

The Irish Question 1894

The
Land
League,
The Church,
and the
Working
Class

by
John Leslie



THE CORK WORKERS' CLUB

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

This pamphlet was first published in serial form in the British Social-Democratic Federation paper, *Justice*. It appeared between March 24th and May 5th, 1894, a period immediately preceding the inaugural Conference of the Irish Trade Union Congress. It later appeared as a pamphlet, of which this reprint is an unabridged edition. Apart from Karl Marx's writings on Ireland, this pamphlet is the first known analysis of the Irish situation written from a Marxist viewpoint.

Its author, John Leslie (1859-1921), was in his youth associated with the Fenian movement and later with the Land League. He was involved in gun-running to the Russian revolutionaries in 1905-06. A Marxist, he was without doubt mentor to James Connolly when both worked in the socialist movement in Edinburgh, Scotland. This pamphlet has generally been accepted as Connolly's starting point for his own analysis of the Irish revolution.

Leslie was also responsible for dissuading Connolly from emigrating to Chile and was instrumental in influencing him in going to Dublin as organiser for the Dublin Socialist Club. However, he was later to be found among those who criticized Connolly's participation in the Irish Uprising, 1916.

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THE CORK WORKERS' CLUB

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THE IRISH QUESTION

"Enter a village in Ireland. There is a meeting being held in the lower end of the street to consider the wrongs of the country and the remedies. A man of plain speech and of ragged exterior is telling the people that they have a right to life, to liberty and happiness. He is telling them how this right can alone be secured. He is telling them that it is a mortal sin to submit to plunder and slavery. That rebellion to these is a duty. . . . When, hark, there comes a great noise of trumpets and drums. On horseback and in chariots comes on a great cavalcade with waving flags and shouting. The actors are so big, of such name and note, the trumpets and the costumes are so loud and so bright that the crowd is carried away, and lose sight for the moment of the man in the ragged coat and his sober speech about life, liberty, and happiness, and how they are secured."

The above quotation is from the American paper, the *Irish World*, of 1877, and it is a picture in miniature, it is a micrograph of the whole deplorable story of how, what was from a working-class point of view, the greatest movement in Irish history has reached its anticlimax in what is termed with fine irony Mr. Gladstone's "Home Rule Bill."

Charles Lever, in his novel "Tom Burke," has drawn perhaps the finest, the most striking and the most pathetic picture of the working-class Irish revolutionist in the character of "Darby the Blast." Darby, when the great movement for Irish Freedom was crumbling in ruins around him, in the hour of defeat and humiliation, in all the rage and bitterness of wisdom learned too late, hurls his curse at the heads of the "Gintlemen." "The Gintlemen," as he says, "who ever and always betrayed us."

And a careful study of Irish history since the Union, to go no further back, goes a long way to confirm the conclusion arrived at by "Darby." Of course it will be understood by any Irishman who may read this lucubration that I speak as an Irish wage-worker, and an unskilled one at that; as one interested in the well-being of the class to which I belong, and which constitutes the bulk of the Irish, as of all other nations, one therefore who does not believe that the Alpha and the Omega of the Irish Question consists in the hoisting of the green and gold banner above the old Parliament House in Dublin. Neither do I believe that the interests of the Irish working-class are any more likely to be advanced by the men who constitute the overwhelming bulk of the present Irish party than the interests of the British working-

class are to be advanced by the men who compose either of the great British parties.

As an Irishman I can quite well understand the passionate desire of my countrymen to assert their nationality. Irish history is but one long series of tragedies, and the lively imagination of the Celt, denied consolation in the present, dwells lovingly upon the great names of the past, upon those who in any sphere reflected credit upon the motherland. Conn of the Hundred Battles, and Malachi and Brian. The Irish theologians who in the middle ages ran amuck against the scholasts of Europe. The magnificent struggles of the O'Neils and the O'Donnells, the glory of Benburb and the sadness of Athenry, a history, in short, that is but a flaming fire on dead ashes; it is the dwelling upon it that gives to the Irish national sentiment all the force of a religion. As an Irishman also I can understand the poetic temperament that typifies "Erin of the streams" as a beautiful woman in chains, as the disinherited Queen, as the weeping Niobe of the nations. But at the same time I know that the devotion of the Irish working people to their land and their fine poetic instincts have been, are still, and will ever be exploited in the interests of the mere politician and the *gobemouche* until the lesson is learned that the Ireland of the past is gone forever; that it would not be very desirable, even if it were possible, to have it back again; and that the Ireland of the present is no beautiful abstraction, the fiction of the poet's mind; but that Ireland means all the people enclosed within its four seas, the Irish People one and indivisible — only that and nothing more.

This lesson was nearly driven home by the brave old Land League; the organisation that for the first time in Irish history, refusing to recognise any side issues, went straight for the throat of Irish Landlordism, grappled with it, and brought it to its knees, while the cheers of the Irish race rang round the world; and which by so doing, by going at once to the root of the matter, looking at the question from the point of view alone of the mere Nationalist, did more to rivet the attention of Europe upon Ireland; did more, in short, to raise Ireland to a place amongst the nations of the earth than any other organisation or movement since the days of the Kilkenny Confederation.

The story of how the movement was diverted into the mere political channel is one that ought to be engraven in letters of fire on the heart of every working-class Irishman. In the very moment of its triumph victory was snatched from its grasp by the "Treaty of Kilmainham," by virtue of which Mr. Parnell consented to discourage the agrarian movement on the condition that the imprisoned suspects, Mr. Forster's *mauvais sujets*, should be released.

It was the great mistake of Parnell's life, a mistake that brought temporary advantage perhaps, but certainly ultimate disaster, just as the failure of O'Connell to take up the challenge of the Government at Clontarf killed repeal, and just as the indignant refusal of Smith O'Brien to foment an agrarian rising in '48 saved Ireland from the horrors of a class war, perhaps, but led to the black day of Ballingarry.

For let there be no mistake about it, the cause of Irish misery is not

to be found in the incorporation of the Irish Parliament in that of England (although such incorporation undoubtedly tends to aggravate the evil), but it is to be found in the fact that the means by which the Irish people must live are in possession of a class, which class will not allow the people to use these means unless by so doing a profit will accrue to this class.

This was seen and pointed out by James Fintan Lalor, the shrewdest and the most far-seeing, indeed, the ablest of the men of '48. It is indeed a remarkable thing that one of the most valuable and thought-suggesting documents in Irish literature, Lalor's "Faith of a Felon," should be known to-day only to the few who take the trouble to dive beneath the surface of things, who wish to place their hands upon the real springs of action in human affairs.

It is safe to say that not one Irishman in a thousand to-day knows anything beyond the name of the man who first pointed out the class nature of the Irish movement and who laid down as the essential basis of a successful insurrectionary movement in Ireland, resistance by any and every method of eviction, the retention of the harvest, and the non-payment of rent; the first and second of which became watch-words of the Land League, in a modified form indeed, but still battle-cries. That Lalor should be almost unknown to-day is an excellent commentary upon the since leaders of Irish public opinion. Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, in his "Four Years of Irish History, 1847-52," deals with Lalor very gingerly; he is evidently afraid to touch him too much, which of course was only to be expected in one who, on his trial for a political offence, called witnesses to testify to his excellent private and moral character — to prove in effect that his bark was worse than his bite, and that after all he was not to be taken seriously, for he did not truly mean much more than half of what he said.

In the pages of what was perhaps the ablest newspaper ever edited on Irish soil, the *Irish Felon*, Lalor elaborated his principles thus:—"The principle I propose and mean to stand upon is this. That the entire ownership of Ireland, moral and material, up to the sun and down to the centre, is vested of right in the people of Ireland, that they and none but they are the land owners and law makers of this island, that all laws are null and void not made by them, and all titles to land invalid not conferred by them. . . . I hold further, and firmly believe, that the enjoyment by the people of the right of first ownership of the soil is essential to vigour and vitality of all other rights, to their validity, efficacy, and value, to secure their possession and safe exercise. . . . This island is ours, and have it we will if the leaders be but true to the people and the people true to themselves. . . . The rights of property will be pleaded. . . . I assert the true and indefeasible right of property, the right of the people to live in this land in comfort and security, and to possess it and to live in it by their own labour as God and nature intended them to do. . . . Years ago I saw that the English conquest consisted of two parts, the conquest of our liberties and the conquest of our land. . . . I saw clearly that the reconquest of our liberties would be incomplete and worthless without the reconquest of

our land. . . . While the reconquest of our land would involve the reconquest of our liberties, would at least be complete in itself, and could possibly, if not easily, be achieved. . . . It has been said that a war upon the principles I propose would be looked upon with detestation in Europe. I assert the contrary. . . . Mark the words of this prophecy. The principles I propose go to the very foundation of European society, and sooner or later will cause Europe to uprising. . . . Mankind will yet take possession of its heritage. . . . I want to put Ireland foremost in the van of Democracy in Europe. . . . Will she take the path I point out? . . . Or to the end of time will she come limping and lagging behind?"

Such was Lalor's confession of faith, and earnestly, resolutely, and ably, he urged it upon the Irish confederation. But in vain, Smith O'Brien emphatically refused to league himself with what he termed a "Jacquerie." And, indeed, one could scarcely expect that this descendant of an Irish king, with seventy domestics in his Irish residence, would become a nineteenth century William Cobbett; while even John Mitchell — Mitchell, the ideal Irish Nationalist; Mitchell, who heaped contumely upon O'Connell because of his abhorrence of the French Revolutionists who had dared to execute justice upon the King; Mitchell, who did not spare his denunciations of Smith O'Brien for not inaugurating the '48 insurrection by giving to the flames the mansions of Tipperary's exterminating landlords; Mitchell, who adopted some of Lalor's ideas (and spoiled them in the appropriation, by the way) — even he speaks of Socialists as being worse than "wild beasts, wretches to whom no mercy ought to be extended."

This is evidence enough that the men of '48, despite their patriotism, were, from the working-class point of view, not much better, if any, than those they rebelled against, and that it was as hopeless to expect from them a true definition of the rightful basis of property as from the English governing classes themselves. Not but that a few did see it with Lalor, but they were as voices crying in the wilderness.

The Fenian movement was many degrees better. Fenianism was, in fact, the first *spontaneous* movement of the Irish democracy, and in its literature are to be found many evidences of its origin. There was less poetry and more appreciation of the practical needs of the hour. For this reason it was frowned upon by the Girondists of '48; for this reason it was thundered from the altar that "Hell was not hot enough nor eternity long enough to punish the wretches who were endeavouring to root Continental Socialism in the soil of holy Ireland." But, after all, Fenianism as a whole had no more than a small conception of the great truth without which democracy is but a bottle of smoke, a fraud, a delusion, and a snare. As a well-known American Irishman termed it, "Fenianism was a chivalrous aspiration after nationhood, for the transfer of government from London to Dublin, but the transfer of not a single acre from the thief to the owners." For nationality is not freedom. Europe is full of nationalities, but where is its freedom? — if freedom is what Shelley defines it to be:

For the labourer — bread
And a comely table spread.

In a neat and happy home.

Italy in our time has waded through seas of blood to attain a united nationality, and to-day she is under martial law, despite her nationhood. It is the same all the world over. Everywhere we find, in the words of Webster, labour to be either “unemployed, underpaid when employed, enslaved, sweated, exploited, despised, dehumanised and crushed by precedent and all that passes for law.” Verily, nationhood is no magic spell.

“Talk not of revolution,” said a writer in the *Irish World*, “think not of the rifle or the pike, until first the great truth of man’s natural rights is engraven on all our hearts. Then prepare the artillery. But not till then. Till then not a word about it.”

THE LAND LEAGUE

The latter-day Irish movement may be said to have commenced with the formation of the Land League at the meeting held at Strade, near Irishtown, in Mayo, in 1879. Of course, the Home Rule movement, headed by Isaac Butt, had been in existence for years before, and had a party of fifty or sixty members in Parliament; but the people had become heartily tired of the full-dress Parliamentary debates, which were the only results that that highly-respectable middle-class agitation had as yet shown. Besides, confidence in the honesty and sincerity of the party was at a minimum, and no wonder, composed as the party was of large landowners, prosperous businessmen, journalists, blatant and bigoted self-constituted “champions of the Catholic Faith,” with only a small sprinkling of really earnest and sincere, if somewhat narrow-minded, Nationalists. The discontent with the party was intensified by the daring and the dash with which Parnell and Biggar had inaugurated the policy of obstruction, to the dismay, and even horror, of all the staid and respectable Home Rule fogies, and the dauntless courage with which these two men, with the spasmodic assistance of a few others, braved and dared the House of Commons, and again and again roused it to fury. It was with mingled feelings of astonishment, amusement, and the thrill of a new hope, that the Irish people witnessed that memorable fight between two men and six hundred, and the names of Parnell and Biggar were becoming household words in Ireland.

In these circumstances the historic meeting was held near Irishtown, at which was displayed the banner of the “Land for the People.” The speeches at the meeting had the true revolutionary ring. In a few weeks all Connaught was demonstrating in favour of the new doctrine; in a few months it had swept the three southern provinces and was invading the north. And what had been the dream of all Irish patriots.

the leaguings of the north and south, seemed to be in a fair way of being accomplished. The revolutionary forces of the country previous to that time were split into five or six sections, all jealous of each other, and often hostile. But the new doctrine carried all before it, and obliterated all narrow sectarianism; and it forms an instructive object-lesson for the Socialist, inculcating the necessity of unceasing watchfulness for the opportune moment, that all this was simply the result of a fall in the price of agricultural produce, was the outcome of economic conditions in a state of disturbance. And it also conveys a lesson to members of "fellowships of the higher life" and other kindred associations, if they care to read it.

Lord Beaconsfield, then in power, recognised the gravity of the new departure in Irish politics. He recognised that it meant something more than the passing of academic resolutions at public meetings and formal Parliamentary debates. A prosecution was instituted against Davitt, Daly, Brennan, and Bryce Killeen, the initiators of the land agitation, and Beaconsfield issued a manifesto to the English electorate in the form of a letter to the Duke of Marlborough, then Lord Lieutenant, declaring that social war, an evil worse than famine or pestilence, was at their door, and appealed to the country for a vigorous assertion of the law in Ireland. In the result he was beaten, and a Liberal Government came into power.

And, oh, tell it not in Gath! While the Tory Minister was calling on all true Englishmen to rally round the constitution, the leading "Nationalist" newspaper, the *Freeman's Journal*, was calling all heaven to aid in saving the sacred cause of Irish nationality, as represented by the *Freeman*, from being profaned by the hands of the new barbarians. "It is not by the politics of Montmartre and the Hotel de Ville," it screamed, "that Ireland will be saved. What she will have highly, she will have holily:—

For freedom comes from God's right hand,
And needs a godly train.
'Tis righteous men must make our land
A nation once again."

And with a delightfully refreshing egoism the inference was left to be drawn that the "righteous men" whom Thomas Davis had in his mind's eye when he "dropped into poetry" as above, were proprietors and editors of *Freeman's Journals*, and others of that ilk.

Meanwhile the processes and notices of eviction were falling like snowflakes in the West. Parnell, who had held aloof from the land movement, although repeatedly urged by Davitt to put himself at its head, made many attempts to induce the Government to stay the hand of the evictor. But finally, abandoning all hope in this direction, he crossed over to Ireland, endorsed the land movement; the head-quarters of the League were formally installed in Dublin, and to "keep a firm grip of their holdings," was pronounced the watch-word of the struggle — pending developments.

The extraordinary daring and determination shown by the Irish peasantry during the practical civil war that followed for the next two years extorted the admiration of even enemies, and keen observers remarked that a dogged tenacity of purpose was also displayed that was supposed to be foreign to the Irish character. It is not my place or purpose to dwell upon that struggle, or upon the thrilling incidents that every day brought forth. Suffice it to say that the Liberal Government literally raided the country night and day, and that the Social-Democratic Federation was the only English organisation I have any knowledge of which dared to take its stand against the policy of coercion so unsparingly administered by Mr. Forster, and that its members often suffered considerable maltreatment at the hands of the mob who to-day cheer for what they term Home Rule without much knowing the why or the wherefore.

Two years of gallant struggle on the part of the people against fearful odds and coercion stood admittedly a failure. Therefore, more coercion. It is in the very nature of governments. Gladstone called into play his famous "last resources of civilisation"; imprisoned every chief of the League upon whom he could lay his hands, and suppressed the League itself by decree as an illegal association. To this the League responded by issuing the redoubtable "No Rent" manifesto, and society in Ireland seemed approaching within measurable distance of the dissolution point. Nine months more of wild hitting on the part of the Government and stubborn resistance on the part of the people, and it was seen that the "last resources" were of no avail; it was necessary to resort to the resources of barbarism — or diplomacy. Accordingly, Mr. Gladstone commissioned his non-official Liberal-Home-Rule ambassador, the hon. and gallant gentleman, Captain O'Shea, to open negotiations with the man whom he, Mr. Gladstone, had kept under lock and key in Kilmainham Prison, and whom he had denounced as the head of a party "wading through rapine and murder to the disintegration of the Empire." The result was the historic Kilmainham Treaty, a treaty that has had more grave consequences than many others that have made more noise in the world. This secured the practical abandonment of the land agitation and the adoption of the single-plank platform of Home Rule; while, as a recompense, there was to be a gaol delivery of all the suspects and another brand-new Gladstonian Land Bill, which was to settle the land question for ever and finally — as previous ones had done.

Gladstone never did a cleverer piece of work in his life, and that is saying a great deal. To this day it is problematical if Mr. Parnell fully understood the land question; certainly his sudden acceptance of some vague nationalisation scheme during the stormy period that closed his remarkable career, while previously he would not hear of it, tends to show that he did not understand it.

From the first it was evident that a great deal of mental confusion existed as to the meaning to be attached to the words "The Land for the People," an excellent illustration of the danger that lurks in mere phrases. The advocates of peasant proprietary succeeded in having it

placed officially as the aim of the agitation, and to this the more advanced or more far-seeing men, in the storm and stress of the fight, could not see their way to take any direct objection, trusting to events to bring matters right in the end. But be that as it may, bitter was the anger on the part of many an ardent agitator when the full significance of the Kilmainham pact was realised. For how did the matter stand? We have seen that Finton Lalor in '48 laid down the indispensable conditions on which a successful insurrectionary movement could alone be founded. These conditions were: 1. Resistance by all means to eviction. 2. Non-payment of rent. 3. Retention of the harvest. Although Lalor's name was never mentioned but in whispers, yet he practically, from his grave, directed the land movement during all the periods of its success.

The first two of his conditions, even in the modified form in which they were used by the League, had succeeded in baffling the enormous military force at the disposal of the Government, had defeated every effort the Government could make, while still retaining any semblance of constitutionalism. That the Government was baffled and knew it, the fact of its making the first overtures for peace abundantly testifies. The only other card in his hand, besides trickery, was the proclamation of martial law, and what a confession would the proclamation of such have been on the part of the heaven-born statesman of the greatest of all the centuries and in the most constitutional of all the countries!

In these circumstances what should have been the duty of the true revolutionist? Manifestly to refuse to help the Government out of the morass in which it had lost itself, to defy it to do its worst; and if it called up its last reserve, if it proclaimed martial law, then to hurl in its face Lalor's entire programme, and oppose an entire people in revolt to a Liberal Government stripped of every shred of constitutionalism. The landlords were thoroughly beaten and cowed; it was the last fight between a pretended representative Government and the people, and twelve months of it would have been sufficient to lay in the dust the whole structure of English administration of law in Ireland, as well as the system it upheld. Would the Irish people have acted upon Lalor's programme? I believe at that time they would. Only those who took a part in the movement in those days can have any conception of what was the heat and temper of the Irish people at that time. The Irish blood was up and stirred as it had not been for many a year, and at a word from Kilmainham the next harvest would have been fought for "from the binding of the sheaf to the loading of the ship"; the women and the very children faced the military, and directed swarms of bees upon them while on the line of march (how true is it that laughter is never far removed from tears in everything Irish). The startling and tremendous occurrences in the Phoenix Park were but symptomatic of the tension to which the popular nerve was strung. There would have been loss of life certainly; but consider well all that has come and gone since, and the position of the Irish movement to-day, and say if a short, sharp and decisive struggle that would have uprooted the poison-tree of landlordism thoroughly and for ever would not have been preferable to

the endless struggle for Land Bills that settle nothing, and Home Rule Bills that are no Home Rule Bills, and which the unaided human intellect has exceedingly great difficulty in comprehending at all. But the opportunity was allowed to slip, all protest was relentlessly stifled, and Parnell entered upon that astonishing and dazzling career of political success and Parliamentary triumphs in which he proved himself a born leader of men and an astute political chief such as the Irish people had never had before. The story of how he smashed successive Cabinets would be out of place here; but the gloomy and tragic close of his great and stormy life — his death, the death of a Titan strangled by pigmies, which wrung tears from those who never forgave him his action in the matter of the treaty, has brought about a conflict between clerical authority in Ireland and all that is large-hearted and generous in the country. This conflict possesses a special interest for Socialists to-day, because economic trouble is again brewing in Ireland. The cloud is as yet no bigger than a man's hand; but it is growing and will grow, and it is necessary that the Irish working-class should be taught by all possible means that the English Socialist Party will be their only and natural allies in the period of storm that is looming ahead, as in the past. Since Parnell's death a crowd of jackasses in lions' hides have brought even the political movement to a pass where there are few left to do it any real reverence. The whole Irish movement, in fact, seems to be advancing, if not to a deliberate betrayal, yet to a fiasco, beside which the Sadleir-Keogh collapse will look small indeed. For this Irish clericalism is largely, if not wholly, responsible, and when the Irish people, deceived and tricked as they have been and are being, once undergo the disillusioning process, short work will probably be made, and without much discrimination, of all who have been instrumental in bringing the collapse about. The more recent developments of Irish affairs, and the part the clergy have played in national and social matters in Ireland, I will deal with later on.

THE OUTLOOK

Students of "Capital" will know from the excellent series of tables there given by Marx in section F, chapter xxiv., that although manufacturing industry is in a relatively backward condition in Ireland, yet the law of capitalist accumulation and concentration is in full force and operation in agriculture and such manufactures as there may be. Notwithstanding Gladstonian Land Bills, the concentration of farms, with the decrease in the area of arable and increase in pasture land, goes on apace, and notwithstanding also Labourers' Acts (which, if they were carried out, as they are not, would but lead in the long run to a reduction in the pitiable wages of the labourer), his condition is pretty much as it was reported by the Poor Law inspectors in 1870, viz:— "A sombre discontent runs through the ranks of this class; they long for the return of the past, loath the present, despair of the future, give themselves up to 'the evil influence of agitators,' and have only one fixed idea, to emigrate to America." The condition of the average

wage-worker in the towns is better, when he can get work, *but* his employment is, if possible, still more precarious than is the lot of his brother in the country. Now it is none other than the wage-workers of town and country who have fought in the Irish fight since '48, and who have furnished nine-tenths of the martyrs and victims of the fight without reaping any of the advantages that may have followed from it.

The workers of the towns constituted the strength of Fenianism, the labourers of the country were the fighting force of the Land League. The Irish Church was disestablished by the one; £1,000,000 yearly was struck off the rent-roll of the landlords by the other, yet the position of the worker remains unaltered, and will so remain until he makes up his mind to fight for his own hand. Is it too much to ask of the workmen of town and country to come together and reason, and, following the example of the workingmen's parties of all countries, try to find an answer to the question why they who produce all wealth of their native land should be precisely the most trampled and despised class in it, and how it comes about that if labour produces all wealth, why all wealth should be in the possession of the very people who do not labour? Let them not flatter themselves that if they do not themselves work out their own social salvation, and work it out not in fear and trembling but in daring and confidence, that any class above them in the social scale will do it for them. The Irish labourer need not be told that the farmer is as great a tyrant to him as the landlord is to the farmer; the Irish workman should know that his own countryman will exploit him as thoroughly and completely, if he gets the chance, as ever the Saxon would, could, or did. A striking example of this is to be found in the fact that the mortgage on the Le Freyne estates, where the devil's work of eviction was carried out the other week, is held by Archbishop Walsh himself, as trustee for the college of Maynooth. A word unto the wise should be sufficient. Is it too much to expect also that the Irish workers should refuse to listen any longer to the ravings of Catholic and Protestant bigots and fire-eaters, and lay aside once and for ever their insensate party rancour which no intelligent workman outside their own shores can understand?

For it is precisely now that a working class party can be formed in Ireland, it is precisely now that the work the old Land League left undone can be taken up again and carried to a successful issue. But a few weeks before the suppression of the brave old organisation a labour department was added to it, and if it had been allowed to develop naturally, there is but little doubt that the Irish Land and Labour League would have become one of the most formidable working class organisations in the world. Now the condition of things is trending towards the same point nearly as they were at prior to 1879.

We read in an American paper of how the other day an unbroken furrow of ten miles in length was turned up on one of the Bonanza farms, in the virgin soil of Dakota. Simultaneously we hear the cry of distress from the Arran Islands, the very place whence proceeded the same cry first in 1877-79. And now, as then, mere political agitation is

beginning to pall and fall into disrepute. This time, be it remembered, it will be only the wage-worker and labourer who will suffer. The farmer has his Land Court, and there are £12,000,000 of rental yet to be cut down, and behind that the farmers' profits, before he will taste of the actual hunger that is the lot of the workman even as it is. The price of agricultural produce is on the eve of a great fall; already I am led to understand it has taken place in the price of cattle. So serious is the situation that, the Irish party having what it considers more serious business to attend to, the cry of alarm comes this time from an ecclesiastic. Archbishop Walsh has cautioned Irish farmers against purchasing their holdings at any number of years' purchase until the operation of the Land Acts have been inquired into, saying that it is quite possible that, even with the comparatively low rate of interest at which the Government lends the purchase-money, the farmer may be ruined completely and irretrievably within ten years, while the Land Court is open for him while he remains a tenant. This, remember, after twenty-four years of final settlement by the greatest and the grandest statesman, &c. Archbishop Walsh, of course, in the face of the recent Encyclical of the Pope on the labour question, cannot recognise that the iniquity of private ownership of land and the carrying on of agriculture for mere individual profit, and not to provide for the wants of the people, lies at the bottom of all the Irish trouble and misery. Accordingly he is engaged in a will-of-the-wisp hunt after the beautiful and simple panacea of bimetallism. In fact, the "leaders of public opinion" are at a dead stop, and the mass of the people are hoping against hope that something in the shape of a measure of self-government may be wrung from or concealed by, the Government before the Irish party is completely disintegrated and corrupted. One may safely predict that the people will be disappointed, for already corruption has set in, and the appointment of red-hot Nationalists as resident magistrates is no longer wondered at; while at the same time the Church is relentlessly pursuing its object of founding a Catholic party on the ruins of the National one, and using as its instrument for that purpose, by all the gods! none other than the redoubtable leader of the Bantry band, "Zimri" Healy himself, of whom the late Mr. Bradlaugh once told a queer tale. Such is the pass to which the Liberal alliance has brought the formidable Irish movement. Is it not time the Irish working class asked themselves the question, for whose benefit has it all been? They have fought the fight, while others have gathered the fruits of such victory as there may have been. The recent Irish Trades Union Congress declared in favour of the necessity for a working-class party in Ireland. There is shortly to be held an Irish *Labour* Congress, either in Kilkenny or Limerick. Is one too sanguine in expecting that this Congress will mark the point of a new departure, and that the banner of a new Land and Labour League, in which the green — and for that matter the orange — will shade off and merge into the red, will be displayed, never more to be unfurled, until monopoly, in all its forms, and its twin-brother monster, competition, have been hurled down to the hell from whence they sprung?

There are I know many, very many, working class Irishmen who imagine that all Ireland wants is capital to develop her resources. Very good, but let them always bear in mind that they can have what is termed capital without the capitalist. Unless by Socialism Ireland can never become a manufacturing country without the most brutal and heartless exploitation of its working people. Oh, if they could but see what this same exploitation has been and is responsible for all the world over!

There is a penny pamphlet written by Cunninghame Graham, entitled "Economic Evolution," which I wish I was able to place in the hands of every working man and woman in Ireland. If the Irish people wish to see their fair island turned into a pandemonium even worse than the landlord has been able to make it, let them call in the capitalist. If they wish to see whole districts of their towns and cities inhabited by the thief and the prostitute, let them call in the capitalist. If they wish to see their children's intelligence stunted, and themselves converted into mere profit-making machines from childhood to dishonoured old age, let them call in the capitalist. If they wish to see the "dignity of labour" so abused, and labour itself made so repulsive and loathsome that men will cheat and lie, and swindle and steal, and sell their very soul to the devil to escape from it, let them call in the capitalist. If they wish to learn to how unfathomable a depth human nature can fall, let them call the capitalist in. If they wish to see their grand old race really sunk lower than even the landlord or the foreigner were able to sink it, let them call him in. If they wish to see every high and noble sentiment, every feeling of honour and honesty, every scruple of remorse and conscience become but curses to their possessors, clogs and impediments in the race of life, let them call him in. The Irish exiles came to England rude and uncultivated, but possessed of all the rural virtues, and in a few years they were outcasts and criminals. Why? Because they but escaped from the clutches of one fiend to fall into those of another, and even a worse one. The landlord robbed them, but stopped there. The capitalist robbed and degraded them, for it is a maxim in the code of capitalist morals that the greater the necessity and simplicity, the more advantage should be taken of them; and in the capitalist vocabulary such words as Truth and Justice, and Mercy and Pity, have no place. If the Irish people wish to be ruled by the meanest, the most sordid, the most cowardly, and most despicable class that ever dominated society, let them call in the capitalist; but in the face of the object lessons the wide world furnishes them, it will be an act of madness, even worse than the embracing of the cockatrice.

But if the Irish working people in their coming Congress resolve to stand henceforth upon their own feet, and, heedless of the threat or frown of churchman or politician, declare, as Fintan Lalor did, that the emancipation of their class from economic bondage means the emancipation from all bondage; that the interests of their class are paramount and before the interests of all other classes in society; if they refuse to be any longer the mere pawns in the great chess-game of the lay and clerical State-gamblers for power and place, then they will clasp hands

with the workingmen's parties of all other countries, they will come into the great International movement for relative economic freedom that is pulsating throughout the world to-day. And let them not imagine for a moment that in doing so they will in any way abate or detract from their nationality. They will merely join hands with the English party that hates the English exploiting classes as deeply as do the Irish themselves hate them. It is this party, the Socialist party, that alone will or can atone for the wrongs, and heal the feud of centuries, that will lay low, never to rise again, the mastery of man over man, of class over class, of nation over nation, that springs from the hell-born system of exploitation that has cursed both countries alike. Will the Irish workers do this thing? They can do it. They possess the faculty of ready and spontaneous organisation, so characteristic of all Celtic peoples. The time is opportune, and they may imbue the slow-moving Englishman with something of their peculiar enthusiasm, while he in his turn may temper their impetuosity with a little (not too much) of his calculating prudence. Everywhere in the English Socialist movement the Irishman is well to the front, and there is not the smallest reason why the Irishman at home should not be to the front in the Socialist movement as well. Will they do it? We will see.

And if they do, one word of warning. Let them remember the conclusion come to be "Darby the Blast" in the hour of his defeat, and deal firmly with the "Gintlemen." Let them resolve that never again will they allow the control of their own working class movement to pass out of their own hands. One experience such as the Land League ought to be enough, and there is not born every day of the week a giant like Parnell to give to compromise all the appearance and eclat of victory. Let them accept aid thankfully from whatever source it may come, and it will come from all sources if they but show themselves in earnest, but let them manage their own business, and by so doing, without abating by one jot or tittle their national demand, they will succeed in building up an Irish nation whose glory will exceed all that the minds of their poets have conceived of the glory of the past; an Irish nation such as John Boyle O'Reilly in his later days conceived; a nation whose wealth and greatness will not be measured in pounds sterling, but by the amount of free and healthy and happy and cultivated human life contained within its shores. That is an object worth striving for, infinitely more worth fighting for than all the miserable quarrels in which the people have heretofore shed their blood like water. That is an object that is in accord with the aspirations of all the best and bravest who have ever lived on this earth, and which now is possible of realisation for perhaps the first time in the long dreary history of human society. Slightly altering Morris's magnificent poem, it may be addressed to the Irish workers of to-day.

O! why and for what are we waiting, while our brothers droop
and die,
And on every wind of the heavens a wasted life goes by?

.

Through squalid life they laboured, in sordid grief they died,
Those sons of a mighty mother, those props of Erin's pride.

They are gone and there is none can undo it, nor save our souls
from the curse.

But many a million cometh, and shall they be better or
worse?

.....
Ah! come cast off all fooling, for this at least we know,
That the Dawn and the Day is coming and forth the banners go.

CLERICALISM

The part the Catholic Church has played in Irish national and social affairs may seem a ticklish subject to tackle, for one brought up as I have been in the tenets of the Catholic faith. Yet that I was so may be taken as a guarantee that I examine the attitude of the Church in no prejudicial, but simply in a critical spirit. Besides, many sincere Catholics are my personal friends, and I am proud of their friendship, and would not for the world offend them unnecessarily. And, therefore, if there are any who expect that I am setting out to prove that the Irish are an ignorant and a priest-ridden people they may as well not read what is to follow, or else they will be disappointed. Notwithstanding all the drawbacks and disadvantages the Irish have laboured under (and the average Englishman could not understand these disadvantages), I assert that the people, taken class for class, compare not unfavourably with the corresponding class in either England or Scotland. What I mean to say is that the Irish agricultural labourer will not suffer by comparison either in intelligence or aptitude, with the English agricultural labourer, and so on throughout the whole social scale. While as to being priest-ridden, Hyndman himself pays a tribute to the highly independent political thought the Irish people have often shown. Even if it were the case to the fullest extent, the English people cannot certainly pride themselves that they are much better. Have we not heard of the rule of the parson in the south and the minister in the north; and while the capitalist rides the industrial population of the towns, as the old man of the sea rode Sinbad, they have scarcely room to gibe. I say deliberately, that if there was no other alternative between being bossed by the priests or bossed by the monopolists and their factotums, I would infinitely prefer to be bossed by the priests, for at least their bossing has another and a higher object than sordid personal gain. No, the present paper will pander to no prejudices, if such can exist in readers of JUSTICE. It will not even attack the attitude of the Church in Ireland; it will simply explain it. And I would wish it to be understood that the policy and attitude of the Church is not to be judged by the action or opinions of individual priests, who have no say in the formulation of the policy. The priesthood is drawn from the people, and shares to a large extent the sympathies and desires of the people;

but the wonderful Church organisation (which Socialists might do worse than study occasionally, for in it they will find many excellent and suggestive things, well worthy of imitation) is such, that the whole vast machine moves by impulse from above, and not from below, and iron discipline effects an unquestioning obedience to the impulse. So much by way of preface.

It may be laid down, that in all its policy, the Church adopts as its maxim, *Ad Majoram Dei Gloriam!* "For the greater Glory of God;" that is to say, it places the interests of the Church first and above all other things. I do not urge this as in any way being derogatory to the Church. Socialists place their cause before all things. So to a less extent do all other bodies. All Catholics, who know what they are talking about, will willingly and proudly endorse the above maxim. But the fact being so, let us evade none of its consequences.

When the Home Rule Bill was introduced, it will be remembered how a crowd of roaring reverend bigots from Belfast, barristers from Dublin, and Orange lords and militia officers swarmed all over England protesting against it as being but the opening of the door for the entrance of the "Scarlet Woman" as a prelude to a general cutting of Protestant throats. To those acquainted with the diabolical history of Protestant ascendancy in Ireland, the spectacle and panic would not have been without a degree of comfort (what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander), if it were not so ludicrous and unnecessary. Not that there was any inherent impossibility in the fear of persecution being realised. As a matter of fact, did ever any religion founded on dogma, fail to persecute when it had the power, and could do so safely? The only difference between Catholic and Protestant in this respect is that the Catholic really desired the eternal well-being of those he persecuted, he really believed that homœopathic doses of fire here below, would save eternal fire hereafter, while the Protestant only made a pretext of religion, and cared not a straw for those he persecuted, so long as he obtained possession of their goods and chattels. But there was not the slightest ground for alarm on the part of the Orange babes and sucklings who were so jealous of other people claiming a right to persecute as well as themselves, for it requires a study of Irish history to know that, ever since the penal laws fell into desuetude, the Catholic Church has been the most potent instrument in preserving the connection between England and Ireland, because, on the open avowed confession of the Church itself, its great aim, and the object that lies nearest its heart, is the re-conversion of England, and that object would not be best fulfilled by any great disturbance of the relations between the two countries. Even Irish priests of a perfervid national turn of mind give unconscious expression to this object. I well remember the odd sensation I felt when I first heard it propounded that God in his inscrutable wisdom and methods had intended and used the Irish race to carry Catholicism to the utmost ends of the earth. I have heard it stated often since, and it was stated by no less a personage than Cardinal Vaughan himself in his St. Patrick's day sermon, preached on March 18 of the present year, and may be found in the entire Catholic press of

the following week. Now I do not say that there is anything wrong in this, I do not deny the possibility of it, certainly I will not attempt to deny the inscrutability of it, but I do say that the Irishman who accepts this teaching cannot any longer lay the misfortunes of his country upon the shoulders of the English Government. That I think is beyond question and challenge. If God has decreed that the Irish race should be scattered all over the earth, then the English Government stands relieved of all responsibility in the matter.

The Catholic Church is, indeed, the most potent instrument for the preservation of the English connection, and the Orange leaders of the North know it; but they use the anti-Popery cry as a means of keeping the Irish democracy split into two parts, well knowing that if each part knew the other more they would distrust each other less. Of course, a colour is given to the fears entertained by the Orangemen by the pernicious nonsense and humbug spouted by blatant "champions of the Faith" in the South, whose Catholicism is about the only quality they possess. But the Orangemen need have no fear of waking any morning with their throats cut; the Church has other, deeper, and more serious matters to attend to than bothering about them. In fact, the whole Church policy in Ireland for the past century is being reproduced in Italy in our own day. M. de Lavaleye has said that it was not at all improbable to see the Church in Italy riding back to power on the back of Socialism, and so we see that the great Dominican preacher, the Padre Agostino de Montrefello, is there preaching to the people a Socialism very difficult to distinguish from the real thing, all having for its object the restoration of the temporal power. So in Ireland the Church uses all movements for the furtherance of its one great object — the re-conversion of England, with Ireland as the base of operations.

The proofs of the truth of what I urge would fill a volume. But a few may be quoted from Nationalist sources that cannot be impugned. As early as 1794, the very year the Society of United Irishmen was persecuted into being a secret organisation, four archbishops and five bishops presented an humble address to the King in which they wished him all success in suppressing "the atheistic faction (the United Irishmen), and crushing France, and acknowledged with thanksgiving to Providence the best of constitutions which permitted them to live in freedom, exempt from Anarchy, and under protection guarded against oppression." This, four years before the terrible rebellion of 1798, and it is on a par with the late Father Burke's assertion, that "the British Constitution was the grandest thing in the world, after the Church." "When the proposal of the Union was first mooted, there was not a parish in Ireland from which an address of loyalty was not issued, signed by the priest or minister of the flock." So says Mitchell. And again: "The influence of the bishops and higher clergy was much relied on, at this time as well as frequently since to keep the higher classes of Catholics loyal." During the very agony of the atrocities committed upon the people previous to the rebellion, addresses were published to rescue the Church from the "imputation of abetting or favouring rebellion and treason." The thick-headed but conscientious Catholic

historian, Plowden, says: "A very great preponderance of opinion in favour of the Union existed in the Catholic body, particularly amongst the nobility, gentry, and clergy." Mitchell says again: "The Catholic bishops used their influence to prevent their flocks petitioning against the Union." The bishops, indeed, promised emancipation, boldly asked for the Union, and were the only dissenting body in the country that did so. To any that think the matter worth inquiring into more fully I would refer them to Mitchell's "History," and to that part of it dealing with the period between 1782 and 1847. The decisively anti-national part played by the Irish hierarchy is there described with as much sorrow as anger. For an account of clerical action in '48 I would recommend "The Felon's Track," by Michael Doheny, and "The Last Conquest," by Mitchell. There will be learned how the young Irelanders were denounced unscrupulously, and mobs set on them to the cry of "Who killed O'Connell?" Doheny, while a wandering outlaw with a price upon his head, on the Comeragh Mountains, penned a sweet song in which he says, apostrophising Ireland:—

Your faith was tried, alas! And those
Who perilled all for thee
Were cursed and branded as your foes,
Acusbla gal macree.

Cursed by whom? By the "trusted few, who paid their land with guile when most they should be true." Mitchell tells how, when the men were gathering in any numbers around the Confederationists who had put themselves upon the country, "the priests came round and induced the people to crawl home and save their pauper souls, as they did, and left their country to become a bye-word and a scorn amongst the nations." He tells also in his "Jail Journal" how he could only hang his head when a Cuban indignantly refused to place Cuba on a level with Ireland, "for in no other country in the world, save in the Gem of the Sea, would one million of whites lie down and die tamely of starvation," and Lady Wilde pours the full vials of her eloquent wrath upon the heads of the "faithless shepherds."

And it was worse all through the Fenian time. The history of Fenianism is but that of a conflict between the Government on one side and the Church on the other. It may be urged that Fenianism was an oath-bound secret organisation, and the Church was perforce obliged to condemn it. But no such objection could have been urged against the Land League. Yet the League had to fight its way against the bitterest opposition on the part of the clergy. The Archbishop of Tuam, "the lion of the tribe of Judah," soundly rated the Government for having released Davitt from penal servitude at all. He denounced the Leaguers as men of bad character, adventurers, and village ruffians long before Mr. Forster did. Dean O'Brien, of Limerick, the founder of the Catholic Young Men's Christian Societies referred to them as "men who might possibly say their prayers, but who certainly had forgotten their catechism." The Leaguers were the "scum of Fenianism," and "Fenian-

ism was composed of the sweepings of the back streets." It was only after the League had fairly roused the country that the clergy came into it, as the late A.M. Sullivan confesses, to prevent "mischief," as there was a lot of "wild Socialism mixed up in it." That is to say they came in to emasculate the movement, and they succeeded. For it is a moot point as yet whether Parnell was really to be blamed for the Kilmainham treaty. There was an incident, nearly forgotten now, that if light could be thrown upon it might enable us to understand the history of that time better. When the League was fighting all odds, the Archbishop of Cashel sought an interview with Parnell, who went to Thurles, and was closeted with his Grace an entire night. It was immediately after that interview that the clergy came into the League. Parnell's life is, I believe, to be published by one of his most intimate friends, who had access to his papers. It is to be hoped that if any documents are in existence relating to that interview they will see the light of day. That Parnell was under some sort of thrall may be imagined from the fact that when he went to Paris for the purpose of establishing an agency for the influencing of French opinion in favour of Ireland, he was sharply called to account for having intercourse with the then two most powerful men in French public life, M.M. Clemenceau and Rochefort, and this, notwithstanding that it was in the office of the *Intransigent* that *United Ireland* was published when it could find a home nowhere else. Loud demands were made for Parnell to explain his "keeping of bad company." Now Parnell was as proud and high-spirited a man as any living, and yet he remained silent under this monstrous insolence, a thing incredible, unless we assume the dignitaries knew they could venture a certain length with impunity. But perhaps the true attitude of the Church is best understood by its unrelenting action towards Parnell after Gladstone's letter, and towards what is known as Parnellism since. But little doubt can be entertained that it was jealous of the popularity of the young Protestant and suspicious of the affection the people displayed for him, and as Parnell placed what he conceived to be the interests of Ireland before that of any church he was a man to be got rid of. The divorce case afforded the opportunity, and between the old trinity of the Church, the Non-conformist Conscience, and the author of "Vaticanism," the great Irishman was driven to his grave. Since his death, war without truce has been waged against his principles. It is a sorrowful matter to refer to, but I ask all fair-minded men, did they ever read a more unscrupulous document than the pastoral letter of the Bishop of Meath, relative to the duty of the electors of his diocese, at the last general election. Now Dr. Nulty is, personally, a most amiable and excellent man, but the bitter fight which is being waged, not only in Meath, but wherever independence of political thought is shown, shows only the more clearly that the Church is determined to let no obstacle stand in the way of the attainment of its great and avowed aim, viz., the control of the whole system of Irish education, and the foundation of a great educational institution in Ireland as a base of operation for the conversion of England. As I have said at the beginning of this article, that is a great, and certainly from

the purely Catholic point of view, a high and holy object to work for. But if Irish Nationalists accept the fact, let them also accept the consequences it entails. Life is too short to be wasted in agitations of which the fruits are only gathered by the Church, and used in its own interests, and for its own ends.

"BEWARE OF THE COCKATRICE"

As I have already stated, all protest against the abandonment of the land agitation had been relentlessly suppressed. One instance, among many, may be given of how this was done; and it may be taken as a typical of how glad were the mere Whigs who were then, and are now, masquerading in the guise of "Home Rulers," to escape from what was for them an undoubtedly uncomfortable position, and how determined they were not to allow the then state of affairs to occur again if they could help it. There was a very able and widely-circulated paper in the north of Ireland called the *Belfast Examiner and Ulster Observer*. This paper circulated largely amongst the Irish in Scotland and the north of England, and it was an advocate of the land nationalisation doctrine, in a sense, and a staunch supporter of the land agitation; indeed, had a strong Socialistic leaning while being a stalwart Nationalist paper. The then proprietor of the *Freeman's Journal*, Edmund Dwyer Gray, went down to Belfast and threatened Mr. Dempsey, the proprietor of the *Examiner*, with financial ruin if he would not sell his paper, and threatened to start an opposition "Nationalist" newspaper if Mr. Dempsey would not clear out. Mr. Dempsey was not a rich man, and had sunk all he possessed in his paper, and accordingly he submitted, and, I believe, went to America. We have learned recently that the *Freeman* was worth £17,000 for years before the Parnell split; and will it be believed that Gray wrought his new Northern paper with rat labour, and by so doing raised a feeling of antipathy to the movement amongst the trade unionists of the North, from which it has not yet recovered. It is consoling to know that this same *Freeman*, which was born in disgrace is to-day dying in disgrace. It was founded by the "sham squire" in 1798 (the "Blood-Money Journal," as it was termed) to decry and traduce the United Irishmen and the revolutionary movement; and during the whole period of its existence it has been the *bête-noir* of Irish politics — always "tame and legal during the evil days," as Mitchell said; in fact it was the very sort of a national journal that a Government itself should have founded if it wished to emasculate any formidable National movement. To-day it is dying, scorned and cursed by all honest men of every shade of opinion in Ireland.

In the intense social hatred that was generated during the dogged resistance offered by Parnell to the new Coercion Bill introduced by Gladstone consequent on the Phoenix Park affair, all these things were crowded into the background, and proper attention could not be, or at least was not, paid to them. But the remembrances of them lingered. The Coercion struggle over, although the landlords at once used the new law to revenge themselves for the humiliation of the preceding

years, and that high functionary of the law in Ireland, the hangman, reaped a rich harvest, yet Parnell was master of the political situation, and he played his cards with a consummate address, which, as we know, led to advances on the part of the Tory government to learn what kind of self-government would be acceptable to the Irish party, and that Gladstone, in alarm lest he should be forestalled and deprived of a party-cry, introduced his "Home Rule" scheme.

I have had the opportunity of listening a few times to Mr. Gladstone, and must certainly pay a tribute to the marvellous oratorical power of the man. His very name is an abomination to me, and yet I must confess he has impressed me when listening to him. I heard him at West Calder when he dilated upon the iniquity of Beaconsfield's eastern policy, and upon the barbarity of the Afghan War. The high moral tone and fiery indignation with which he denounced the carrying of fire and sword amongst an unoffending people. . . . Because the hut of the savage is as sacred in his eyes as the palace of the sovereign is in hers. Oh! It was grand; and well I remember it when he himself was slaughtering the Egyptians, not for a mistaken idea of greatness of empire and national glory, which could be urged in extenuation of Beaconsfield's action, but at the instigation of the meanest and most sordid figure that ever appeared in English public life — the Jew money-lender, George Joachim Goschen. The unaccountable thing is that the same people who cheered him for the noble sentiment, also cheered him for the ignoble action, which was the negation of the sentiment. I heard him also at Edinburgh in 1885 when, in promising a Home Rule Bill, he at the same time appealed for a Liberal majority independent of the Irish Party, and the amazingly plausible, eloquent, and ingenious manner in which he pleaded for "justice to Ireland," and yet at the same time that he should be placed in a position where he could safely ignore the Irish opinion, taken in conjunction with his previous speeches, convinced me that he was the most formidable and dangerous opponent of the real democratic movement the century had yet seen. His Home Rule scheme we may discuss later on, if the editor of JUSTICE thinks it is worth while devoting the valuable space of a Socialist paper to the discussion of an abortion. Whether Parnell was taken in by it at the time will probably never be known? It is sufficient to know that he fell into the trap, the Liberal Alliance was formed, and then, given but a sufficient continuance of Mr. Gladstone's life, it was but a question of time, when the "Old Parliamentary Hand" would succeed in crushing his younger and less sophisticated rival and "friend." How it would be done no one could exactly predict, but it was as certain as the rising of the sun on a summer morning.

The occasion came. Socialists know that the accursed property marriage and our idiotic marriage laws have been, and while they exist will ever be, responsible for far greater evils than the one Parnell fell a victim to, but his fault roused that detestable hypocrisy, the hydra Nonconformist conscience, and gave Gladstone the long-coveted opportunity of calling for the retirement from public life of the man who had forced him to make an appearance of submission on his own chosen

battle-ground; and, to the eternal shame be it said of the Irish people, they supported that call, and hunted to death the man who, whatever had been his fault, had been as a Nationalist, true as steel to them.

How stood the matter? Here was a man on one side whose whole long life may be sought in vain for the spontaneous utterance of a single generous sentiment; who but uttered them when they were of use as a piece of party tactics; who never yet had championed a weak cause save for the same object; who had only shown himself knowing enough to reap the harvest sowed with toil by others, and to gather their laurels; who only had allied himself with any progressive movement when it was on the high road to success, and then only to divert it as far as possible from the goal towards which it had been directed by the agitators of the movement; who had introduced the Home Rule Bill to forestall the Tories, for if they had been before him he would have been bound by all the ethics of party to oppose them; who had coerced the Irish people as they had not been coerced since the days of Pitt and Castlereagh; who had passed Land Bill after Land Bill, declaring that each one was the final settlement of the land question, and had sent better men than himself to prison, not merely by the hundred, but by the thousand, for daring to call into question the finality of his legislation; who had supplied, in his anti-Home Rule speeches, an inexhaustible store of arguments against Home Rule and the character of the Irish leaders; who had distinguished himself in times past by the vindictiveness of his opposition to the national demand, and who, at one time, in the full plenitude of his robust physical strength, had deliberately, cowardly, and wantonly insulted, in the face of all England, a dying man, John Martin, one whose shoe latchet he was not worthy to loose, one of the most sterling Irishmen and most loveable men that ever sat in the English House of Commons, and had stigmatised him as "the carnation of the evil genius of his country" but a few days before his death, and with the upright man sitting before him with death pictured in his face. Such was one claimant for the favour of the Irish people; and the other was one who, whatever his fault, had been at least true as steel, from a Nationalist point of view, to the Irish people; who had found them a race of political beggars and helots, had welded and organised them all over the world as they never were organised before, and made them politically strong and feared and respected. The Irish people were called on to make their choice, and they kissed the serpent and killed the patriot.

Curious, is it not? Many a queer tune have the people danced to in the Green Island during its chequered history, yet never to a queerer one than they did then. But perhaps they will learn some day soon what an acute piece of clerical diplomacy it was that induced the Irish hand to lift itself against the chief.

There was one man whose action was looked to with anxiety and hope on the part of many. I think it no shame to say that at one time Michael Davitt was my hero. Every young man, consciously or unconsciously, forms to himself a hero, after whom, with more or less success, he tries to shape his life. I was very, very young during the

land agitation, and the one-armed father of the peasant revolt was my hero. Even yet I would give two years of my life willingly if the last two years of Davitt's life could be obliterated. But the conviction has forced its way that Davitt has failed in every circumstance where the truly great man would have succeeded. When his name was equal in influence with Parnell's, why did he not raise his voice against the abandonment of the Land agitation and recall Parnell to a sense of duty? The Kilmainham agreement did not bind him, for he was in Portland until after it was settled. He allowed himself to be talked over, and practically acquiesced in the abandonment; and when came the Parnell crisis — ah! how truly wanting in magnanimity his conduct! For if he had been really a far-seeing man, a truly great-minded man, he would have sprung to Parnell's side in the moment of danger, and their two names would have swept the country and administered a straight knock-down blow to the insolent pretensions of clerical despotism in Ireland such as it never received before.

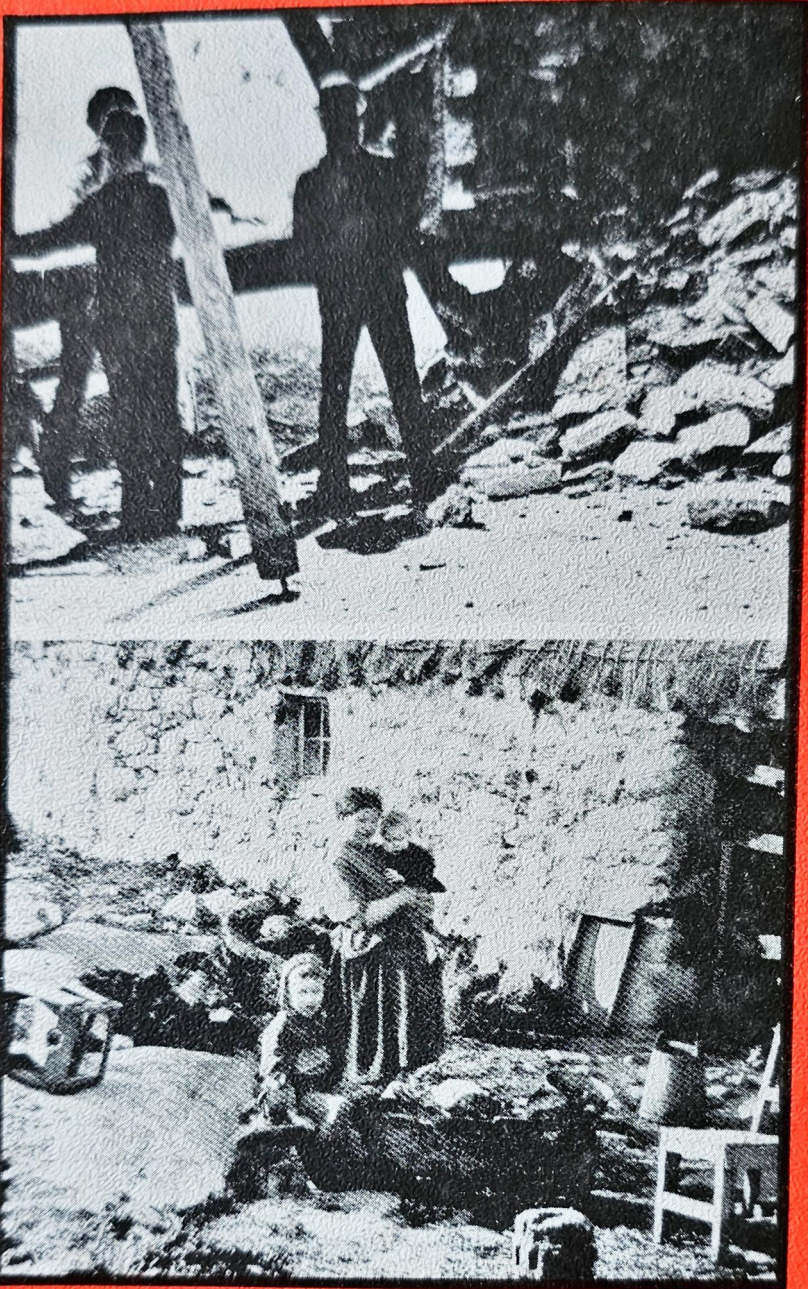
And again, when the Socialist and Labour movement in Britain was but feeling its way, and paying the Irish the compliment of imitating its tactics, when there was only possibility of inflicting damage upon either of the great political parties, but none of returning an avowed Socialist to Parliament; Davitt was always interfering in the elections, and urging upon the Irish electors to support the Socialist or Labour candidate. And now, when the Socialist movement is becoming serious and assuming gigantic dimensions, when the entry of an avowed Socialist and Labour party into Parliament is within measurable distance, when the Socialist vote is to be counted by the thousand when before it could only be counted by tens; now, forgetting the principle on which the fierce elections that broke the old fraudulent Home Rule party were fought, viz., that who got in was a secondary matter, the chief thing being to keep the nominal Home Ruler out, we find him flinging himself into the fight against the Socialist and Labour party in favour of a crew of landlords and capitalists who would hang him on a gibbet as high as Haman's if they could do so with decency. Such a record of lost opportunities not many men can show, for to-day he who was once a popular idol is now distrusted by the clerical party at home, is used as a tool by the Carthy-Dillon-O'Brien faction who hate him and his doctrines like poison, and he is regarded with an aversion by the Independent Party, scarcely, if at all, inferior to that entertained for "Zimri" Healy himself; while the Socialist party in England, with whom his name was once one to conjure with, looks with a feeling of wondering pity and sorrow upon the erratic course of a man whose honesty of purpose is being continually cursed, crossed, and thwarted by the most deplorable vacillation of will and unsteadiness of judgment.

The truth is that the crowd of business men and sweaters who have come to the front in the Irish movement in England since the Liberal alliance, and who venture to speak in the name of the Irish people, are raising by their action a feeling of resentment against the entire Irish movement in the minds of the party that holds the future in the hollow of its hand that may be productive of deplorable results. The Socialist

party is the only English party that will ever give Home Rule spontaneously as a matter of principle, and the fact that men who were ardent Home Rulers before Gladstone could see anything else than treason in it, and who were expelled from Liberal Associations for their uncompromising advocacy of Home Rule should be now opposed by Irishmen, and above all by such as Davitt, is scarcely a guarantee of the quality that the Irish people boast of so much, viz., gratitude. Let the Irish working people look to it.

To sum up, what has been the result of that simple letter of Gladstone's, couched in unambiguous language for once, that called for the dismissal of Parnell from leadership of the Irish party? Why, this. That Parnell is sound asleep in Glasnevin, that Gladstone is wide awake, very wide awake indeed, in Hawarden; that Home Rule has become a dissolving view, that the Irish party is split into half-a-dozen sections, each warring upon the other; that the economic conditions of the country are upon the point of again becoming disturbed, and no one seems to know it, that the directors of the policy of the Catholic Church are playing their cards with admirable skill and dexterity, and that if the Irish working people of town and country do not rouse themselves they will find some fine morning that the result of sixteen years of agitation, of an agrarian struggle unparalleled in the annals of the island, of their political fight and world-wide organisation, will be a few belated inconclusive Land Bills — and the endowment by the State of a fully equipped Catholic University in Ireland. Ah, truly the venerable wearer of "the white flower of a blameless life" may, to-day, in the seclusion of Hawarden, look back with pardonable pride upon a well-spent life, and dwell with exultation upon his last and perhaps greatest stroke in the glorious craft of the statesman.

HISTORICAL REPRINTS NO. 7



Cover & Above: Eviction scenes by bailiffs backed up by British Forces, during the Land League days in Ireland.