

PRACTICAL SERVITUDE;

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 tenants; 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 when 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 tenants 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. A certain measure of improvement and prosperity would necessarily have arisen from the expenditure on the soil of 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 in the large, 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 capital legitimately applied within the land itself, 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 that there was injury for the

ABSENTEE LANDLORD,

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 which 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 either or both measures—were brought within the domain of practical politics, not because interested or selfish landlords or wealthy tenants had come to the conclusion, from some new turn of reasoning, that the condition of Ireland was one of injustice that required amelioration, but because a great jail in the heart of London was broken open, and some policemen in Manchester were killed. That it was this that aroused England's attention to Irish affairs and rendered possible those measures of reform is beyond doubt, and again the same fatal error, and again justice and measures of propriety and prudence too long delayed, and again those lessons taught the Irish people, has borne for so many years such fatal fruits which as those to which Mr. Gladstone referred. That Land Act was useful in its way but it was not wide enough; the land clauses most hopeful in theory, which struck largely at the root of the question, turned out in practice not so useful as the land clauses with reference to the Irish Church owing to difference of condition. The truth was that in other respects the

LAND LAWS OF IRELAND,

as of England and Scotland, were grievously defective, and the expense of a voluntary transfer of land in small parcels was almost prohibitory. The search for titles, and copies and conveyances and conveyancing itself were such that whatever price you might fix for those moderate portions of land, which were the utmost aspiration of the occupant would in many cases fail to meet the expenses of conveyancing. That was one difficulty with which legislation was unable to grapple. There was another, in the want of sympathy on the part of

the Treasury Government a little too much of the country with the sacred a little too

DIVIN

which looked recognition party has rights, and there were but age, or a total have been all of the land of therefore, you wholly defected complained proved to be 1880, the la tinnal pres creased and measure, but great question plicated det that a meas and found that meas no provision arrears of r or satisfaction defect. If which prec circumstances you will se large exte beyond pr most of th posed to e arrears. T of parties ever, no or was an

that it wa expected obtained Kingdom, obtained tinued di had been still. and wor last reme length in that came those evi attended the provi It came benefit—far as th pend on United I of an en