

And a little later, speaking during an unhappy temporary agitation upon religious questions, I said this :

"I hold those men false to the principles of religious freedom who would sow discord between Protestants and Roman Catholics on this (the educational) subject. I freely render to my Roman Catholic fellow countrymen, first, religious freedom and next their stipulated rights, but more, I say that, being strong we ought to be what the strong should always be—generous to the weak. Measure full, heaped up and running over is the measure to be given by the strong to the weak, and by so acting we will exemplify true christian principles ; we will exemplify true Liberal principles ; we will do our best for the promotion of true Christianity and for the spread of the Gospel."

I rejoice to say that when I repeated these sentences amongst the Roman Catholics of Ireland, while seeking their support in my own county and in other counties, my words met with as enthusiastic a support, as applicable to their demeanor and their course of action respecting the Protestant minority, as the most earnest and strenuous of Protestants, amongst whom I count myself, could possibly demand.

Now, Mr. Chairman, besides the national aspirations of Ireland for local government ; apart from the evils inflicted on her in various ways by the existing system of government, there has always been present the great question of the land. It is impossible and it is needless to enter into details on that question to-night. You know, this audience, largely composed of Irishmen, knows, that a system of tenancies at-will, or for short periods, under which the tenants effected all the improvements while the landlords were absentees ; that such a system, combined with the dearth of other employments, with the increase of the population and the relations of supply and demand as to the land, had produced absolutely intolerable conditions,

under which there was no real freedom of contract. You know that the tenants were largely rack rented on their own improvements, and that the landlords took all but the barest possible subsistence ; they even took more, the remittances from relations in America, and the earnings of the unhappy tenant in England, Wales and Scotland. You know that the earlier efforts, however well intended, at remedial legislation were towards the recognition legally of the moral and equitable ownership subsisting from this condition as to the making of improvements, and towards the provision of a kind of dual ownership. You know that, partly owing to serious defects in the measures themselves, partly to the falling value of products, and partly to a complication of circumstances, those plans failed of satisfactory results, and that it has been for some time generally recognised that the true solution is to convert the tenant, at any rate the small occupier, into the owner of the soil which he occupies. (Hear, hear.) You know that already something has been done to this end.

But the Ashbourne Act and all other prior and subsequent acts are inadequate to complete the work. This plan demands, in my opinion, the creation of public authorities, with power, if necessary, to sanction compulsory purchase, and to use the public credit to accomplish the operation.

And still more is needed in those unhappy congested districts where there are small holdings in which it is not a question of rent at all, in which, if the occupant had the plot rent free he yet could not live—where many holdings must be enlarged, and where, on account of the necessary displacements of the existing population, arrangements must be made for the transfer of a portion of them to other adjacent lands. Here, again, compulsory power by a public authority and the use of the public credit is required.

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