

but without a ladies' committee, has escaped various evils which have followed such an arrangement elsewhere. But the Board of Guardians is a large one, admitting of the appropriation of special duties by gentlemen in a position to attend to them, and several of them take a lively and personal interest in the boarded-out children. The foster-parents are chosen from persons known to some one of the guardians, who to some extent holds himself responsible for seeing that things go right. Moreover, the children live near a large manufacturing town, in which remunerative employment is at once within the reach of all who are willing to work. And one result of its being as easy to find situations for girls as boys is that a distinctly smaller proportion of girls than boys ever re-appear at the workhouse in after-life. This is not the only particular in which manufacturing towns have been proved, in spite of special risks of their own, to be less dangerous to morality than those in which the poverty of women is great, in consequence of the absence of large industries in which they can be employed. But even in such circumstances, there is room for the kindly and judicious intervention of ladies; and many guardians in unions where it has not yet been tried, are anxious that it should be.

It is a cause of congratulation that such a committee has just been formed in Dublin, to look after children boarded out from the metropolitan unions. The double responsibility—to the state on the one hand, and to the children on the other—is somewhat novel for many ladies; but it is precisely typical of much other work which ought eventually to reach their hands. They will have to face discouragements arising not only from the ordinary difficulties of life, but from the tendencies to disease, drink, vice, and insanity, which many of these children inherit. But marvellous results have followed careful nurture even in such cases—to say nothing of the happier ones mixed with them. The boarding-out system rescues children from artificial conditions under which nothing living could thrive, and secures for its clients a home—friends, parents, brothers and sisters—school teaching, which becomes a pride and a pleasure, instead of a meaningless drudgery—and religious instruction which is blended with tenderness, instead of a dry form which *might* inspire awe, but *could* not inspire love. This surely is work in which the place of women is evident and essential.

II.—*The condition of Small Farmers in Ireland, and their position with reference to the Land Question.* By Murrrough O'Brien, Esq.

THE average size of farms in Ireland is so small that it may well be matter for wonder how the tenants upon them are able to pay any rent after supporting themselves and their families. In 1866 the number of farms of the value of £10 and under was estimated to be 365,866, and the average size throughout Ireland is placed at less

than 30 acres. Making allowance for changes since 1866, and other circumstances affecting the estimate mentioned, the number of agricultural holdings under the value of £10 may be taken to be 300,000. Reckoning 5.39 persons to each holding (this being the average number of persons to each house in rural districts) we have over 1,600,000 persons living on these very small farms. According to the census of 1871, there are in Ireland 33.8 per cent. of men engaged in agricultural pursuits, while in England the similar per-centage is 13.3. In fact Ireland is a country where peasant cultivation is the rule; but the condition of the population differs from that of continental countries in the occupiers being yearly tenants instead of owners of the soil they till. In 1835 Gustave de Beaumont wrote thus:—

“In Ireland the estates are as large as in England, and the farms as small as are the properties in France; the country combines the evils of great properties with all the inconveniences peculiar to cultivation on a small scale, and without any of the redeeming advantages of the latter.”

He described the condition of the Irish peasant as

“worse than that of the Indian of the forest or the slave in chains; he had neither the liberty of the one, nor the regular supply of food of the other.”

The remedy he suggested as the only cure for the excessive misery of the people was that they should

“acquire the property of the soil; but not by means coercive or unjust: it is necessary not only to remove the obstructions which are in the way of their becoming proprietors, but to assist them in becoming so.”

Many other economists and statesmen have pointed out this as being the only permanent solution of the Irish land question. The arguments and illustrations of J. Stuart Mill in favour of a peasant proprietary are familiar to all. In 1866, Mr. Bright said in Dublin:—

“It is of the first importance that the people of Ireland should have the opportunity of being made the possessors of their own soil. You will understand that I do not propose a forced purchase, or any confiscation.”

Mr. Bright in fact proposed that money should be lent at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. to enable tenants to purchase their farms wherever an opportunity offered, and he continued:—

“I would undertake even to give—if I were the government—to every one of these landlords 20 per cent. more for his estate than it will fetch in the market.”

In those days, as now, these proposals were misrepresented: it was said that Mr. Bright and the agitators encouraged the people to think that the land would be taken from the landlords and given to the tenant. In all seriousness persons have argued against such a course, and dilated on the evil results of such a confiscation. Irishmen were represented as defining a free country as one without “rent, laws, or taxes.”

Since 1870 I have come in contact with a very large number of the smaller farmers in every part of Ireland, under circumstances which encouraged in them perfect freedom of speech. The universal feeling among this class, as expressed in their own words over and over again, is that “no man can expect to hold his land unless he pays his rent.” There may be differences of opinion as to what is

a fair rent, and there are frequent complaints of excessive rents, but the idea of escaping from rent except by purchasing the fee has no existence. Mr. Bright's proposal has had a partial trial under the 44th, 45th, and 47th clauses of the Land Act of 1870, and the 34th clause of the Irish Church Act. It has been conclusively proved—(1st) that the tenants are most anxious to buy the fee-simple of their farms at good prices; (2nd) that as owners their industry has been increased; that on lands, the tenure of which has been changed from a yearly tenancy to ownership in fee, remarkable improvements have been noticed, and that the tenants say without such security they would not have made such expenditure. The account given by Mr. Shaw Lefevre* of his visit to lands sold under the Bright clauses, and the evidence given to the Committee on the Land Act, are proof, if such be needed, that to be owner in fee of his farm is more satisfactory to the occupier than to be a yearly tenant, and that such a system tends to peace and the creation of wealth.

Every other solution of the land question has been by means of a lawsuit between landlord and tenant. Poor—ignorant of the mysteries of the law, the tenant is at a disadvantage and will submit to almost any rent rather than engage in such a strife. The law's delays, its uncertainty, and expense, may embarrass even the winner.

There are now but few cases of capricious or heartless evictions. The land question generally arises as a dispute about the amount of rent. No principle upon which this can be equitably done has been agreed upon; and the valuations of the same farm by careful valuers are found frequently to differ surprisingly.

Judge Longfield† has given some instances of extraordinary discrepancy between the government valuations and others made by skilful and careful professional valuers—the estimates of the latter being from twice to thirteen times the former; and on this subject he says:—

“If the valuation is made for the purpose of taxation, it is generally made low; if for the purpose of a sale, the valuation is apt to be high, as more likely to suit the interests of the employer.”

The economist's theory of rent, if applicable anywhere, is not so to Ireland, where small farms—“peasant cultivation,”—are the rule. On this subject, the evidence of Judge Longfield to the Devon Commission may be quoted. He said:—

“I consider it perfectly impossible to form an accurate opinion as to the proportion which rent ought to bear to the aggregate produce of a farm. . . . Political economists all agree upon this, that there is no fixed proportion between produce and rent. . . . I do not think that any man who ever lived, having all the data given to him, could with any certainty determine the proportion.”

Notwithstanding the difficulty of ascertaining what is a fair rent, the tenant has no option but to pay what is demanded of him, or go. Take the case of a large estate, let by a kindly landlord to tenants whom he wishes to live on and by the land. He likes to dwell

* *Journal of the Statistical Society of Ireland*, December, 1877.

† “Address to Statistical Society of Ireland,” 1865.

securely among contented and prosperous neighbours. Privileges of fuel and commonage follow each farm, without being the subject of separate payment in addition to the rent. Under a sense of security, houses are built or improved, cultivation is pushed up the mountain side, or into the bog; comfort and a higher standard of living prevail. As wealth accumulates, wages rise and all classes in the district benefit. Should the estate come to be sold, the tenants receive formal notices in what is to them almost an unknown language. They may object if they like to the descriptions of their farms set out in these notices. But how? They may be ten, twenty, or thirty miles from an attorney's office, but objection must be made through him. It must be filed in Dublin, and if set down for hearing by a judge, they must attend and support their claim by means of witnesses. They may be detained—the expense is great—the result uncertain. The matter in dispute may be absolutely of trifling value, but of the highest importance to the comfort and independence of the tenant. It is better to leave matters as they are: and the estate is sold in small lots and at high prices. The rights and privileges attached to the farm may have been enjoyed for years without exact definition. By the passage of the estate through the land court they have been limited or abolished. A valuer next appears: he may be skilful and careful; but he is engaged and paid by the landlord. The tenant's homestead may have been built and improved by degrees; reclamation may have gone on year by year, little by little; what was once a cabin is now a snug cottage with farm offices; the corn field or meadow was not long ago barren moor. In the words of Mr. Sullivan (*New Ireland*, vol. i. p. 271):—

“Whatever there is on or above the surface of the earth, in the shape of house, or office, or steading, or fence, or road, or gate, or stile, has been created by the tenant's hand.”

But it is impossible for the valuer to eliminate the annual value of the tenants' improvement; he can only value the farm as he finds it. Without having had a voice in the matter, the tenant finds himself with the choice of—(1) leaving his farm; (2) entering upon a vexatious, costly, and uncertain lawsuit, with the man of all others it is his interest to be on friendly terms with; or (3) submitting to an increased rent and diminished privileges, silently, but with ill-will. It is generally his interest to do the last. Yet he cannot but feel that his own expenditure placed him at the mercy of the new landowner. And the latter is not wholly to blame; in the opinion of an expert, the land is worth more than the present annual rent. Why should he not have a fair rent for his land?

So there remains and must ever remain the elements of war between landlord and tenant. As long as occupation and ownership are severed, the interests of the two parties concerned must be antagonistic.

It is evident no law will ever be passed *fixing* rents, for that would be equivalent to confiscation. No such demand is made; for fixity of tenure has only been asked for at a fair rent, and circumstances under which land is let or held differ so widely, that no general rule for fixing rents can be applied. It is sometimes said

that the interests of landlord and tenant are identical—that they row in the same boat. In 1849 Richard Cobden said:—

“As members of one community, landlords and farmers have common interests in good and equal laws; but I tell you as landlords and tenants your interests are antagonistic. The interest of the one is to rent the land as cheap as he can, the interest of the other is to let it as dear as he can.”

The system of land tenure in Ireland tends to make the interests of landlord and tenant far more antagonistic than in England. In Ireland it is the general practice for the tenant to make all the permanent improvements that are necessary. It is the landlord's interest that for these improvements, merged in the freehold, incorporated in the soil, he shall receive a rent, and he often does so.

Rents have always been high in Ireland. Wakefield, in 1810, says:—*

“As landlords, they exact more of their tenants than the same class of men in any other country.”

John Wiggins† an English agent for over thirty years in Ireland, wrote in 1844:—

“The fact of too high rents, arising from these and other causes, having long prevailed, especially in the province of Munster, is too notorious to admit of doubt, and the mischiefs arising out of this circumstance are manifold and grievous. . . . I am clearly of opinion that the rent of land in Munster, and in other provinces partially, is about or nearly double—perhaps 80 per cent. above that in England, in proportion to its saleable produce.”

In 1850 Mr. Caird* said:—

“Can it be said that the landlords generally have expended any capital in providing necessary buildings, etc., on their farms? In that respect there has been no change [since Arthur Young's time]; but as regards rent the advance has been enormous.”

Though there are numbers of liberal landlords in every part of Ireland, on whose estates moderate rents are demanded and cheerfully paid, yet the tendency in fixing rents is apt to be steadily against the tenant, who is more or less bound to his farm by his capital sunk in improvements, buildings, and even in the condition to which he has brought his land. Except, however, the very poorest and the worst housed of the agricultural labourers, their condition will in general bear comparison with that of the English farm labourer. If, as is commonly the case, a bit of land, however small, accompanies the house, it gives the tenant a means of saving. Poultry, pigs, fruit, bees, vegetables may be and often are a source of profit to the small tenant. If custom permits him to sell his interest in his holding to the best advantage, he may be repaid, if he leaves, for all his care and expenditure. Where the tenant-right system prevails on small farms, improvements are often effected, the cost of which far exceeds the fee-simple value of the land for which the rent is paid. In fact a small plot of land is a foundation from which a man may start and rise in life—a bank in which he can

* *Account of Ireland*, vol. ii. p. 795.

† *Monster Misery of Ireland*, p. 47.

‡ *Ireland and the Plantation Scheme*, p. 126.

safely and profitably deposit his daily savings of time and labour ; and by means of these small holdings the problem of housing the agricultural labourers is being solved, for where their tenure is secure, or they fancy it is, they build their own houses.

In England the same strong desire exists among the agricultural labourers to obtain small holdings of land. Cobden denounced the allotment system as "a plaything and a failure." During the last three years I have known land in one of the midland counties, in an agricultural district, to be bought up by labourers and artizans at fifty, sixty, and seventy years' purchase of the rent paid for the adjoining land by large farmers. In one parish three separate fields of six or seven acres each were thus purchased. Allotments were to be had in abundance ; but what was sought for was a bit of land to be dealt with as the owner pleased. The fields, divided into lots of 1,000 square yards, are first used as gardens ; but the purchasers had hopes of living in their own houses on their own land ere long.

On the house accommodation of the labouring classes, the effect of making the occupiers owners may be expected to have the best influence. From the report of the Census Commissioners of 1871, it appears that there are 148,233 cabins in rural districts with only one room, and with not more than one window. If the cost of improving or replacing these be reckoned at £60 each, more than £8,000,000 would be required. As occupiers hold almost universally by a yearly tenure, it can scarcely be expected that they will undertake the expenditure required, relying on the protection that the law may give them. Nor is it likely that the land owners will do it: to build a sufficiently good house and offices on a farm paying a rent of £5 or £6, would require an expenditure equal to twenty years' purchase of the rent at least. Little or no return could be expected from such an outlay, for the farm would not be rendered more productive by it. On the contrary, the landlord's interest is rather that neither he nor the occupier should build. Every improvement made by the tenant tends to diminish the power of the landlord to do what he likes with the land.

Consolidation of farms, and the reduction of the small farmer to the condition of the English labourer, have been openly recommended by the highest authority ; and while such theories are held, the population of a country, where farms average only thirty acres in size, must feel that they have reason to fear.

The Land Act of 1870 has given the tenants on some estates an increased security of tenure ; but not on all ; nor anywhere to such an extent as is likely to lead to great improvements of either houses or land by yearly tenants. Improvements are effected no doubt ; but confidence in the landlord's character and that of his family is the tenant's guarantee that he shall not be disturbed, rather than the doubtful protection or compensation that the law may give him. And this confidence is insufficient : as "another king arose who knew not Joseph," so tenants have reason to fear that future owners may be regardless of justice or ignorant of the facts. Ignorance as well as avarice may lead, and has led to gross injustice in this matter. The dread of an increased and exorbitant rent checks improvement as

much as the fear of eviction, and the Irish Land Act places no limit to the rent that may be asked. The tenant must pay or go, taking his chance of receiving some compensation after a vexatious and costly lawsuit. The inferior house accommodation has a very bad effect on those whose lot it is to inhabit such dwellings, and on the wealth of the country, by diminishing the efficiency of the labour of the agricultural population. One of the first requisites of progress is to provide healthier dwellings for the labouring classes. The obstacle to this being done, consists, as I have said, in the fact that it is not the interest of the owner to do it, and that the occupier's tenure is uncertain; and his dwelling, generally built by himself, has a tendency to be as frail as his tenure. It is no wonder if everything is kept "from year to year."

The evidence of Judge Flanagan to the Committee on the Irish Land Act, presided over by Mr. Shaw Lefevre, shows that the fear of exorbitant rent is not at all imaginary. He said:—

"I think the small landlords are, as a rule, the most tyrannical class—I hardly know what term to use—their whole object in buying these residues being to extract from the unfortunate small tenants the very highest penny they can. They are the most merciless, the most avaricious, and the worst class of landlords that can by any possibility be put over an unfortunate class of tenants."

An example of what Judge Flanagan refers to may be mentioned. Two small residues of estates in the north-west of Ireland, belonging to the Church Temporalities' Commissioners, were sold in 1877 to other persons than the occupiers. The best farms on these estates had been purchased by the tenants themselves; there were fifty-four tenants on these residues; the average rent paid was little over £5 each. Both of these estates are in purely agricultural districts at a distance from any town. The greater number of these fifty-four tenants are now under notice to quit—served for the purpose of raising the already high rents. Discontent, ill-feeling between the landlord and tenant classes, a sense of insecurity, and agitation, are the result.

The effect of the purchase of the fee by the tenant is best described in the words of the new owners. One wrote thus from the County of Donegal, in January, 1878:—

"My neighbours are all proud to be freeholders. As for improvements I have made a great deal. I have built a house forty feet long, and put English slates on it: and for draining, and quarrying, and sub-soiling, and making land out of the solid rock, I have laid out as much as would have bought a small farm, which if I had been paying rent I would have done but very little of."

Another, who was examined by Mr. Shaw Lefevre's Committee, said:—

"The year the Church was disestablished I built a house costing £400. Last year I built an outhouse costing £180; I made 300 perches of drains, and put up six iron gates on masonry piers. I would not do so much without having the security I now have. If every tenant had that, there wouldn't be one policeman needed for six that are in the country now."

As to the power of subsisting themselves on small farms, it is well known that Ulster, the province of the smallest holdings, fared best

in the famine time. Major Dalton,* agent to Lord Headfort's estate, says:—

“Anyone acquainted with the north of Ireland must have witnessed the comfort and tidiness pervading many an humble homestead of two or three acres, of which the occupier makes his living partly by the tillage of his little plot and partly by labour.”

Other occupations are added to the ordinary farming operations. Road and other contracts, dealing in horses and cattle, carting, quarrying, are all successfully undertaken by small farmers. Country tradesmen are nearly all occupiers of land also. The women and younger members of the families engage in domestic industries, as the dressing of flax, and wool-spinning, weaving and knitting. As an instance of such domestic employment, Messrs. McDevitt, of Glenties, County of Donegal, permit me to mention their woollen manufacture, which is carried on in the wildest part of Donegal, and throughout a district twenty or thirty miles in length and the same in breadth. Socks, stockings, comforters, guernsey frocks, and other knitted goods, are made from yarn imported by Messrs. McDevitt and distributed through the district. They say:—

“We manufacture of all classes of socks and stockings about 52,000 dozens a year, or 624,000 pairs; they average about 3 lbs. of wool per dozen, which would be equal to 156,000 lbs. weight. We employ about 1,100 families (we mean the female portion), and we imagine that each family would number about three, equivalent to 3,300 persons: of course all their time may not be fully employed, as they take the work with them to their homes, and bring it back to the depot finished. As a rule the younger of each family attend school during the day, and assist the others during the evening and night, while at home, at knitting.”

The farmer's own wool also is spun and woven by his family for their own use. In some districts fruit is grown with fair success. An acquaintance of mine, paying a rent of £45, the full value of the land, sold in 1876 his apples on the trees for £50. He had besides half an acre of damsons. I noticed this year that two of his neighbours had enlarged their orchards by planting each an acre with young apple trees. The quantity of eggs and poultry exported from the small farm districts is very great.

When, however, such industries are added to the ordinary farming pursuits, a fund is created from which an increased rent can be extracted, if the lands fall into “merciless or avaricious” hands as they may at any time.

The weaving industry in the north of Ireland led in some districts to excessively high rents, fixed in proportion to what could be made by the loom as well as the land. Handloom weaving has almost disappeared; but the high rents remain. Adam Smith says (*Book i, c. xi.*):—

“In adjusting rent, the landlord endeavours to leave the tenant no greater share of the produce than what is sufficient to keep up the stock, pay labour and other outgoings, together with ordinary profits on farming stock. . . Improvements are not always made by the stock of landlord; but sometimes by that of the tenant. When the lease comes to be renewed, however, the landlord commonly demands the same augmentation of rent as if they had all been made by his own.”

*Pamphlet on the Bright Clauses of the Land Act, 1878.

So whatever improvements the tenant makes, whatever industries he may engage in, his prosperity in any shape offers an inducement to the landlord to ask for more rent, and to this demand the law puts no limit.

To their honour it is to be said that numbers of landlords refrain from taking even such rents as would be cheerfully paid, and are proud of the high tenant-right on their estates. A large landowner having proposed to contribute to the disendowed Church in proportion to the rateable value of his property, it was suggested that he should pay on his rental. It appeared, however, that this was considerably less than the government valuation, though the tenants held from year to year.

In the glens of Donegal I have found men paying a yearly rent of £5 or £6, who were able to keep twenty head of cattle and one hundred sheep. These are the estates which, should they come by sale into the hands of new owners, would be immediately subjected to such a revaluation as the ancient owners never dreamt of. Other properties are found let at double and treble the government valuation. There is no such thing as uniformity of rental. Adjoining estates are found let at widely different rates, subject to different estate rules, administered on different principles. On low-let estates the fear of an indefinite increase of rent is a discouragement to improvement; on highly rented lands, the tenant must feel insecure, and therefore is disinclined to spend either money or labour on his farm.

Among the advantages of the small farm system must be reckoned the development and preservation of family affection, which found such a remarkable expression in the very large remittances made during the famine years, by the Irish settled abroad. These were estimated by Dr. Hancock* to have reached in the twenty-one years from 1852 to 1872, the enormous sum of £14,830,000. These remittances have by no means ceased; the purchases by tenants under the Church Act were largely made by funds sent from abroad by relations and friends of the occupiers. The words of Mr. Murray, who in 1847 first drew attention to these gifts, are still true. He said:—

“These offerings are sent from husband to wife, from father to child, from child to father, mother, and grandparents; from sister to brother, and the reverse; and from and to those united by all the ties of blood and friendship that bind us together upon earth.”

Many old persons who would under the English system be on outdoor relief, are largely assisted and enabled to live on their little holdings by means of gifts from children abroad. A case met with lately will illustrate what is of frequent occurrence. A man of sixty-five, whom I met on a mountain side in Donegal, gave the following account of himself:—“My rent is 19s. I keep one cow. I have five children in America, and two daughters at home. When my eldest son was eighteen, he went to Scotland, and in one job he saved £14. He went to America, but he did not forget the others: he sent for the next, and after a while they brought out the others. One of

* *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland*, vol. vi., p. 283.

them is coming home to see me this summer. They send me £3 now and then." Thousands of acres of reclaimable land lay around the little holding of this man. His sons, living abroad by the labour of their hands, might have found as profitable employment at home. They were permitted neither to reclaim this land for themselves, nor were they hired by the owner to do it. Two hundred acres of land adjoining this were sold under the Church Act to six tenants. Within a month of the sale, they had divided between themselves, with the intention of reclaiming it, one hundred acres of barren moor, hitherto held in common, and had commenced to fence it. One of these tenants, not having the money to buy, a neighbour purchased in his name, on the condition that the tenant might redeem it within three years. This tenant was preparing to start for America. He said: "I think I can make some money there in two years, and with the help of my friends there I'll have the land yet."

While there are millions of acres to be reclaimed in Ireland, and both a want of, and desire for better houses through the whole country, there is a general complaint that there is no employment. The wages of ordinary labourers are still very low. In one district during the past year I have known 10d. a day, without food or any supplementary advantages, to be given. Another employer told me he had more applicants for work at 1s. a day than he required. The highest wages are about 12s. a week, and the average 8s. or 9s. I give some examples of the diet of the labouring classes, as taken from their lips and verified by observation:—

	Breakfast.	Dinner.	Supper.
1. Farmer; Rent, £4 6s	Indian meal porridge and milk, tea.	Potatoes, milk, and a herring.	Indian meal porridge and milk.
2. Farmer's son in summer, when working as a slater's assistant at 2s. per diem	Bread, butter, and tea.	Meat and potatoes.	Bread and tea.
3. Ditto in winter,	Indian meal porridge and milk.	Bread.	Indian meal porridge and milk.
4. Labourer in Derry: wages 11s. per week 3s. paid for house.	Bread and tea.	Potatoes and milk.	Stirabout and milk.

The wages and diet of labourers now are higher and better than in 1844, when the Devon Commissioners described them as badly fed, badly clothed, badly housed; their only food potatoes; water often their only beverage; their cabins an insufficient protection against the weather; beds and blankets rare luxuries; but even now their wages insufficiently supply the necessaries of life.

The want of employment still existing is largely due to the tenure of land, which is such that the landowner cannot make the necessary improvements, and the tenant, if he makes them, is liable at any time

to have the fruit of his expenditure wholly or in part appropriated by an increase of his rent.

The position of the small farmers with regard to the land question is this: It is the general custom that they should build and maintain their own houses, make and preserve all improvements. Practically the landlord cannot enter on the land to do it even if he wished. If the landlord were to provide the buildings which are needed on the small farms, the general value of his estate would not be increased, for the land would not be rendered more directly productive, and he would obtain no return for his outlay. The tenant builds because a house is as necessary to him as clothes or food: it adds to his health and comfort, and in proportion to his comfort and ease, is the strength and wealth of the nation increased. The expenditure by tenants on small farms often exceeds the value of the fee-simple. Improvements and reclamation on small farms is necessarily done little by little. A record of such improvements cannot be kept by farmers, and to file them under the 6th section of the Land Act is impracticable. The Land Act (§ 4) implies that after the lapse of an uncertain time the improvements made by the tenant should become the landlord's property. This is contrary to the natural dictates of justice. The Land Act places no limit to the rent that may be demanded of a tenant. In revaluation of estates, the value of the tenant's improvements cannot be satisfactorily eliminated, and the occupier is always liable to a rent placed on his own improvements. Great complaints and discontent exist on this ground—not without reason, as appears from the evidence of the senior judge of the Landed Estates' Court. This liability to continually increasing rent checks improvements, and operates as an uncertain and capricious tax on the tenants' capital. No law can fix or limit rents without committing an injustice, and if such a law were passed it might be evaded.

The scheme recommended in 1866 by Mr. Bright is the only economical solution of the land question. The partial trial it has had has been most satisfactory; its extension has been recommended by a select committee of the House of Commons; and accompanied by a simple system of land transfer, the best results may be expected from a scheme such as this.

From the summary of the Irish Doomsday Book,* it appears that of the 20,000,000 acres in Ireland, 19,900,000 acres, or ninety-nine per cent. of the country, are owned by 17,900 persons. The wider distribution of land with the object of providing a firmer basis for society is not inconsistent with the principles of any of our great political parties. It is an object which is attainable; while to reconcile by legislation interests, which are and must be necessarily antagonistic, is impossible.

The labours and report of the Select Committee of 1878 on the Irish Land Act provide a foundation for a "new departure" in legislating on the Irish land question, on principles which involve neither coercive nor confiscatory measures; and I venture to hope that the recommendations of that committee may be acted upon by whatever political party is in power.

* *Parliamentary Paper*, 422: 10th August, 1876.