

himself would write or talk in this strain. But we do mean to say that such is the frame of mind and such are the feelings towards all who differ from them into which a great many of the Prohibitionist rank and file have been worked up by the language addressed to them from the platform and even from the pulpit. When people are possessed with the notion that they and the other subscribers to the *New York Witness* are "God's children," and that all who dissent from their views are modern Sanballats, to be smitten with the sword of Prohibition, is it possible that they should be able to do common justice to the motives of opponents or to weigh any arguments, however strong and however supported by experience, against the practical tendency of their favourite scheme? The particular delusion, indeed, is the least serious part of the matter: the most serious part is the temper which the crusade, carried on in this spirit, is breeding. A domination of such enthusiasts as Mr. Bell, if it could be established, would render the country intolerable as an abode not only to lovers of wine but to all who desire to live in the realms of freedom, charity and common sense.

THE fated limits of Tory Democracy appear when we find the *Quarterly Review*, which after all is the organ of genuine Toryism, upon the very eve of an appeal to the people, coming out with a defence of the Game Laws. It is simply showing the enemy's gunners the point on which they ought to direct their fire. Equity will not echo all the strong things which Radical Reformers have said, or dispute the plaintive allegation of the venerable organ that, while the hare and the partridge are the ostensible objects of attack, the real object too often is the Squire. We can believe, too, that if the sportsman gives the peasantry plenty of beer, game preserving will be tolerably popular with them, at least while the beer is going down. The preserver of game is often a good fellow, and to the dog, the gun, the fine September morning and the luncheon basket pleasant memories no doubt belong. But it is surely idle to suppose that when a territorial aristocracy has surrendered its political power it will find it possible to maintain for its own amusement a system which entails much waste of food in a land where many hunger, and what is still worse forms a constant seed-plot of lawlessness and a not uncommon cause of bloodshed. The days of imprisonment for poaching, we may be sure, are numbered. In the feudal game law, lingering though in an attenuated form into the last decade but one of the nineteenth century, we have a fact which is typical of the whole course of British progress. In France the feudal system, after flourishing in unpruned luxuriance of oppressiveness down to 1789, was then swept away, root and branch, in a single night. In England it vanishes by a process so gradual that its outline is visible at last only to the eye which has followed the fading shape through successive periods of history. Yet the sporting squire, his game preserving and his keeper, are the lineal descendants of the terrible Norman huntsman, his forest law and his forest guard, while the poacher represents, and in his murderous affrays with the keepers only too truthfully represents, Robin Hood and Little John. A clear historical pedigree connects Mr. Wardle with William Rufus. So long has the hunter instinct in man survived his exit from the hunter state. The Norman warrior, unlettered, without home amusements and living apart in his lonely castle, had no occupation wherewith to fill the listless intervals of war but the chase, and his plea might seem valid, at least in his own eyes, for dealing summarily with the destroyer of the stag and the boar. The Squire, when he metes out very rural justice to poachers, is not without a similar excuse. The British landowner, says the *Quarterly*, if he has nothing to kill will not reside on his estate. This argument has lost some of its force by the introduction of battues. Instead of spending the shooting season at his country seat and among his country neighbours My Lord now runs down with a party from London for a battue. The battue system itself is the reduction of the sport to an absurdity. Barn-door pheasants are bred by hundreds simply to make a bag, and the biggest of all bags is made by that curious travesty of British Squirearchy the Maharajah Dhuleep Singh. The Squire, if he wishes to sit firmly on his parish throne, will have to find sufficient inducements for residence in the care of his estate and in social duty. If he has a heart and a brain he will not repine at his lot.

THE conflict between Lord Devon and his tenantry seems to show that the spirit of agrarianism has not been laid by the Land Act. Few expected that it would be laid, or that the Land League would rest satisfied with anything short of the total spoliation and expulsion of the landlords. If winter should bring distress, which in some districts of Ireland seems likely to be the case, we shall probably see the agitation again in full activity, and we may look for a renewal of the outrages which at present, and till the elections are over, it is manifestly the policy of Mr. Parnell to suspend. Excessive competition for land, arising from the redundancy of

population, had undoubtedly brought matters in Ireland to a very dangerous pass, and relief was imperatively required. But it is a pity that the relief could not have been afforded by a concerted action on the part of the landlords themselves. A most serious step, and one pregnant with incalculable consequences, was taken when the Legislature proceeded to break private contracts and cancel debts. The notion that Ireland was an exceptional field in which economical principles might be set aside with impunity, and without extending the effect to the other kingdoms, if it ever was well-founded, is not well-founded now. With general intelligence so much quickened, and the activity of the press so great as it now is, an agitation easily overleaps the Irish Channel. Agrarianism has already spread to Skye, and whether it will spread to Great Britain generally is of all British questions about the most momentous. No man on earth is by nature less communistic than the British farmer, or would be less likely to be caught by any scheme for the nationalization of land; if he desires anything it is not that land should be nationalized, but that there should be more of private ownership in his own person; but he has no revolutionary tendency of any kind, and his economical wars hitherto have been waged not with the landlord but with the labourer. Still, if agricultural depression continues, and the tenant farmer is in sore distress, there is no saying that the example of Ireland, and the theories of confiscation which are in the air, may not produce an effect even on his conservative soul. With a general refusal to pay rent an elective government would find it desperately difficult to deal. The life of the British land-owner is not likely henceforth to be one of ease.

IF the estates of the landed gentry were unencumbered the owners, at least the more opulent of them, might be able to make such reductions as would satisfy their tenants and yet retain a sufficient income, provided they would live on their estates. But the estates in England and Scotland are encumbered in the aggregate to the estimated amount of four hundred millions, the annual charge being about eighteen millions. This arises partly from rent charges in favour of widows and younger children, but principally from mortgages, the result, to a large extent, of the extravagance of former owners. Only a small portion represents money spent in improvements. The price paid for many of the estates in the first instance was extravagantly high, because land bore a fictitious value as the title to social rank and the source of political influence. It was by buying land in all directions to increase his political influence that the Duke of Newcastle, three generations back, brought his princely house to the verge of ruin. Of course the interest on the mortgage debt and the annuities have to be punctually paid in full, while the rent is being reduced twenty or thirty per cent., while farms are being by the dozen thrown on the hands of the landlord, while large tracts are going back out of arable into pasture. Thus magnificent rent rolls represent in reality only a meagre margin, which is dwindling day by day. It has been justly said that this debt is about the most important among the factors in the politics of the immediate future. The territorial aristocracy which has defied all the attacks of armed revolution seems likely to fall before the Western plough. In France, where subdivision breaks up the great estates, proprietors are found haunting rather than inhabiting the vast chateaux of their forefathers, to which family pride clings when the family revenues are gone. In the course of another generation "the stately homes of England" may share this fate, and that country life, the poetry of which is perhaps not equal to the beauty of its mansions, may have almost ceased to exist. Certain it is that the doom of entails and aristocratic conveyancing at all events is sealed. For whatever property is left to them the landed gentry will have to seek perfect freedom of sale and an open market.

AN interesting, perhaps a painfully interesting, feature of the coming electoral struggle in England will be the first trial on a large scale of the caucus. "The caucus," says a Radical, who is evidently a writer of mark, in *Macmillan*, "may be accepted as the visible manifestation of Radicalism; it rests upon and embodies the Radical principle of self-government by direct popular representation." Happy simplicity! we cannot help exclaiming, if the writer is sincere in his infantine faith, if he is not a Boss but one of those who are to be bossed. He will change his note presently when he finds himself, unless he takes to wire-pulling, left with no more practical enjoyment of the suffrage than his dog. The British caucus is still in the green wood, and it is still possible, for a partisan passionately bent on a victory, to flatter himself that it is "nothing more than the union of persons of one way of thinking, in each constituency, in a representative organization freely and openly chosen, administered by elected officers and charged with the business of deciding who shall stand as candidate for the party, and with the consideration of broad principles towards the main-