

**GLEANINGS IN
IRELAND AFTER THE
LAND ACTS**

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Gleanings in Ireland After the Land Acts by W. H. (Bullock) Hall

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W. H. (BULLOCK) HALL

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IRELAND AFTER THE
LAND ACTS**

CLEANINGS IN IRELAND

AFTER

THE LAND ACTS.

BY

W. H. (BULLOCK) HALL,

FORMERLY 'DAILY NEWS' COMMISSIONER OF THE FURROW FRASANT BELINE FUND.

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TO
WILLIAM SPAIGHT, Esq., J.P.,
OF DERRY CASTLE, TIPPENARY,
A MODEL IRISH LANDLORD, THIS LITTLE WORK
Is Dedicated,
WITH THE SINCERE ADMIRATION OF
THE AUTHOR.

Robert F. Brown

INTRODUCTORY.

HAD it not appeared to me that I was possessed of exceptional advantages for forming an opinion on the Irish Land Question, I should not have been presumptuous enough to add even so small a contribution as this to the literature of the subject. These advantages comprise intimate association with the peasantry of France, Russian, Prussian, and Austrian Poland, Italy, and other countries, during periods of effervescence in some respects not dissimilar to the Irish complication. On to this exceptional qualification, I have lately grafted a wide experience of land-owning in several English counties, so that I ought to be well acquainted with both English and foreign land systems.

In despair of comprehending the Irish Land Question in England, I went over to Ireland to endeavour to get some idea of its meaning there. I soon discovered that it is only by divesting oneself of all one's English

ideas of the relations of landlord and tenant, that one is in a condition to enter on the inquiry. The Irish landlord, with some notable exceptions, seems to have left his tenant to do everything which, as a matter of course, an English landlord would have done for him. In the north of Ireland, tenants' improvements are conspicuous everywhere, in the shape of commodious buildings of all kinds, and drainage appears to have been largely carried out. In the south and west, improvements of any kind seem to be so rare, that I cannot see where the landlord found his alleged opportunity of confiscation. Between Dublin and Belfast the farming, as a rule, appears to be almost up to the English standard. In the south and west it seems below any standard at all. There can be no question that in many parts of Ireland the land has been purposely allowed to get into a foul state, with the view of deceiving the Commissioners, so as to insure a low valuation in the interest of the tenant. Mr. S. Hussey, in his evidence given before the House of Lords Select Committee on Land Law, Ireland, 1882, p. 107, in answer to question 5629, "Will the tenants improve it?"—i. e. the land—states. "Certainly not; they have an interest in running it down until their case is adjudicated upon. In fact, *I have known many instances of tenants stopping up the drains on their farms.*" The result must inevitably be that for many

years to come there must be a considerable falling off in the produce.

I am convinced that it was not excessive rents which ground down the peasant-farmers of the south and west, but chiefly the smallness and barren nature of their holdings, aggravated by bad seasons, bad farming, accumulation of debts, and, lastly, insecurity of tenure. "If they had their small holdings rent free down there," an Ulster farmer remarked to me, "they would starve on them."

Having passed a considerable portion of my life in travel, I assert, as the result of an exceptionally wide experience, that there is no country in the world where an Englishman will meet with more uniform kindness and civility, if he behaves like a gentleman, than in Ireland. The only kind of protection I felt in the least degree in need of, was from the almost too copious wit of the natives. As a specimen of this, I cannot resist giving the diagnosis of the Irish difficulty attributed to Chief Justice Morris, "that it is a hopeless attempt of a stupid people to govern a quick-witted one."

As the weather was almost uninterruptedly magnificent, I enjoyed in that respect far more than my share of good fortune. I was thus enabled to utilize to the full the long days of the latter half of May.

In the plan of my tour, it will be observed that I