

## THE SOCIAL REFORMER.

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# BACK TO THE LAND.

By Bishop Nulty.

[Again a double number of the SOCIAL REFORMER is issued. This time it is to enable us to publish the letter of Bishop Nulty to the clergy and laity of his diocese. The letter was the result of the independent observation and study of a Catholic divine, whose orthodoxy and theological learning no one could question, whose life had been spent in a purely agricultural part of Ireland, and who, as this letter shows, was disposed to view the land question from that standpoint. The letter attracted widespread attention at the time of its publication. Our eight pages will not contain the whole of the letter, and we have therefore been reluctantly compelled to omit several paragraphs.]

### Dedication.

*To the Clergy and Laity of the Diocese of Meath:*

Dearly Beloved Brethren—I venture to take the liberty of dedicating the following essay to you, as a mark of my respect and affection. In this essay I do not, of course, address myself to you as your bishop, for I have no divine commission to enlighten you on your civil rights, or to instruct you in the principles of land tenure or political economy. I feel, however, a deep concern even in your temporal interests—deeper, indeed, than in my own; for what temporal interests can I have save those I must always feel in your welfare? It is, then, because the land question is one not merely of vital importance, but one of life and death to you, as well as to the majority of my countrymen, that I have ventured to write on it at all. With a due sense of my responsibility, I have examined this great question with all the care and consideration I had time to bestow on it. A subject so abstruse and so difficult could not, by any possibility, be made attractive and interesting. My only great regret, then, is that my numerous duties in nearly every part of the diocese for the last month have not left me sufficient time to put my views before you with the perspicuity, the order and the persuasiveness that I should desire. However, even in the crude, unfinished form in which the essay is now submitted to you, I hope it will prove of some use in assisting you to form a correct estimate of the real value and merit of Mr. Gladstone's coming bill. For my own part, I confess I am not very sanguine in my expectations of this bill—at any rate when it shall have

passed the lords. The hereditary legislators will, I fear, never surrender the monopoly in the land which they have usurped for centuries past; at least till it has become quite plain to them that they had lost the power of holding it any longer. It is, however quite manifest to all the world—except, perhaps, to themselves—that they hold that power no longer. We, however, can afford calmly to wait. While we are, therefore, prepared to receive with gratitude any settlement of the question which will *substantially* secure to us our just rights, we will never be satisfied with less. Nothing short of a full and comprehensive measure of justice will ever satisfy the tenant farmers of Ireland, or put an end to the land league agitation.

The people of Ireland are now keenly alive to the important fact that if they are loyal and true to themselves, and that if they set their faces against every form of violence and crime, that they have the power to compel the landlords to surrender all their just rights in their entirety. If the tenant farmers refuse to pay more than a just rent for their farms, and that no one takes a farm from which a tenant has been evicted for the non-payment of an unjust or exorbitant rent, then our cause is practically gained. The landlords may, no doubt, wreak their vengeance on a few, whom they may regard as the leaders of the movement; but the patriotism and generosity of their countrymen will compensate them abundantly for their losses, and superabundantly reward them for the essential and important services they have rendered to their country at this critical period of its history. You know but too well, and perhaps to your cost, that there