

THE IRISH LAND WAR.

An Exhaustive and Impartial Resume of the Situation.

(From the Toronto Globe Correspondence.)

DUBLIN, Dec. 7. During my stay at Broughall Castle, King's County, I had many opportunities of meeting with the tenant farmers and getting an insight into their conditions and views on the situation. I soon found that they were Land Leaguers (using the term in its general sense rather than implying actual or continued membership in the body) to a man, and were disposed heartily to embrace the programme of the League in its entirety. I have spoken of the headway that is being made in some quarters by the radical doctrine of the nationalization of the land. From all I could gather here and in other rural districts, I have no reason to suppose that this idea has yet filtered down to the farming classes. Their views as to the ultimate settlement of the question are rather in the direction of peasant proprietorship or a very considerable reduction of rent. They are not given to theorizing on such subjects, or liable to be charmed by any amount of abstract reasoning to risk anything to forward any system that does not promise them individually a concrete and tangible advantage. The "no rent" idea commends itself to their self-interest. They can understand and appreciate the notion of possessing their present holdings rent free or 20 per cent below Griffith's valuation, and any qualms of conscience they might have on the subject are completely set at rest by the argument that they have already paid in rack-rent enough to buy out the landlord's interest. They readily enough assent to the proposition that the land was made for the people, but always in the spirit of the famous resolutions of the Pilgrim Fathers. "Resolved, 1. That the earth belongs to the people of the Lord. 2. That we are people of the Lord." Thus the tenant farmer's interpretation of "the land for the people" is simply that the present occupants are to become virtually the owners, by the simple process of refusing to pay rent.

WHAT THE LAND LEAGUERS WANT. "What do the Land Leaguers want?" This question is one that has been very frequently addressed to me in Canada as well as by Englishmen and others whom I have met in Ireland, and I may as well undertake to answer it here as at any later time, as I have now obtained all the light that an intimate study of the workings of the organization can give. The only true and straightforward answer to such a question is, that there is no such consensus of opinion among Land Leaguers and their sympathizers as to enable anyone to state authoritatively their views as to a final settlement of the question. The success of the agitation, so far as it has been successful, is mainly due to the fact that its ultimate aims have been carefully kept vague and indefinite. The bulk of the farmers, I am persuaded, have no further desire than to obtain their present holdings either rent free or with as little rent as possible. But the farmers after all have been so accustomed to follow the leadership of the active politicians of the towns, the shop-keepers, priests, lawyers, journalists, publicans, &c., who constitute the real nucleus and organizing force of the party, that any policy which met the approval of the latter class as a whole would quickly be accepted by the voting numerical strength of the body. The views of those who lead public opinion, however, are widely divergent. Some are Nationalists or Home Rulers before everything else, and look upon the agitation as a means to accomplish the disruption of the Union. Others make land reform the principal object, and regard Home Rule as altogether secondary in importance. Then as to land reform itself, it is impossible to formulate any proposition for a final settlement which can be said to embody the sentiment of a majority. Some favour peasant proprietorship, either with or without compensation to the landlord. Others would be satisfied if the rent were reduced to a very low figure, cut down to about half or a third of the present rental all round. Perhaps the greater number have given but little thought to any scheme as a finality, and are quite content to keep up the fight against landlordism without any definite end in view—to let things drift, and be guided in the future by circumstances as they arise. And there is a considerable leaven of men who know exactly what they want, and who personally have clear ideas in favor of nationalization of the land as the ultimate object to be attained on the basis of State ownership of all land, and taxes in place of rent. They realize clearly that their remedy has not, so far, been generally accepted or even understood by their co-laborers, but have an abiding faith in the power of radical ideas, and believe that the logic of events is hurrying on the solution which they consider the only logical and effective one, and in the meantime are willing to co-operate with those whose abstract views on the land question are wide as the poles asunder. Of course in this, as in all popular movements, there is the usual number of on-lookers and camp-followers who have simply joined it from selfish motives, and are perfectly willing to catch up any and every watchword that is likely to be popular.

HOW THE LANDLORDS FEEL. In my first letter from Belfast, I gave the substance of an interview with an official of the Irish Land Committee, an organization formed in the interests of the landlords. Shortly after my arrival in Dublin I called upon the same gentleman and had another interview. He was disposed to take a very despondent view of the situation. The outlook for the landed interest he regarded as gloomy in the extreme. There was, he said, no possibility of compromise between landlords and tenants as long as each party remained in their present temper, and the fight must go on to the bitter end. Suppose a landlord, recognizing the fact, which could not be denied, that some tenants had been rack-rented, came to Ireland and made a personal inspection of his property with the object of reducing rent in such cases. He finds that a number are paying a disproportionately high rent, and makes an abatement. The immediate result is that all the other tenants on the estate whose farms have not been rack-rented clamor for similar reductions, and refuse to pay their rents until they get them. The landlords who try to make reductions, where reductions can be fairly demanded, are obliged to stop short and postpone the execution of their plans, owing to the disposition of the tenants to stand together and demand the same abatement for all. "We must all hang together," said one of the signers of the

American Declaration of Independence. "Yes," said another, "for if we don't we shall all hang separately." The Irish tenant is tired of hanging separately. Among other curiosities of the campaign I have in my pocket a Land League card of membership—a study in Orange and Green. One of the devices in the corner is an illustration of the familiar fable of the boy and the bundle of sticks, and the motto that "Union is Strength" has sunk deep into the minds of the peasantry. The first inculcation of the League organizers is that, come what may the people must all act together, and the swiftest and deadliest vengeance is reserved not for the landlord or agent, bailiff or process-server, but for the tenant who is regarded as

A TRAITOR TO HIS CLASS for taking up land from which another has been evicted or paying rent while the rest are holding out. In this respect the parallel between the Land League and the Trade Unions, to which it has often been compared, is very close. In both cases the system of acting en masse may sometimes work detrimentally to the interests of individuals and result in injustice to the landlord or employer, but in the main it is calculated to strengthen immensely the position of the class adopting it. This, needless to say, is my conclusion, not that of the landlord representative, the thread of whose conversation I now resume. He described the position of many of the landlords as desperate in the extreme, money and credit being alike exhausted. The banks were not disposed to lend money, as formerly, on the security of landed estates. Some of the landlords had borrowed money and overdrawn their bank accounts to enable them to live, but the crash could no longer be postponed in the case of those properties burdened with jointures or mortgages, which would perforce pass out of the possession of their present owners into the hands of receivers. He did not expect that the provision of the Land Act, providing for the purchase of property by the tenants, would be availed of to any considerable extent, as under present conditions the position of a tenant was really better than that of the peasant proprietor who borrowed money to pay for his land. The situation was growing worse rather than better. In Tipperary there was a complete system of refusal to pay rent combined with an attempt to increase boycotting. In West Meath the no rent programme has also been generally carried out. As to the Land Court recent decisions reducing rents that had not been raised for thirty or forty years were regarded by both parties as significant and unexpected. The extent of the reductions was something never contemplated when the Act was passed, and Mr. Gladstone himself never foreshadowed or anticipated the very sweeping changes made by the Court. There would be an attempt to get compensation for the landlords, whose revenues had been cut down, but he did not expect that any such measure would be adopted. Much, however, depended upon the appeals from the decisions of the Sub-Commissioners, and it was of great importance that they should be heard quickly and the points involved determined before the large number of cases now on hand were disposed of by the Sub-Commissioners. In case a number of decisions by the courts had afterwards to be set aside general dissatisfaction among that portion of the tenants who were now disposed to go to the courts would result. From the entire tone of his conversation it was evident that the cause of the landlords had considerably declined since my former interview, some five weeks before, and that their representative was conscious of fighting a losing battle.

While in this city I came in contact with a Land League organizer for one of the central counties of Ireland, from whom I obtained a considerable insight into the working of the organization and the views of its leaders. I cannot, of course, give his name or even refer to the locality in his charge, as that would undoubtedly result in his being "reasonably suspected" and consigned to Kilmabinnah. He talked quite freely on the understanding that nothing which would betray his identity should be published. "Now that the Land League is suspended," I asked, "through whom is the work carried on?" "Through the officials of the old branches. You understand there is nothing done now in the name of the Land League, but when work has to be done I communicate with those who formerly held offices in the League." "And suppose they die, leave the country, or are suspected and sent to Kilmabinnah?" "Then I should ask the remaining officials of the locality to nominate others to fill their places." "Then under whose direction do you act?" "The organizers act under instructions from the headquarters at Paris, and from Farnell himself."

"But Farnell is not allowed to communicate with the outside world on political matters, is he?" "No, he is not allowed to. Nevertheless it is managed. The wardens are glad enough of the chance to make a little money for themselves, and can be conveniently blind if approached the right way. They keep continually changing them, but so fast as new men are put on they are bribed, for we have plenty of the snares of war."

"That accounts for the issue of the 'no rent' manifesto, I suppose?" "Oh no. It is well known now that the 'no rent' manifesto was really written and put by, to be used in case of the arrest of the leaders, some time before the blow was actually struck."

"And how are the financial affairs managed?" "Through the Ladies' Land League. All the money paid out in Ireland to forward the movement comes through that channel. It is expected every day that the Ladies' League will be declared illegal and suppressed, and in order to provide for that emergency we are organizing, all over the country, branches of the Political Prisoners' Aid Society, which will take up and continue the work when the ladies drop it, just as the Ladies' League took it up when the Land League proper was suppressed. Everything is now done in the name of the Ladies' Land League, which, so far, has not been proscribed as an illegal organization."

but since the suppression of the League as an open organization things have assumed a different phase. The people must be kept together at any cost. My idea is to prevent serious personal injuries or the maiming of cattle—which is a dastardly business—but I shall certainly not interfere to prevent the man who goes behind his neighbour's back and sneaks to the office to pay his rent from being thoroughly frightened or having his thatch burned off or anything of that sort. This is a revolution—that's the long and short of it—and these measures are necessary to keep the people up to the mark. In exceptional cases a more striking example may sometimes be made. There is a man in my county who is a systematic land-grabber. He is guarded day and night by constables. Some day he will be caught out alone, and then he will be shot to a dead certainty. I have lifted my hand entirely, and let the people free to deal with him as they see fit."

"What shape do you think the NEXT PHASE OF THE MOVEMENT will assume?" "I think the landlords' claim for compensation, which I hope will be strongly urged, will result in a claim on the part of the tenants for restitution of the amount out of which they have been wronged in the form of rack rent. The tenants will calculate what such overcharges amount to on the basis of the reductions made by the Land Court, and then claim exemption from rent-paying until the amount is wiped out. The people will thus get out of the habit of rent-paying and will never get into it again."

"How about Henry George's scheme?" "I don't think it will be put forward too prominently just now, or else I think it will array a number of people against us who would otherwise be with us. It is best not to say too much about it at present. Let it gain adherents gradually."

"Is there any disposition to break up the large grazing tracts, from which the people were driven by eviction, in order to restore them to cultivation?" "Yes. In my locality the people have notified the holders of several large grazing farms that they must give them up, and in one instance at least the land has been abandoned accordingly. There is a strong feeling among the people that these tracts must be again reduced to tillage, and it is likely to manifest itself in connection with the future of the agitation."

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LETTER FROM QUEBEC.

QUEBEC, Dec. 31, 1881. Everything seems to be going out of gear in our city. Two of our professional men have turned up wrong end up, both I understand are lawyers. One was found yesterday morning delivering an address to the stars and is believed to be "non compos mentis." If every member of the legal profession found in a similar situation was sent to an asylum for the insane I am afraid the receipts of the Recorder's Court would show a lamentable deficiency. The other legal luminary is alleged to have gone astray in his morals instead of his brains, and is at present in quod pending the establishment of his guilt or innocence. As "his connections are said to be high-toned," as Guiteau says, he will doubtless be bailed out. The charge is a misappropriation of funds, but in nine cases out of ten criminality in such matters is difficult of proof. Lawyers generally pontificate between fools and rogues, and like the keepers in an asylum they sometimes get a flavor of both extremes.

Our Post office is said to have a goat among its sheep, and detectives are busily trying to detect the horned iniquity. The French Yorkton delegates luxuriated in our historic slush yesterday, and return to La Belle France, firmly convinced that a sou-ester and an oldskin are more suitable for a Canadian winter than furs. St. Peter street has a succession of lakes, the largest of which has been called very appropriately Lake St. Peter. I would respectfully invite the Mayor and Corporation to take a survey of it with a view of establishing a canal ferry. The 28th anniversary of St. Bridget's Asylum was celebrated on Thursday evening by a successful concert in Victoria Hall, the property of St. Patrick's Literary Institute. His Grace the Archbishop and suite and the Redemptorist Fathers were present. A new wing is now being erected to shelter destitute old men who have borne worthy characters for honesty and industry when in a position to help themselves. The Quebec Land League is making preparations to fill the Music Hall on the occasion of Father Sheehy's lecture, and any Irishman who fails to put in an appearance, if not unavoidably engaged, will be looked on as a "bad egg." Quebec will not be behind in practically endorsing the action of the Chicago Convention. "We are ready to keep abreast of the 'Clan na Gael' wherever our march may lead to, even if we have to make a skyrocket of the British Empire. Well, the year is in its dying moments, so hoping you and all your readers have had a merry Christmas (barring the inevitable indigestion), I wish you all a happy New Year, and as many as may be good for us all. May the New Year rock the cradle of Ireland's Liberty, and attend the funeral of all her enemies. DIOGENES.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS. At the last regular meeting of the W. T. Association, held in their hall, Pictou, Ont., on January 2nd, the following office-bearers were elected for the ensuing year:—President, James Clarke; 1st Vice-President, Richard Ringer; 2nd Vice-President, George Ackerman; Recording-Secretary, Gus Molash; Financial-Secretary, F. E. Hourigan; Conductor, E. Lalane; Assistant Conductor, John Burke; Warden, Murray McGowan.

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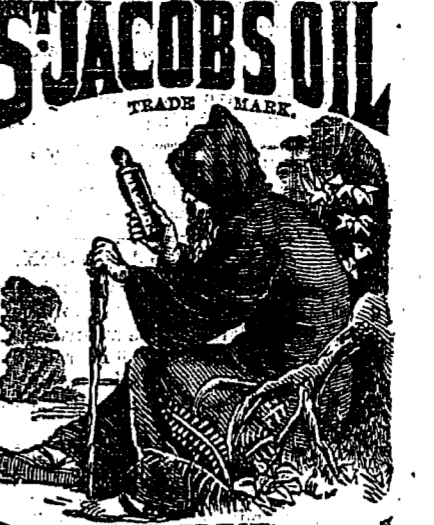
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