TIMES SPECIAL COMMISSIONER. No. 25. Dec 20)

My tour through Ireland having been completed, I proceed to examine in detail the land system of the country as a whole, according to the plan I have before laid down. The first question that presents itself is how that system is, as it were, expressed in the material condition of the land, and in the state of its leased classes, which will be fairly answered by noticing briefly the resources and position of the Irish nation.

Before the year 1846, the land was cultivated by a class of Irish people who were in a state of absolute barbarism, and whose mode of life was such as to render it almost impossible to estimate the value of the land. It was not until the year 1846 that the land was cultivated by a class of Irish people who were in a state of absolute barbarism, and whose mode of life was such as to render it almost impossible to estimate the value of the land.

Yet, though the general progress of Ireland has been considerable since 1841, there are some indications of a movement in the other way which require attention, and it is certain that within the last few years the advances of the nation have been great. All over the country the land is now being cultivated by a class of Irish people who are in a state of absolute barbarism, and whose mode of life is such as to render it almost impossible to estimate the value of the land.

On a fair review of the facts, therefore, we may say that the material progress of Ireland has been great in the last 25 years; that it has been considerable since 1840, and that it has been apparent where the small farm system—taking the term in a reasonable sense—has continued the ordinary mode of agriculture. Turning now from the visible results to the organization of the land system of Ireland, we find a state of things which, viewed critically, and without regard to mitigating influences, would seem incompatible with any kind of improvement, and which, after making every allowance, must be pronounced injurious to the national welfare and pregnant with a social disaster and mischief.

It is deplorable to observe how unequal our law is in dealing with these two classes of tenants. It is a reasonable rule of right for the first; for its principle that whatever is added to land becomes the property of its owner seldom works wrong in cases in which the landlord makes the chief permanent improvement; and its right doctrine that grant or contract can alone create an interest in the fee is not often injurious to a tenant who holds either by lease or by a distinct bargain.

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These modifying circumstances have been sufficient to lessen the mischief of a bad law, and to make the system of landed tenure prevailing in the greater part of Ireland consistent with a fair amount of progress. Nay, they have been sufficient to cause even whole districts, for the most part occupied under these conditions to advance as yet more rapidly than districts held under a system more favored by law, but introduced after such social disturbances. But that the existing relations between the law and what I have called the Irish mode of occupation produce real and immense evil is a matter that does not admit of question. The necessary tendency of this state of things is to retard improvement; by exposing the just rights of the tenant to confiscation, and to provoke discontent in a whole class, the most important seriously in the nation. One of the best proofs of this is that in Ulster, where the law is, in a great degree, being supplanted by the custom that guards the interest of the tenant, we find comparative progress and order; and that, in the case of farms in the class here referred to, you see, as a general rule, throughout Ireland, better cultivation and more comfort wherever the vices of the law have been, to a considerable extent, neutralized by the security afforded by reasonable leases.

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The land system of Ireland, moreover, examined upon the side of ownership is not in a satisfactory state. As I have often pointed out, absenteeism prevails to an extent that is really calamitous; many of the largest proprietors are absentees; and in the South a marked religious distinction associated with an insular past, divide the great body of landowners from the people. I have indicated before the unfortunate consequences which, coupled with a system of tenure, may be traced to this condition of affairs, how when whole tracts are without the influence that gain effect from landed property, too often becomes an object of dislike; how disputes are bred between landlord and tenant draws a barrier between them difficult to level and too suggestive of ill-omened recollections; how the antagonism of social and political life, in part flowing from the separation, has terminated in the South of Ireland in a wresting from property its natural power, and rendering it odious in too many places. I shall dwell on these topics again, but shall make one mark upon absenteeism, reserved for a last glance at its effects. The great evil of absenteeism is morally especially in such a country as Ireland, the withdrawal of the presence of the proprietor; but I will agree with those who contend that it is absolutely without economic mischief. It is easy to refer to the vulgar fallacy that Ireland is at the loss of the whole sum remitted to absentees abroad, that this is simply a drain on her resources. I conceive however, that, economically, Ireland suffers from absenteeism in this way—that its tendency is to remove to a distance the market for many Irish commodities which otherwise would find a market at home, and thus to lessen prices to some extent; and that it diverts a considerable fund from productive to unproductive employment. I cannot, however, enlarge on this here; and I must leave a subject not exclusively Irish to be discussed in a more general manner in the greater part of the north of Ireland, land property, resting on a social basis very different from that of the other provinces, still fortunately possesses considerable power, and notwithstanding some adverse influences, will long maintain its natural activity. As regards the whole system of ownership in Ireland, unadvised as it is in too many places, it is obvious that any change in it must be, in the strict sense, voluntary and most fully respect the rights of property. Such a change must be gradual and partial, and can only be thought of as supplemental to any settlement of the Land Question; yet it may be the duty of real statesmanship, on grounds of high political expediency, to afford facilities for this consummation.

IRISH INTELLIGENCE.

Our Special Correspondent in Rome, writing on the 22nd instant says:—'I believe it is pretty certain that the Marquis de M'Gonigal, who was nominated dignitary for the Archbishopric of Armagh but who from the first was unwilling to accept the responsibility, has been excused by the Holy Father from acceptance of it.'

The Derry estates of the Marquis of Waterford are about being sold, and the tenants thereon are taking active steps to purchase their own farms. They are all comfortable people, and with a little assistance would be in a position to buy the fee simple of their holdings, and thus become proprietors themselves. At meetings held by the tenants six deputies have been appointed, who are to go to London to apply to the Government for assistance to enable them to effect their object.

The Friends are determined to put O'Donovan Rossa forward again for Tipperary as soon as the late election shall have been declared invalid by the House of Commons, and Col. John O'Mahony, who is at the head of one of the wings of the Brotherhood in the United States, has made an urgent appeal to Irish nationalists of all classes for money to carry on the contest. 'The men of Tipperary,' he says, 'have won a great victory for the cause of Irish national independence by this election. They have covered themselves with immortal honor. It is now become the imperative duty of every patriotic Irishman all over the world to aid and support them in maintaining the advantage they have thus gained over the enemies of our country.' Colonel O'Mahony thinks it ought to be feasible to raise a sum of £10,000 in a few weeks to defray the extraordinary influences which he assumes will be set in motion by the British Government against the Fenian candidates.—Cork Examiner.

The Freeman's Journal has received a list of twenty-one families consisting of one hundred and thirty-eight individuals who have received notices to quit in one district, there being not one shilling of rent due. Further particulars are promised.

A clerk in the Cork branch of the National Bank was recently arrested on a charge of embezzling £1,000 belonging to the bank. Mr. J. Bright's popularity is on the wane.—At a large meeting of workmen at Bethnal Green, Mr. Anderson's remark that Mr. Bright was 'the friend of the working man' was received with a storm of hisses.—Irish Times.

The 'Scotsman' repeats the rumor that the Government is again prepared to act in this country to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act, and it adds that the question was under consideration at the last Cabinet Council. We are happy to be able to state on the authority of special telegrams from our London Correspondent, who has obtained Cabinet information from a most reliable source, that the Cabinet has not had the question before it since the last meeting of it before the Christmas holidays; and, therefore, he reports the 'Scotsman's' is without foundation.—Freeman.

Mr. Heron has thought proper to contradict a rumor that he would not present himself to the voters in the premier's country. 'I have considered it the proper course,' he says, 'not to petition for the seat, and I have adopted that course for reasons which will occur to every independent mind. He has definitively stated his intention to stand again to the event of a vacancy.'

REPRESENTATION OF LONDON.—There is a rumor that Major O'Reilly, M.P., having accepted an appointment from the Government, will vacate his seat, and that the priests of London, feeling themselves now unpledged will adopt Mr. John Martin. In that case, of course, no petition would be put forward against the return of the Hon. Mr. Greville Nugent.

The opinions of the Irish National press were very generally commented upon by the English press of Saturday and Monday. The feeling of disappointment and disgust evinced by our people against Mr. Bright is allowed to be deep, and likely to be lasting. The 'Standard' says it is probable he will, before many weeks, the most unpopular of the English ministers. Of course, their condemnation of Mr. Bright is simply a party move, and no matter what course was adopted by him, the 'Standard' would quibbly condemn it, the real difference between the English parties being the enjoyment of office rather than any abstract principle. With regard to Bright, I hope the memory of his heartless and unworthy defence of the jailers will not be forgotten soon in Ireland; and I would suggest, as a means of keeping his baseness ever present in the minds of our countrymen, that he be henceforth known as Hypocrite-Bright.—Dublin Irishman.

The 'Cork Examiner' has the following 'proposal' for the revived discussion of the Repeal question:—'The goal of the Union would seem to be on the eve of gaining a position more or less the practical question of Irish politics. The old cry has been heard at several of the great popular demonstrations lately held in connection with the agrarian movement—the idea, as yet, has barely assumed a definite shape, and has not as yet been expounded in Parliament, if we except Mr. G. H. Moore, but here are indications that has taken possession of the minds of a considerable and active party in the country, by whom it is held in reserve for the present, simply that public attention may be concentrated on a question of more immediate urgency. We do not row into the party who have taken up the cry as a means of venting a fancied injury inflicted by the British Government; but to a section of patriotic and earnest men who believe with the Dean of Limerick, that here are diseases in the present condition of the country which it will be difficult to cure by any measure short of the concession of perfect autonomy.'

SIR GEORGE BOWYER, BART., A REPEALER.—This morning we received the following letter from Sir George Bowyer, and although not intended for publication, we think it should go before his former constituents in order that they may learn the change he has taken place in his opinions on the question of Repeal. There is no doubt at all that Sir George is right. No matter what laws may be passed for Ireland, neither prosperity nor lasting peace will visit her till she is legislated for by her own sons, as the London Parliament will never be able to understand the wants of the country.

My Dear Sir—I am off to my duty at the Council next Thursday. Can I do anything for you in it? I do not know what the government are going to do about the land. But my own opinion is that the only complete remedy for the evils under which the country suffers is an Irish Parliament in Dublin. I have been for a long time coming to the conclusion that the British Parliament never will and never can understand what the country requires. Until there is an Irish Parliament, Ireland will always be made a tool of English Party Leaders in the House of Commons.

I hope to see the day when the Legislative Union will be repealed, and I believe this will be best for England as well as Ireland.—Believe me yours sincerely, George Dowdes.

THE 'SATURDAY REVIEW' ON THE IRISH QUESTIONS.—'THE DAY.'—As the time draws near when the Irish land scheme of the government is to be made public, attention is naturally concentrated in England on the minor details of the bill which it is supposed can be properly proposed. But when the debates in the House of Commons begin, it will not only be inevitable, but it will be most desirable that the discussion should take a much wider range. There are, for example, a large number of persons here who deny altogether the proposition that it is desirable that the political control of Irish landlords over their tenants should cease. They say that such a control is entirely in harmony with the English Constitution, and that it is very beneficial to Ireland, by encouraging the continuance of very wholesome relations between the upper and lower classes. If this is not the view by which the House of Commons is prepared to abide, then it will have to be explained to the Irish that the political control of which they complain will be minimized, if not extinguished, by measures which Parliament is prepared to adopt; as, for example, by securing the tenant against capricious evictions, by encouraging long leases, and by the ballot. The expediency of making small holders the proprietors of the land, will also be discussed, and when it is discussed, let us hope it will be discussed fairly. It is said that the great landlords are necessary to lead the way to improvement, and that the Irish farmers are too ignorant and careless to make good proprietors. Neither of these arguments are sufficient, although both are very well worth considering. If the creation of small proprietors is to be treated as an open question, the benefits of small properties, as well as their very serious defects, ought to be weighed. What reason is there to think that the small Irish tenant of to-day is less fitted to become a good proprietor than the French peasant was at the time of the French Revolution? How can it be more than a mere surmise that the holder of small holdings, under the promptings of self-interest, would not learn as fast from larger owners, and from reading about and visiting well-cultivated districts, as tenants are likely to learn from wise landlords? If it is said that to make the tenant a proprietor would lead to endless subdivision of land, it may be asked whether the history of small proprietorships shows that subdivision is always pursued to the point where ruin becomes inevitable. Even the question of Irish independence must receive some notice from Parliament. Here again it would be advantageous both to Englishmen and Irishmen if the whole subject were fully argued out. On the one hand, Irishmen might be brought to ask themselves what they mean by such phrases as the management of Irish capital, the development of Irish industries, the making of Irish laws, and the assessing of expenditures of Irish taxes, being left in Ireland's own hands. First, they may be got to see that if, as they mean, that there should be two Parliaments of co-ordinate power in the two islands, the steady persistence of an Imperial policy would be wholly impossible, and to ask it to ask that the British Empire should be broken up by Mr. Laville, we imagine, would reply that he did not