

are bad landlords in Meath, and worse still in Westmeath, and perhaps also in the other counties of this diocese. We are, unfortunately, too familiar with all forms of extermination, from the eviction of a parish priest, who was willing and able to pay his rent, to the wholesale clearance of the honest, industrious people of an entire district. But we have, thank God, a few good landlords, too. Some of these, like the Earl of Fingal, belong to our own faith; some, like the late Lord Athlumny, are Protestants; and some among the very best are Tories of the highest type of conservatism. You have always cherished feelings of the deepest gratitude and affection for every landlord, irrespective of his politics or his creed, who treated you with justice, considerateness and kindness. I have always heartily commended you for these feelings. For my own part, I can assure you, I entertain no unfriendly feelings for any landlord living, and in this essay I write of them not as *individuals*, but as a *class*; and further, I freely admit that there are individual landlords who are highly honorable exceptions to the class to which they belong. But that I heartily dislike the existing system of land tenure, and the frightful extent to which it has been abused, by the vast majority of landlords, will be evident to anyone who reads this essay through. I remain, dearly beloved brethren, respectfully yours,

+ THOMAS NULTY.

Mullingar, 2nd April, 1881.

THE LETTER.

Bishop Nulty commences with the following propositions:—

Private property in land not justified by its general acceptance.

Human slavery was once generally accepted.

Even Christians recognized slavery.

The approval of the world cannot justify injustice.

Private property in land is the twin sister of slavery.

Natural right, not vested right, should control.

The bishop then proceeds as follows:—

Justice of Private Property in the Results of Labor.

The following are the acknowledged principles of justice that have a practical bearing on the question.

Every man (and woman, too) has a natural right to the free exercise of his mental and corporal faculties; and whatever useful thing any one has produced by his toil and his labor, of that he is the rightful owner—in that he has in strict justice a right of property.

The two essential characteristics of property, therefore, are: First, the thing itself

must be useful for some purpose; and, secondly, it must be the product or the result of our labor.

Now, the effort or the exertion demanded by labor is irksome, distasteful and repulsive to the indolence and self-indulgence that is natural to us, and, therefore, no one will voluntarily subject himself to the painful inconvenience of labor who is not stimulated by the prospect of the remuneration and enjoyment which the fruit of his labor will return him.

Whoever, then, has voluntarily subjected himself to the painful operations of labor has, in strict justice, a right of property in the product or result of that labor; that is to say, he, and he alone, has a right to all the advantages, the enjoyments, the pleasures and the comforts that are derivable from the results of his labor. Others cannot complain of having been excluded from the enjoyment of a thing whose production cost them nothing; which he was not bound to produce for their use, and which, were it not for his efforts, would not have existed at all. *Use* and *exclusion* are, therefore, the two essential peculiarities of the enjoyment of a right of property. The power to dispose of legitimate property is almost absolute. Property may be devoted by its owner to any purpose he pleases that is not inconsistent with the public good and does not interfere with the rights of others. He may keep it for his own use and enjoyment if he wishes, or he may exchange it by barter or sale for an equivalent in value of the property of others; he may alienate it by free gift when living, or bequeath it to anyone he pleases, as a voluntary legacy, when dying. He might even destroy it and do no wrong to anyone. If Michael Angelo, in that delirium of artistic frenzy in which he called on his celebrated statue of Moses "to speak," had dealt it a blow of his mallet, which would have created not merely a rent in its knee, but had actually shattered it into atoms, the world might indeed deplore the destruction of this immortal work as an irreparable loss, but it could not complain that he did it an injustice or a wrong. Michael Angelo was master of his own free actions, and he was not bound to spend years of labor and toil in producing that incomparable statue to delight and please the world, and, even after he had produced it, he was not bound to preserve it for its enjoyment. "He might do what he liked with his own."

Every individual whose labor produces an article of property makes a substantial addition to the wealth of the nation; and a nation's general prosperity and happiness, and the degree and abundance in which it possesses all the comforts, the enjoyments, the luxuries and pleasures of life, depend entirely on the numbers engaged in industrial productiveness, and on the skill and efficiency or their labor. Every man, no doubt, works for his own self-interest, for his own benefit and happiness, but whether