

## Gentry & Commonality

### *The Letters of "Norah" in her Tour Through Ireland*

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The tenants, I think, are naturally averse to borrowing money which brings interest in perpetuity over them, and enables the landlord to say, "I made the improvements myself." Into these improvements enters the tenant's labor, as well as the perpetual interest.

A good man, a minister, not Mr. Brown, reasoned with me that the landlord was sleeping partner with the tenant, that he gave the land, the tenant the labor, and both should share the profit of improvement. If the land was rent free I could see that partnership just, but as long as a man paid the rent value of the land as he got it, the improvement made by his labor and means through the slow years should be his own. I might think differently if I had an estate with daughters to portion, sons to establish in life, a castle to build, a fine demesne to create, or even a gambling wife or horse-racing sons tugging at my purse strings.

Whatever good and sufficient reasons may be found for skinning eels alive, nothing will ever reconcile the eels to it.

The companies of Derry, who are great landlords there, the Fishmonger's company, the Mercers, &c., are following suit with the rest in evading the Ulster Custom. It is thought, as these companies never observed the conditions upon which these grants were made to them, but held them merely to make money of them, they should be compelled to sell to the tenants. I agree with this. Still, if the same rule of non-fulfilment of obligation were laid to private landlords there would be compulsion of sale there too. The companies on the whole get the name of being better landlords than private individuals, and are more liberal to their tenants. In cases of hardship the managers for the companies, not the companies themselves, get the blame.

The great complaint is the landlord's power to raise the rents as often as he pleases. When a landlord appoints a valuator, the latter understands what he is to do and why he was appointed. The tenant has no say in this matter. Where is the freedom of contract of which so much is said? This arbitrary power of raising the rent at will irresponsibly and thus confiscating the tenant's rights, the people who are affected by the wrong with one voice declare must cease to exist.

Instances were given me by Mr. Brown, who, by the way, had just come home from giving his testimony before the Bessborough Commission. A man named Hamilton Stewart was put out of his place, receiving three years' rent as compensation. His predecessors had bought the tenant right of the place; he had improved it after it fell into his hands. All his rights, including the purchase money paid, except the three years' rent, were confiscated.

Another case he mentioned as happening on the estate of one Major Scott. A tenant, one John Loughrey, was lost in the river. His widow died in a few months afterward, leaving two

little boys absolutely orphans. Their uncle, who lived near, offered to manage the place for the boys and to pay the rent till one of them came of age. Answer—" No, we cannot allow minors to hold land on our estate." Very much against the wishes of the uncle he was obliged to fall in with this landlord's arrangement, and five years' rent were laid down as a settlement of the case by Mr. King, the agent. The boys' uncle thought it a great hardship to have to give up the place the boys' father had improved, for he was a thrifty man, had some money, and was able to improve. When the five years' rent was counted out on the table, Mr. King said to the boys' uncle, " That is the money coming to the boys, count it." He counted it and said, " This is five years' rent certainly." " Now," said Mr. King, " there is a bad house upon the farm ; it is not in as good repair as I would like, and I would like a good house upon it. I will take ; £100 of this money and with it I will build a house upon the place." He took £100 of the five years' rent and built a house that was never inhabited. The children never got this money back. This case was referred to again and again in public meetings and other places till Mr. King was obliged to make an effort to explain it away. The children's uncle was rich, and they thought that, therefore, the orphans need not get all the money. Mr. Brown knew this case intimately, as the drowned man, his widow and orphans were members of his congregation. This is liberty of contract.

The argument that the children had relatives comparatively rich was the same argument as Captain Dopping used as a reason for not restoring what was robbed from the Buchanan children—their relatives were rich and therefore they did not need it. Now, what person who was touched with a trial like this would not consider this freedom of contract absolute robbery. In the case of the Loughrey children there had been no agreement or shadow of an agreement with the drowned man to keep up the house, and the house was as good as any of the neighboring houses—a good substantial farm house. This case was brought before the Bessborough Commission.

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#### Remembrances of " The Long Ago"—A Soap and Water Remedy Needed—Spoiling for A Fight.

AFTER I had seen Mr. Brown, and heard how well his new proprietors were getting along, and had given attention to the complaints of those who were not yet peasant proprietors, I made a sudden determination to run over to Grace Hill for Easter and rest among my kin folk. Was not very well and as home sick for Canada as an enthusiastic Irishwoman could afford to be.

Found a package of letters and papers from home awaiting me and felt better after reading them. Made an effort for old times' sake to be at all the meetings on Easter Sunday and enjoyed them all, seasoned with early recollections. The quaint Litany held heartfelt petitions for me. The love feast, with its tea and buns so noiselessly served, brought back many a pleasant memory. Even the minister's face, son of parents much beloved, had a special power of recalling other days. I felt as if in a dream when I sat in Grace Hill church among the people, in the place to which I have so often desired to return. I have felt as if, were I to turn my head as I used naughtily to do when a child, I should see the dear Miss Borg, sitting on the foot-board—a raised seat running along the front wall of the church when it had an earthen floor—her sweet face tinted with autumn red, bearing sweetly and graciously the

burden of consecrated years. What a spot of memories is the “ God’s Acre” on the hill to me, surrounded by solemn firs, shaded by spreading sycamores.

Rose up in the morning and left Grace Hill behind me once more. Passed into Derry and found that veteran maiden lady quite well, with a small stir on her streets caused by the Land League meeting. Heard no one speak of it at all, no more than if it had not been, while I waited some hours for the Omagh train.

This train, like all third class trains which I have yet seen, including one second-class train, by which I travelled a little way, was extremely filthy. One would think a little paint or even soap and water were contraband of war as far as these cars are concerned. After steaming a short distance the solitary lamp went out for want of oil. When the cars were stopped at the next station we were told to go into another compartment that had a lamp—they never seemed to think for a moment of replenishing with oil the lamp in the compartment where we were. The compartment into which we were moved was pretty full already. A good many were smoking strong tobacco, some were far gone in the tipsy direction, one of whom was indulging very liberally in profanity. I was the only woman in the compartment, but my countrymen, as always, were polite, inconveniencing themselves for my accommodation. Even the profane person made a violent effort to curb his profanity when he noticed me.

A good many of these persons were going to the Land league meeting. One respectable man spoke to me of the high rate of land and the miseries of the poor, but acknowledged that there were wealthy farmers in Tyrone. He recommended me to a nice quiet hotel near the railway, but it being late and I feeling a little strange, went to the best hotel in the town, the “ White Hart,” where I was received with uncommon kindness and attention, and allotted a quiet, comfortable bedroom away from the noise of the street.

In preparation for the Land League meeting the next day the following lively placard was posted in Omagh :

“ A general public meeting, with bands and banners, of the Tyrone Orange Leaguers against the murderous, blood-stained, seditious Popish League, commonly called the Irish National Land League, will be held in Omagh on Thursday, April the 21st, 1881, to consider the terms of the Land Bill, and transact other necessary business. A protest will be made at this meeting against the introduction of the principle among the Protestant people of Tyrone that it is good to murder Protestants under the guise of a Land Reform cry. The Land Leaguers have proved themselves murderers and robbers ! Why allow the system to be introduced into Tyrone ? They are boasted rebels. The swindler Pamell stated in his speech in Cincinnati, ‘ We will not be satisfied till we have destroyed the last link which keeps Ireland bound to England.’ It is now sought to have this disloyal society and association of murderers established in Omagh. They tried in Dungannon first, but the Orangemen frustrated the design. The Orangemen of Omagh and neighborhood know well how to shoulder their rifles. Let them be ready. Trust in God and keep your powder dry ! No peace with Rome. No surrender. By order of the Committee.”

This proclamation was pulled down by the police, but people seemed to expect a faction fight. There was a great force of constabulary in town, and military also. It was pointed out to me how skilfully they were posted, the military entirely out of sight, but in readiness. There were twos and threes here and there, lounging about apparently, but with eyes alert and watchful.

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Honoured as Miss Parnell—A Land League Meeting—An Expensive Document—The Land Law Discussed.

In the morning a good many police were scattered about the corners, but no massing of them. All the fiery placards had completely disappeared. I was a little astonished at the scrupulous courtesy with which I was treated, a guide volunteering to show me the place of meeting. Found out afterward that when I arrived at the hotel I was mistaken for Miss Parnell, and felt highly flattered. Omagh was quiet enough ; no more stir than would be likely for a fair or market day. No sign or sight of a counter Orange demonstration. The meeting was held in a field on the outskirts of the town, on the property of a gentleman, whose name I forget, but who was described as a very good, kind and considerate landlord.

On the highest ground in the field a rather slenderly put up platform was erected, while farther back and lower down a large tent was pitched for the banquet which was to follow the speechifying. The platform, slightly railed in and protected by a primitive gate, was furnished with two tables and a number of chairs. As soon as I came near the platform a gentleman opened the little gate which admitted into the sacred enclosure and invited me to a seat on the platform. I accepted gladly, for I was very tired. Not knowing the mistake under which the people labored, I wondered at the respectful attention that was directed to me. Groups of people came and stared at me through the board enclosure, to go away and be succeeded by other groups, mostly ladies of the country-bred kind. Finally I drew my chair to the back of the platform to be more out of the way, and sat there watching the crowd gather.

The crowd was assembling slowly in dozens and half dozens straggling along, no great enthusiasm apparent at all. The great majority wore corduroys of a great many varieties of color and states of preservation or dilapidation. The irrepressible small boys were clustering over the slight fence that surrounded the platform, crawling under it, roosting on top of it, squatting round my chair and smiling up at me as if they expected a universal pat on the head.

The time for the meeting arrived, and with it a squad of reporters, who monopolised one table, all the chairs but one, and proceeded to make themselves at home, producing their pencils and note books in a business-like manner. The crowd clustered at the back of the platform began to fling jokes from one to the other about penny-a-liners. Two policemen, one tall, blonde, pleasant featured, one short, dark and rosy-cheeked, arrived next with their note books and pencils. There were a few more policemen at the entrance gate into the field, one soldier standing carelessly on the road, an unconcerned spectator to all appearance.

Presently the straggling crowd began to concentrate round the platform. The women who were peeping into the tent and the men who were helping them forsook that pleasing occupation and made for the platform at a double quick trot. Many voices said, “ yon’s them.” Looking along the road toward the town black with the coming crowd, I saw a waggonette drawn by four horses, gallant greys, coming along at a spanking pace.

The crowd around me disputed whether the driver was able to bring his four in hand safely through the rather narrow gate, which involved a sharp turn, but he did, and drew up inside with a flourish, to the great admiration of all. The gentlemen came on the platform, Mr. Dillon, a half dozen or so of priests and some other gentlemen. There was a goodly number of people assembled ; still not as many as I expected to see. There were not many thousands

at all. The faces of the crowd were not by any means so fine as the faces of the Donegal peasantry

They were mixed faces, all but a few seemed simple country people, some of the heavy, low English type, some keen and Scotch, some low Irish. The women were not so fair skinned and rosy as the mountain lasses. There were a good many ladies and gentlemen present. I do not think all who were present were in favor of the Land League, by the remarks which reached me, but the large majority were. As none of the gentlemen speakers spoke to me when they came on the platform, I lost my prestige at once.

The first speakers, not accustomed to pitch their voices so as to be heard by a crowd, where quite inaudible where I sat. On the contrary, every word Mr. Dillon said was distinct and clearly audible. He has a clear voice pleasant to listen to after those who preceded him. He is tall, slim, rather good-looking, very black hair, which he wears long, and which was so smooth and shining that it made him look like an Indian, and truly he is as well made, lithe and nervous-looking as one. His manner is cold and clear and self-repressed ; not a word but tells. His speech was exactly the same as he gave in Derry. He did not approve of the Land Bill—and I had thought it so good—but he pointed out a great many defects in it. Faults I never should have suspected to be there were picked out and brought to view.

A very telling speech was made by a dark, thin, wiry man named O'Neil. His speech dealt with the hardships which they had passed through owing to excessive rents and hard years of poor crops. He spoke what the people felt, for many a voice chorused, " True for you ; we know that well." In the middle of the speeches the platform prepared to break down, but only collapsed in the middle and fell half way and stopped. Two of the priests spoke also, and spoke well to judge by the people's applause. No one spoke in favor of the Bill.

I thought as I sat there of the remark made to me by a Catholic gentleman of Innishowen, who said : " The Irish people have hoped in vain so long, have been deceived so often, that it is hard now to win their confidence." The more I move through the country the more I believe this. Mr. Dillon was the idol of the assembly, that was easy to be seen. A few words with him, a touch of his hand, was an honor. He apologized for Mr. Parnell's absence, who being elsewhere could not possibly be at Omagh that day. I left before the meeting was over.

As far as I hear from the common people themselves, they think the law and the administrators of it sympathize with the landlords only, and let that sympathy influence their decisions. They are, therefore, very averse to go to law to obtain what they consider justice from a landlord.

Another great complaint that I hear again and again is the expense attendant on a transfer of property. As an instance, a little property of the value of a hundred pounds changed hands when I was in Ramelton. The deed of transfer was a parchment as big as a table-cloth, and cost £10.

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Irish Husbandry—A Description of Lord Leitrim—Above and Below The Salt—Landlord  
and Tenant.

The valley through which the railway passes from Derry to Omagh is one long stretch of beauty, fertility and careful tillage. Every field, whatever its shape, is cultivated up to the fence and into the corners with a mathematical nicety. The regular fields, the green separating ditches with their grassy covering, the hills cultivated to the very tops, and the trees growing here and there all over made a landscape that should delight the heart of a farmer. Whenever I come to careless husbandry, I will be sure to record it. I have seen nothing of the kind yet on mountain side or valley. I do not wish to fling a rose-colored veil over everything because it is Irish.

The country is simply beautiful—no words can do justice to it. Still there are some things one could find fault with freely. Between Omagh and Strabane I took a third-class car. It was dirty, of course, horribly dirty, but, as Mrs. McClarty said, “the dirt was well dried on,” and it was almost empty, so I entered. At a way station a great crowd, great compared to the size of the compartment, came surging in. Every man had a clay pipe, every man had a supply of the most villanous tobacco. I do not wonder the Government taxes such tobacco, that it has to be sold by license—some would not grieve if the duty were prohibitory.

Soon matches were struck, a tiny flash and a fusilade of reports like toy pistols—all matches here go off like that. Every man began to smoke for dear life, and smoked furiously with great smacks and puffs. And the floor ! when the mud of many days that had hardened and dried there was moistened again by tobacco juice ! Soon the compartment was filled with smoke, there was literally nothing else to breathe. The car began to heave about like a ship at sea. Fortunately we stopped at a station and some on board got out, so that there was an opportunity of getting close to the door and letting down the glass and a faint was prevented.

It was not pleasant to sit there craning one's neck round to breathe at the window, for the seats ran lengthways of the carriage, and keeping all crushed up to keep out of the way of a cross fire of tobacco juice from the opposite benches. Made a vow there and then against third-class carriages.

When the train stopped at Strabane was quite dizzy and sick and took refuge in the first 'bus, which 'bus belonged to that superfine establishment, the “Abercom Arms.” Was informed that the late Lord Leitrim had stopped there a day or two before his death on his way to Manorvaughan. “Stopped in this very room,” said my informant. “He left here on the Sabbath day in his own carriage for Manorvaughan ; he had not much reverence for the day. He was a very old man, walked lame with one leg, had a fiery face and very white hair. I did think they might have respected his gray hair. He had not long to live anyway, they might have spared him.” He rested one day at Manorvaughan, the next day he set out for Milford and was killed.

“Why did they murder him ?”

“They said he was a cruel landlord. Yes, a very bad landlord they said he was. He was very impatient to get away from here that morning. He little thought he was hurrying to his death.”

From Strabane took the Finn Valley Railway, and went off on a voyage of discovery to Rusky.

From Killiegordon took a first class ticket, as the distance was short, to see what first-class passengers enjoyed. There is a great difference indeed between first and third. Third-class is a penny a mile, first is two pence half-penny ; third is simply horrible with filth, first is as luxurious as carpets, curtains, cushions, spring seats and easy chairs can make it. There is not nearly so much difference in price, as difference in style. As a first-class passenger I was assisted in and out, and the door held open for me ; as third or second-class one can get in or out as they please for all the officials care. There is a very wide difference in every respect between those above and those below the line which separates “ gentry from commonality.” Of course I am using local words. Gentry are expected to have a well-filled and an open hand. If they have not both, what business have they to set up for gentry ? Popular opinion thinks of them as Carleton’s hedge scholar expressed himself, “ You a gentleman ? No, nor one of your breed, seed or generation ever was, you proctoring thafe you !”

Now the line of demarcation between the people trained by ages to stand with open hand expecting a gift, and those to whom a gift is an insult is hard to find sometimes. A young lad, a sharp boy, had been my guide to two or three places and carried my bag for me. I offered him pay, for pay had been expected from me by every one with whom I came in contact from the moment I landed. Tears came into the poor lad’s eyes with mortified anger. One feels bad to hurt anyone’s feelings, and between those who have a desire for a gift and are hurt if they do not get one, and those to whom offering a gift is the worst form of insult, one is sometimes puzzled to know what to do.

I find a very strong feeling in some places where I have been in connection with the contempt which some owners of the soil feel for the cultivators of it. A landlord—lately an attorney in a country town—who has succeeded, most unexpectedly, to a great estate, takes no pains to conceal the contempt in which he holds his tenants. He sauntered into a shop, also the post-office of the town, and in the course of conversation informed them that his tenantry were a lazy lot of blackguards. Two of his tenants were present standing in the shop. He did not know them, but they knew him. To the eyes of an outsider like myself the tenants seemed the more gentlemanly of the two parties. This gentleman, it was explained to me by his tenants, was not a specimen of the usual landlord, who, whatever the fault of the land law might be which they believed in and ruled their conduct by, they were gentlemen who would not degrade themselves by such an utterance.

The idea is brought forward to me again and again that the best landlord clings to the power to oppress, absolute unquestioned power to do as he likes with his tenantry though he might never exercise it. The Protestants of Derry, Donegal, Tyrone, farmers with whom I have had the opportunity to converse, all refer to this fact. The good landlord considers it an infringement of his rights as a landlord, to take away a power he is too kind to use, although he will admit that some have used it unmercifully.

A recent speech of Lord Lifford’s, complains that things are now claimed as a right that used to be regarded as a favor on the part of the landlords. There is a strong, deep feeling among the best of the tenants against such utterances as these and the spirit behind them.

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## Landlord and Tenant—The Land Question from Both Sides.

As far as I have travelled yet, in the mountains of Donegal, through Derry, Antrim, Tyrone and Down, I have seen no trace of what Dr. Hepworth lays to the charge of the Irish—laziness, never cultivating a holding up to the line or into the corners. What excited my wonder again and again, is the fact that up to the boundary ditch or hedge, into the corners, up to the very edge of the rocks the tillage extended. I saw men dig up little fields entirely with the spade among the sudden rocks of Port-a-dorus. Some of the patches a horse with a plough attached could not turn in, yet they were tilled ; there was not a spade's breadth left in any corner. And they paid high rent for this ground, rocks and all. They fell behind in famine time—not so very far—and humbly grateful were they for the help that came from outside in that time, and a mercy that forgave a little of the rent. I saw men digging on the mountain-side on the Leitrim estate, and wondered how they could keep their footing. As far as I have seen, it is a slander on the people to say they are averse to labor. On the contrary, they are very laborious, and singularly uncared for their personal comfort. I heard a fellow-countryman at Moville talk of Paddy's laziness. I pointed out to him how carefully mountain-side and rough bog were cultivated. He admitted it, but spoke of want of rotation of crops and absence in many instances of fall-ploughing. This, I humbly consider, is want of skill, or maybe want of means—not laziness.

Every one says that the country depends almost solely on agriculture ; agriculture rests on farm labor ; farm labor pays rents high enough to produce periodical famine. The £90,000 rental of one estate, the £40,000 of another, is all produced by these lazy people. If there were any spot so rocky, so wild, that it was under no rent, one might think them lazy if they failed to make a living out of it, but they make a living and help to support a landlord, too, out of these rocks and morasses. I hope to see life farther south, and see if these lazy people exist there. They do not exist in the north so far as I have seen.

It seems to me that the tenant-farmers have been out of sight altogether. Now they have waked up, and there is no power to put them to sleep again. I am more than astonished to find not one intelligent person to defend the Land laws. There is no possibility of understanding previous apathy from an American standpoint unless we think of the thoughtlessness with which the Indians have been treated. The thoughtless landlord has looked upon his own needs according to the requirements of his station, not thinking whether the tenant could pay so much or not, and, whether, if the rent was raised, it left the means of existence behind. I met with very estimable people, who were taking a very high rent ; higher than any man could honestly pay, and at the same time laughing at the poverty-stricken devices of their tenants. They did not think.

It must be borne in mind that there was a famine in the land but a short time ago, that these thousands and thousands of people who are under eviction now have no money and no place to go to but the ditch-back, or the work-house. The work-house means the parting with wife and children. These things must be taken into consideration, to understand the exasperation of mind which is seething through the whole country.

I do not think the people here, generally speaking, have any idea of the amount or intensity of hidden feeling. I confess it frightens me. I stayed in a country place for a week. I boarded with a family who were much better off than their neighbors. They were favorites at



the office of the landlord, and paid him their rent punctually. I often sat at the kitchen hearth as neighbor after neighbor came in in the evening and told in Irish the tale of some hard occurrence that had taken place. I understood enough to guess the drift of the story. I understood well the language of eye and clinched hand with which my host listened. The people who suffered were his people ; their woe was his ; he felt for them a sympathy of which the landlord never dreamed ; but he never said a word. I thought as I sat there—silent too—that I would not like to be that landlord and, in any time of upheaval, lie at the mercy of this favorite tenant of his.

They talk of agitators moving the people ! Agitators could not move them were it not that they gave voice to what is in the universal heart of the tenantry.

A gentleman connected with the press said to me to-day : “ The fact is that any outrage, no matter how heart-rending, committed by a landlord upon his tenantry is taken little notice of—none by Government—but when a tenant commits an outrage, no matter how great the provocation, then the whole power of the Government is up to punish.”

One great trouble among the people is, they cannot read much, and they feel intensely ; reading matter is too dear, and they are too poor to educate themselves by reading. What they read is passed from hand to hand ; it is all one-sided, and “ who peppers the highest is surest to please.”

The ignorance of one class, consequent upon their poverty, the insensibility of another class, are the two most dangerous elements that I notice. It is easy to see how public sympathy runs, in the most educated classes. There is great sympathy, publicly expressed, for Captain Boycott and his potatoes ; for Miss Bence-Jones, driven to the degrading necessity of milking the cows ; but I have watched the papers in vain for one word of sympathy with that pale mother of a family, with her new-born infant in her arms, set upon the roadside the day I was at Carndonagh. Policemen have been known to shed tears executing the law ; bailiffs have been known to refuse to do their duty, because the mother’s milk was too Strong in them ; but the public prints express no word of sympathy.

In the papers where sympathy with the people is conspicuous by its absence, there will be paragraph after paragraph about prevention of cruelty to animals. I had the honor of a conversation with a lady of high birth and long descent, and, as I happen to know, of great kindness of heart, a landlady much beloved by a grateful and cared-for tenantry. I remarked to her that justice seemed to me to be rather one-sided : “ There is much difference unavoidably between one class and another, but there are three places where all classes should stand on an equality—on a school room floor, in a court of justice, in the house of God.” “ I would agree with you so far,” said the lady, “ that they should be on a level when they come before God.” I am sure there would be no agitation nor need of coercion if all the landladies and landlords were like this kind-hearted lady in practice.

Another instance of kindly thought on the part of another landlady. The famine left many a poor tenant without any stock at all ; every creature was sacrificed to keep in life. This lady bought cows for her tenants who were in this sad plight. She left the cows with them until a calf grew up into a milking cow ; then the cow was sold to pay the landlady the money invested. If the cow sold for more than was paid for it the balance was the tenant’s, and he had the cow besides. “ Thus,” said the lady to me, “ I benefitted them materially at no expense of money, only a little.” This lady, who claims and receives the homage of her tenants for the ould blood and the ould name, has by these acts of inexpensive kindness,

chained her tenants to her by their hearts. “It’s asy to see,” said one to me, “that the ould kindly blood is in her.”

There have been many humble petitions for reduction of rent ; many have been granted, more have been refused. The reasons given in one case were, a ground-rent, a heavy mortgage, an annuity, and legacies. The question whether one set of tenants was able to meet all these burdens, not laid on by themselves mind, and live, never was taken into consideration for a moment.

When I arrived in Ireland, I met with an English gentleman who took a lively interest in the purpose for which I crossed the sea, namely, to see what I could see for myself and to hear what I could hear for myself on the Land Question. He volunteered a piece of advice. “There are two different parties connected with the Land Question, the landlords and the tenants. They are widely separated, you cannot pass from one to the other and receive confidence from both. If you wait upon the landlords you will get their side of the stoiry ; but, then, the tenants will distrust you and shut their thoughts up from you. If you go among the tenants you will not find much favor with the landlords. You must choose which side you will investigate.”

Considering this advice good, I determined to go among the people and from that standpoint to write my opinions of what I saw and heard. I made up my mind to tell all I could gather of the opinions and grievances of the poor, knowing that the great are able to defend themselves if wrongfully accused, and can lay the land question, as they see it, before the world’s readers.

I hear many take the part of the landlords in this manner : “You are sorry for the tenants, who certainly have some cause of complaint ; can you not spare some sympathy for the landlords who bought these lands at a high figure, often borrowing the money to buy them and are getting no return for the money invested ?”

Land hunger is a disease that does not attack the tenant alone. The poor man hungers for land to have the means of living ; the rich man hungers for land because it confers rank, power and position. As soon as men have realized fortunes in trade they hasten to invest in land. That is the door by which they hope to enter into the privileged classes. Men accustomed to “cut things fine,” in a mercantile way, are not likely to except a land purchase from the list of things which are to pay cent, per cent. The tenant has created a certain amount of prosperity, the new landlord looks at the present letting value of the land and raises the rent. This proceeding extinguishes or rather appropriates the Tenant Right. The landlord thinks he is doing no wrong, for, is he not actually charging less than Lord So-and-so, or Sir Somebody or other ? which is perhaps very true. All this time the tenant knows he has been robbed of the result of years, perhaps of generations of hard and continuous labor. It is impossible to make such a landlord and such a tenant see eye to eye.

A gentleman asked a lady of Donegal if she would shut out the landlord from all participation in profits arising from improvements and consequent increase in the value of the land. I listened for the answer. “I would give the landlord the profits of all improvements he actually made by his own outlay ; I would not give him the profits arising from the tenant’s labor and means.” Now I thought this fair, but the gentleman did not. He thought that all profit arising from improvements made by the tenant, should revert to the landlord after a certain time. I could not think that just.

As a case in point, a brother of Sir Augustus Stewart, said to a Ramelton tenant :

“ My brother does not get much profit from the town of Ramelton.”

“ He gets all he is entitled to, his ground rent, we built the houses ourselves,” was the answer.

These people are safe, having a secure title, not trusting to the Ulster Custom or the landlords' sense of justice.

I have not been much among landlords. I did sit in the library of a landlord, and his lady told me of the excessively picturesque poverty prevailing in some parts, citing as an instance that a baby was nursed on potatoes bruised in water, the mother having hired out as wet-nurse to help to pay the rent. There was no cow and no milk. I had a graphic description of this family, their cabin, their manner of eating. The mother cannot earn the rent any longer and they are to be evicted. I was told they were quite able to pay, but trusting to the Land League had refused.

Naturally what I have seen and heard among the poor of my people, has influenced my mind. I could not see what I did see and hear what I did hear of the tyranny wrought by the late Earl of Leitrim, and the present Captain Dobbing, or walk through the desolation created by Mr. Adair, without feeling sad, sorry and indignant.

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Lord Lifford—The Duke of Abercorn—Wholesale Evictions—Going South—Enniskillen—Asses in Plenty—In a Graveyard.

On the banks of the Finn, near Strabane, was born the celebrated hero Finn ma Coul. I think this just means Finlay McDougall, and, therefore, claim the champion as a relative. Strabane lies in a valley, with round cultivated hills, fair and pleasant to the eye, swelling up round it. Near it is the residence of Lord Lifford. I have heard townspeople praise him as a landlord, and country people censure him, so I leave it there. His recent speech, in which he complains of the new Land Bill, that, if it passes into law, it will give tenants as a right what they used to get as a favor from their landlords, has the effect of explaining him to many minds.

Leaving Strabane behind, went down or up, I know not which, to Newtown-Stewart, in the parish of Ardstraw (*ard strahé*, high bank of the river). In this neighborhood is the residence of the Duke of Abercorn, spoken of as a model landlord.

The Glenelly water mingles with the Struell and is joined by the Derg, which forms the Mourne. After the Mourne receives the Finn at Lifford it assumes the name of the Foyle and flows into history past Derry's walls.

At the bridge, as you enter the town of Newtown-Stewart, stands the gable wall of a ruined castle, built by Sir Robert Newcomen, 1619, burned by Sir Phelim Roe O'Neil along with the town, rebuilt by Lord Mountjoy, burnt again by King James.

Upon a high hill above the town, commanding a beautiful view of the country far and wide, stand the ruins of the castle of Harry Awry O'Neil (contentious or cross Harry), an arch between two ruined towers being the only distinct feature left of what was once a great castle. This castle commanded a view of two other castles, owned and inhabited by two sons or two brothers of this Harry Awry O'Neil. These three castles were separated each from each by a river. Here these three lords of the O'Neil slept, lived and agreed, or quarrelled as the case might be, ruling over a fair domain of this fair country. I do not think the present generation need feel more than a sentimental regret after the days of strong castles and many of them, and hands red with unlimited warfare.

Towering up beyond Harry Awry's castle is the high mountain of Baissie Baal, interpreted to me altar of Baal. I should think it would mean death of Baal. (Was Baal ever the same as Tammuz, the Adonis of Scripture?) In the valley beyond is a village still named Beltane (Baal teine—Baal's fire), so that the mountain must have been used at one time for the worship of Baal. The name of the mountain is now corrupted into Bessie Bell.

In the valley at the foot of the mountain is the grand plantation that stretches miles and miles away, embosoming Baronscourt, the seat of the Duke of Abercorn, and the way to it in the shade of young forests. There are nodding firs and feathery larches over the hills, glassing themselves in the still waters of beautiful lakes. Lonely grandeur and stately desolation reign and brood over a scene instinct with peasant life and peasant labor some years ago. The Duke of Abercorn was counted a model landlord. His published utterances were genial, such as a good landlord, father and protector of his people would utter. Some one who thought His Grace of Abercorn was sailing under false colors, that his public utterances and private course of action were far apart, published an article in a Dublin paper. This article stated that the Duke had evicted over 123 families, numbering over 1000 souls, not for non-payment of rent, but to create the lordly loneliness about Baronscourt. His Grace did not like tenantry so near his residence. Those tenants who submitted quietly got five years' rent—not as a right, but as a favor given out of his goodness of heart. They tell here that these evictions involved accidentally the priest of the parish and an old woman over ninety, who lay on her death-bed. He had called upon the priest personally and offered ground for a parochial house ; he forgot his purpose and the priest continued to live in lodgings from which he was evicted along with the farmer with whom he lodged. Of the evicted families 87 were Catholics and 36 Protestants. If they had been allowed to sell their tenant right they might have got farms elsewhere. Of those cleared off seventeen who were Protestants and six who were Catholics got farms elsewhere from His Grace. Some sank into day laborers, some vanished, no one knows where.

People here say that the reason why there are Fenians in America and people inclined to Fenianism at home is owing to these large evictions—clearances that make farmers into day laborers at the will of the lord of the land. The people feel more bitterly about these things when they consider injustice is perpetrated with a semblance of generosity. Nothing—no lapse of time nor change of place or circumstances—ever causes anyone to forget an eviction. Now they say that the Duke of Abercom holds this immense tract of country on the condition of rooting the people in the soil by long leases, not on condition of evicting them out ; therefore, he has forfeited his claim to the lands over and over again. This article, published in a Dublin paper, was taken no public notice of for a time, but when sharply contested elections came round, the Duke and four others, sons and relations, were rejected at the polls because of the feeling stirred up by these revelations. Such is the popular, report of the popular Duke of Abercorn.

Omagh is a pretty, behind-the-age country town. The most splendid buildings are the poor-house, the prison, and the new barracks. The hotels are very dear everywhere ; they seem to depend for existence on commercial travellers and tourists. Tourists are expected to be prepared to drop money as the child of the fairy tale dropped pearls and diamonds, on every possible occasion, and unless one is able to assert themselves they are liable to be let severely alone as far as comfort is concerned, or attendance ; but when the *douceur* is expected plenty are on hand and smile serenely.

Left Omagh behind and took passage for Fermanagh's capital, Enniskillen of dragoon celebrity. The road from Omagh to Enniskillen showed some, I would say a good deal, of waste, unproductive land. Land tufted with rushes, and bare and barren looking—still the fields tilled were scrupulously tilled. The houses were the worst I had yet seen on the line of rail, as bad as in the mountains of Donegal, worse than any I saw in Innishowen. I wonder why the fields are so trim and the homes in many cases so horrible. Not many, I may say not any, fine houses on this stretch of country.

Arrived at Enniskillen on market day, towards the close of April. The number of asses on the market is something marvellous. Asses in small carts driven by old women in mutch caps, asses with panniers, the harness entirely made of straw, asses with burdens on their backs laid over a sort of pillion of straw. I thought asses flourished at Cairo and Dover, but certainly Enniskillen has its own share of them. The faces of the people are changed, the tongues are changed. The people do not seem of the same race as they that peopled the mountains of Donegal.

A little while after my arrival, taking a walk, I wandered into an old graveyard round an old church which opened off the main street. Underneath this church is the vault or place of burial of the Cole family, lords of Enniskillen—a dreary place, closed in by a gloomy iron gate. A very ancient man was digging a grave in this old graveyard, sacred, I could see by the inscriptions, to the memory of many of the stout-hearted men planted in Enniskillen, who held the land they had settled on against all odds in a brave, stout-hearted manner. None of the dust of the ancient race has mouldered here side by side with their conquerors. There was a dragoonist flavor about the dust ; a military flourish about the tombstones. A., of His Majesty's regiment ; B., officer of such a battalion of His Majesty's so-and-so regiment ; C, D., and all the rest of the alphabet, once grand officers in His Majesty's service, now dust here as the royal majesties they served are dust elsewhere. Went over to the ancient grave-digger, who was shovelling out in a weakly manner decayed coffin, skull, ribs, bones, fat earth—so fat and greasy-looking, so alive with horrible worms. He was so very old and infirm that, after a shovelful or two, he leaned against the grave side and *peched* like a horse with the heaves.

“ How much did he get for digging a grave ?”

“ Sometimes a shilling, sometimes one and six, or two shillings, according as the people were poor or better off.”

“ How were wages going ?”

“ Wages were not so high as they had been in the good times before the famine. A man sometimes got three-and- six or four shillings then ; now he got two shillings.”

“ And board himself ?”

“ Oh, yes, always board himself.”

“ Some people now want a man to work for a shilling and board himself, but how could a man do that ? It takes two pence to buy Indian meal enough for one meal. You see there would be nothing left to feed a family on.”

A stout, bare-legged hizzie appeared now, and kindly offered the old man a pinch of snuff out of a little paper to overcome the effects of the smell, and keep it from striking into his heart. This was one errand ; to find out who was talking to him was another. She did not ; we gave the poor old fellow a sixpence and moved away.

The Letters of “ Norah” on Her Tour Through Ireland : Being a Series of Letters to the Montreal ... (1882)

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