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BY

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CHAPTER XVI.

LAND PRACTICALLY AND SOCIALLY CONSIDERED.

THE INDUSTRY OF THE CULTIVATOR THE TRUE MEASURE OF THE VALUE OF LAND.—EXISTING VALUATIONS—OBJECTIONS MADE TO THEM.—FORMS FOR MEASURING THE VALUE OF LAND AND RENT.—STATISTICAL DETAILS.—PEASANTRY—PRAISE OF THEIR INHERENT GOOD QUALITIES NOT EXAGGERATED.—GENERAL OBSERVATIONS UPON THE VIRTUES OF THE LOWER CLASSES.—CHARACTER OF THE IRISH, BY OLD AUTHORS AND MODERN.—STRONG DEVOTIONAL TURN OF MIND.—WRETCHEDNESS OF THE IRISH PEASANT.—HEALTHINESS AND COMELINESS OF HIS CHILDREN.—EARLY MARRIAGES.—FEVER.—EJECTMENT.—THE POOR LAW, ITS FAILURE AND EXPENSIVENESS.—BEGGARS, WAKES, PATTERNS AND FAIRS.—CRIME, NOT RELIGIOUS OR POLITICAL, BUT AGRARIAN—ITS EXTENT, AND MEANS OF SUPPRESSION.—RIBANDMEN.—SPIES, INFORMERS, CONSEQUENT DEMORALIZATION OF THE PEOPLE.—LANDLORDS DEALING EQUITABLY WITH TENANTS, POWERFUL FOR ALL PURPOSES.—ESTATES OF ENGLISH PROPRIETORS AMONGST THE BEST MANAGED IN IRELAND.—LORDS HAWARDEN, FORTESCUE, STANLEY, PALMERSTON AND OTHERS.—DEFEAT OF THREATENING NOTICES.—FATHER MATHEW AND THE TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT.—REMEDIAL SUGGESTIONS.—MANAGEMENT OF FARMS AND ESTATES.—LAND AGENTS AND RECEIVERS.—RECENT LEGISLATION AFFECTING LAND, &c.

In all countries, the labour of man makes the land of value. In one spot the soil may be naturally rich, in another com-

paratively poor, but in both the industry of the cultivator is the great index and measure of its productiveness.

This observation, if well founded, cuts at the root of some heavy labours which have been prosecuted for several years in Ireland without producing any results commensurate with the public desire expressed, or the public expense incurred on the occasion. There has been and there still is a loud demand in that country for an accurate survey and valuation of the lands of the whole country. The proprietors in making this call seem to have reasoned thus:—Let the government ascertain the true value of the land, and as it will then be easy to calculate what it will fairly bear for rent and taxation, room will no longer be left for exaction, or any of those disagreements between landlord and tenant which have led to so many disturbances and crimes. Much has been done to gratify the prevailing wish in this respect, but the consequent degree of satisfaction appears small indeed.

We have two general valuations of Ireland.* The first has been executed, as far as it has proceeded, by Mr. Griffith the engineer, under an act passed in the reign of Geo. IV., amended by another, 6 & 7 Will. IV. c. 84. The second has been completed by the Poor Law Commissioners. The evidence taken before the Land Commissioners shows how much both these valuations are open to criticism. That by Mr. Griffith has been pronounced so considerably below the letting value as to be unavailable for practical purposes, while that by the Poor Law Commissioners is described as loose, inaccurate, and even fraudulent. (*Digest of Land Commission Evidence, Part II.*)

The latter objection, though the more startling of the two, is the less serious on account of the facilities afforded by the law for its gradual correction. The other objection is not so easily answered. Except as a measure of rent the utility of a general valuation is not obvious, and a fair measure of rent it

* The Valuation and Survey by Mr. Griffith is not to be confounded with the Ordnance Survey of Ireland under Col. Colby and Capt. Larcom. The latter, up to the year 1847-8, had cost about £886,000—the former will hardly be completed for less than £200,000.

cannot possibly become on account of the numerous minute details, local and personal, which must in every case be demanded as separate and independent elements of calculation. Capital, the quality of the soil, the system of cultivation, the contiguity of markets, facilities for procuring manure and soil, and, above all, the character and industry of the cultivator—all these are questions to be considered by themselves in every case, and they are only to be determined by local and personal tests, which neither Mr. Griffith nor any other person can furnish in a general work.

The truth upon this subject is well conveyed in a passage and some extracts from Part II. of the Digest of the Evidence already referred to:—

“It is, no doubt, very difficult, not to say impossible, to estimate, beforehand and with *certainly*, any result that is to grow out of numerous details which may be affected by various contingencies. But this is assuredly not a reason why all provident calculations in reference to such subjects should be abandoned. The most that can be hoped for in any such calculation, is a proximate, not a certain, estimate beforehand. This proximate estimate can only be obtained by the consideration of its regulating details; and in the subject now under consideration, the very labour and repeated investigations which these calculations would entail must afford the most useful national training that can well be conceived. Besides accomplishing the direct object aimed at, they would probably go farther to correct the prevalent discordant pretensions of classes, and to establish the equitable interests of all persons connected with land, than any other measure.

“The elements of these calculations are well known to many, and ought to be minutely considered and understood by all owners and occupiers of land; nor is there any insurmountable difficulty in their application.

“The evidence of one of the witnesses proves that this theory has been for a considerable time in practical operation as a branch of the instruction afforded to pupils in the agricultural school of Loughash.

“An extract from a valuation report made upon this principle offers, in a tabular form, every detail of information that can be required either by the owner or occupier, with a view to establish an equitable bargain in reference to the use of the land in question, as well as to point out how its productive powers may be increased to the highest point of which it is capable.