

# THE WEEK.

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### THE CONFLICT IN IRELAND.

WE have constantly maintained that the real difficulty in Ireland was agrarian, and that the political agitation was, like previous agitations, from O'Connell's Repeal movement downwards, a bubble, which derived its appearance of solidity and its show of strength from its connection with the struggle for the land. We are confirmed in this by the spasmodic effort which the political agitators are now making to prevent a settlement of the land question, which they well know would leave their fire without fuel, or without any fuel but that which is extracted from the pockets of luckless Irish servant girls on this side of the water. The gravity and perplexity of the land question itself we have never underrated. Nor have we ever attempted to disguise or palliate the evils of absenteeism. Its mere commercial evils perhaps may have been exaggerated: the rent, though it is not spent upon the spot where it is collected, circulates through the whole of the United Kingdom, and if it buys Irish products in London the commercial result is much the same as if it bought them in Ireland. But the social evil of absenteeism is very great indeed, particularly in the case of people so dependent on personal leadership as the Irish. Landed property has duties morally attached to it, especially when it is held under laws framed with the object of keeping land in possession of a limited class and out of general circulation, for the purpose of supporting a territorial aristocracy. By Irish landlords as a class those duties have been grievously neglected. Of late years, it is true, there has been a marked improvement, if not in respect of residence, in respect of liberality of management and care for the well being of the tenantry. But it is proverbial that upon the generation which begins to amend, the deluge of revolution comes. Long ago, and before resort was had to the legislative subversion of contracts, or to violent measures of any kind, primogeniture and entail ought to have been abolished in Ireland, and a cheap and easy system of conveyancing, such as the Torrens system, ought to have been introduced. This would probably have led to the severance, in some cases at all events, of the Irish estates of great families from their English estates, and would thus have extinguished a good deal of what is now unavoidable absenteeism. Royalty might also have done not a little to make residence fashionable among the landowners, as well as to win the hearts of the people, had it set the example of duty by frequent visits to Ireland. Unfortunately, Royalty has set the opposite example. The result is as awkward a social problem as ever statesmanship had to deal with, rendered still more desperate by political agitation. There are even those who, looking at the matter from a conservative point of view, think that the relation between landlord and tenant in Ireland will henceforth be impossible; and there can be no doubt that the social estrangement as well as the agrarian hostility between the two orders, has now become extreme. There is no simple or heroic solution, and the attempt to find one made by the authors of the Land Act has

broken down, economical laws, like the law of gravitation, having still the effrontery to assert themselves in spite of all demonstrations of their effectness. But by the joint operation of private compromise in the form of the reduction of rents, of purchase by the tenant under the Ashbourne Act, and of the introduction of the Torrens System, a settlement may be gradually effected, and, that something of the kind is apparently approaching, the panic violence of the political agitators is a sure sign. There is a limit to the agrarianism of the Irish tenant farmer which may make him stop short of extremities. He does not want the labourer to share the land. Not only does he not want the labourer to share the land, but he often grinds him pretty hard, and probably he will grind him harder still when, by the abolition of the landlord, the only moderating power is removed.

A CRISIS has certainly come in the struggle between the Queen's Government and the League. Again the parrot cry of coercion is raised. Those who raise it do not pause even to inquire whether the Government is acting under any special legislation or only putting in force the ordinary law. As a matter of fact it is only putting in force the ordinary law against conspiracies to defraud. Great Britain has enemies in Canada as elsewhere, who would with pleasure see her dismembered, and desire the triumph of the rebellion. This is perfectly intelligible, though on the part of British Canadians not very filial, or perhaps indicative of great nobility of nature. But it is difficult to understand how any man who does not wish to see civil society dissolved can blame a Government for upholding the law. Suppose in this country a conspiracy were formed to prevent the payment of debts, and a "plan of campaign" were promulgated inciting debtors to put half the amount due into the hands of trustees to be tendered to the creditor, and to repudiate the rest, would the community allow the Government to stand by with folded hands? Would not Mr. Blake and Sir Richard Cartwright themselves, if they were in power, think it their plain duty to put the law in force? Did not the Americans put the law in force against boycotting as soon as it showed its head among them? Even of those who would advocate confiscation of the property of landlords by legislative authority, few, it may be presumed, will maintain the liberty of private buccaneering. If they do, they will have to provide themselves with stronger bolts and bars for their own doors and windows. The right of property in real estate cannot be separated from the right of property in anything else; and perhaps some day the Radical manufacturers of Leeds and Bradford may find their workmen applying advanced doctrines to factory buildings and plant. It appears that there is an element of weakness in the British Cabinet which has been causing hesitation at the last moment, nor can there be much difficulty in divining where that element of weakness resides. The nature of the Tory demagogue is exactly the same as that of his Radical compeer, and a bully in debate is almost always a coward in council. On this occasion, however, the authority of the Prime Minister seems to have been exerted. Messrs. Gladstone and Morley, with their organs, continue to encourage law-breaking by faint condemnation, but there are symptoms among their followers of unwillingness to be identified with rapine. If the Government acts with firmness it will certainly prevail.

### STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

FAIRBAIRN'S "Studies in the Life of Christ" appears to be popular and to deserve its popularity. It is, at all events, a work of the right kind. To study the acts and sayings of Christ as recorded in the gospel is possible and most profitable. To write a life of Christ other than the Gospels' is impossible, and the pretended biographies, great as is the vogue that some of them enjoy, are little better than impositions. They are simply the gospel shredded up and interlarded, sometimes to a ridiculous excess, with Jewish topography and antiquities. Shreds of the gospel and Jewish topography and antiquities, with a most unsatisfactory philosophy of miracles, and a quantity of rather full-bodied language, are all that there really is in the immensely popular work of Archdeacon Farrar. All this illustrative matter may be useful and interesting as notes to the New Testament, but it will not make a substantive history. In the attempt to