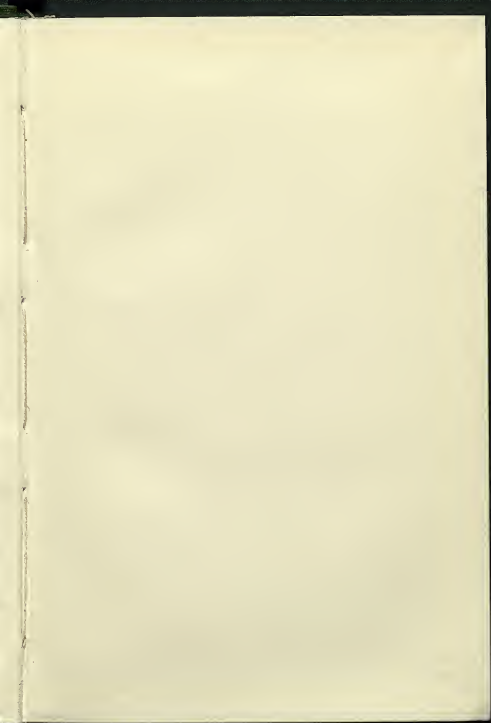


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P. 247

COMPULSORY CULTIVATION OF LAND :

What it Means, and Why it Ought to be Enforced.

BY
CHARLES BRADLAUGH.



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LONDON :
FREETHOUGHT PUBLISHING COMPANY,
63, FLEET STREET, E.C.
1887.

PRICE THREEPENCE.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY ANNIE BESANT AND CHARLES BRADLAUGH,
63, FLEET STREET, E.C.

COMPULSORY CULTIVATION OF LAND:

What it Means, and Why it Ought to be Enforced.

I OBTAINED early place in the ballot for the discussion by the House of Commons of the following motion:

“WASTE LANDS.—That, in the opinion of this House, ownership of land should carry with it the duty of cultivation, and that in all cases where land capable of cultivation with profit, and not devoted to some purpose of public utility or enjoyment, is held in a waste or uncultivated state, the local authorities ought to have the power to compulsorily acquire such land by payment to the owner for a limited term of an annual sum not exceeding the then average net annual produce of the said lands, in order that such local authorities may in their discretion let the said lands to tenant cultivators, with such conditions as to term of tenancy, rent, reclamation, drainage, and cultivation respectively as shall afford reasonable encouragement, opportunities, facilities, and security for the due cultivation and development of the said lands.”

Unfortunately, the precedence thus obtained did not avail me; the Government absorbed the whole time of private members, and the debate has not yet taken place, though I have been again successful in obtaining a first place in the ballot.

In the first Parliamentary Session of 1886 I raised the same question, but in different form and with some variation of details. I introduced a Bill “to promote the better cultivation of land”, by which Bill it was proposed to enact that:

“2. From and after the first day of January one thousand eight hundred and eighty-seven, any person shall be guilty of misdemeanor who shall hold in any agricultural district any

land of more than one hundred acres in extent in a waste or uncultivated state, unless such land shall not for any purpose be cultivable with profit, or unless such land shall have been devoted to some purpose of public utility or enjoyment. That upon the trial of any indictment for such misdemeanor, evidence shall be given of the quantities and description of the land uncultivated and of the actual annual produce of such land for the preceding fourteen years, and the jury before whom such misdemeanor shall be tried shall specially find such facts.

"3. Upon conviction for such misdemeanor, the Commissioners hereinafter appointed to carry out this Act may forthwith eject the person so convicted as to all the lands found by the jury to be so uncultivated, and thereupon the said lands shall thenceforth vest in the said Commissioners.

"4. The person so convicted and ejected shall be entitled to receive from the Consolidated Fund, for the term of twenty-five years from the date of such ejection, an annual sum equal to the average value of the annual actual produce of the said lands calculated over a term of fourteen years prior to the date of such conviction."

"5. The Commissioners shall, within one month from the date of such ejection, cause public notice to be given in the district where such land is situate, and also through the chief London and provincial papers, inviting tenders from persons willing to become actual cultivating tenants of the said lands in parcels not exceeding forty acres to any one person, and the Commissioners shall in their discretion let the said lands to tenant cultivators, with such conditions as to term of tenancy, rent, reclamation, drainage, and cultivation respectively as shall afford reasonable encouragement, opportunities, facilities, and security for the due cultivation and development of the said lands.

"6. The Commissioners for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this Act and of performing the duties and exercising the powers herein-before enacted shall be 'The Commissioners of Her Majesty's Woods, Forests, and Land-Revenues'."

This Bill came under debate on its second-reading stage on April 14th, 1886, and was then withdrawn by me at the close of the discussion as being unfitted in the shape it then presented to reach all the evils against which I aimed, and as not providing the best machinery for the purpose even of redressing the evils it actually reached. The report of the discussion will be found in "Hansard", 3rd series, vol. 304, pp. 1582—1611. The objections which occurred to my own mind, but which were not raised in the debate, were: (1) that the Bill as drawn only applied to waste land in agricultural districts, and thus did not

reach vacant land in urban districts and land with injured surface in mining districts; (2) that even for agricultural land the limit of 100 acres was far too large; (3) that the initiative of action and subsequent control in the matter ought not to be confided to a central power, but should be vested in the local authorities. An objection of weight, urged by both Conservative and Liberal members, was that the question was new to Parliament, and that there was hardly sufficient reliable information before the House to warrant immediate legislation. It was further objected that a Bill on a matter of such prime importance and involving such grave issues ought to be brought forward either by the Government of the day or by some member having special connexion with, and experience in the cultivation of land. Liberal and Conservative members alike were sternly indignant that the Bill proposed to create a new misdemeanor, and in this they followed the expressions of the press.

The appearance of the Bill in print brought down on me much journalistic wrath. The *Saturday Review* was specially indignant that the holding land cultivable with profit in an uncultivated state should be declared a misdemeanor. But why not? In a country like our own the ownership of property has surely its duties as well as its rights. The laborer able to work who will not work is prosecuted and punished as a rogue and a vagabond. It is a misdemeanor for a laborer to suddenly transfer his labor from what has been his domicile in order to avoid the maintenance of his family. He is indictable at common law, and printed rewards may be seen on most workhouse gates for the apprehension of laborers who have absconded, leaving to the community unfair burdens. Unoccupied and unused land near great towns escapes the local rating, whilst its value for building purposes is often enormously increased by the mere augmentation of population. Why should the owner of this land escape its proper burden any more than the laborer, who is punished if he tries to escape? The *Spectator* suggested that "great properties in the home counties, kept waste in the hope that London will build upon them, would be confiscated"; and declaring that the Bill infringed the article of the Decalogue "thou shalt not steal", denounced it as a monstrous scheme. The *Times* declared the Bill to be "the embodiment of a

scheme of downright plunder". The *Field* was shocked by the "extraordinary want of common knowledge betrayed by the propounders of the Bill". Some Conservative agriculturalists alleged that all land capable of cultivation with profit is already so cultivated, and that the mere proposal, as stated in the Bill, was an evidence of impudent ignorance. In proceeding by motion instead of Bill I avoid some of the objections raised. I have not reiterated the allegation of misdemeanor as it makes little difference what name is used if the result is achieved. I no longer limit my proposition to agricultural lands, and I avoid the centralising tendency of the Bill of 1886.

To win support for the proposition involved in my motion I propose to show: (1) That there is land now in an uncultivated state, and for this purpose shall take "uncultivated" to meet all land not included as cultivated in the agricultural returns for Great Britain and Ireland; (2) that a large quantity of this land is reclaimable with profit; (3) that the right of ownership of cultivable land ought to carry with it the duty of cultivation.

The proof of the first proposition is easy and the evidence very clear. In the Statistical Abstract the cultivated area of Great Britain and Ireland is given, in 1884, as 32,465,861 acres for Great Britain,¹ and 15,242,837 acres for Ireland, making a total nominal acreage of cultivated land in the United Kingdom of 47,708,698, out of 77,606,146 acres. The agricultural return for 1885 gives total area of land and water, including Isle of Man and Channel Islands, at 77,799,793 acres, of which 47,895,770 acres is given as the cultivated area: England, total area, 32,597,398; cultivated, 24,844,490. Wales, total, 4,721,823; cultivated, 2,809,558. Scotland, total, 19,466,978; cultivated, 4,845,805. Ireland, total, 20,819,847; cultivated, 15,242,837. The returns of agricultural produce statistics of principal crops do not, however, quite agree in the acreage cultivated, even in the cases where the returns relate to the same crops; in these latter returns rye, carrots, cabbage, rape, vetches, lucerne, orchards, arable, and grass used also for fruit-trees, market gardens, nursery gardens, growing trees and shrubs, woods, coppices, and plantations are distin-

¹ In 1885 the agricultural return makes this 32,544,000. In 1886 this had increased to 32,591,000 acres.

guished. In the grass lands and permanent pastures reckoned for hay, or not for hay, the distinguishment does not seem clear, and adding in the omitted items the totals of the two returns differ. Roughly, 30,000,000 of acres are thus given as not under cultivation. In 1870 it was estimated by Admiral Maxse, in an article in the *Fortnightly Review* for August 1st, that the space occupied by towns, villages, water, road, and rail traffic was 3,898,839 acres. I am not aware on what authority this estimate was based, but assuming its correctness, this would leave 26,000,000 acres of land as uncultivated. Admiral Maxse's general figures differ a little both in totals and details from the returns, but not enough to affect the arguments he presents. In Ireland the returns allow 4·3 per cent. for water, roads, fences, etc.

The difference between the Statistical Abstract, the Agricultural Returns, and the Agricultural Produce Returns, is possibly explained by the difficulty even in Great Britain of getting the farmers to fill up the schedules sent to them by the department.

In the return by counties in England and Wales, Bedford, out of a total acreage of land and water of 295,509 acres, has 260,298 cultivated, leaving 35,211 acres unaccounted for, but certainly not all uncultivated, as in every such case deduction has to be made for the space occupied by towns, villages, rivers, canals, and other waters, roads, rail, etc. Berks, out of 450,132 acres, has cultivated 377,321, leaving to be accounted for 72,811. Buckingham, total 467,009, cultivated 408,361, leaving 59,638. Cambridge, total 524,926, cultivated 487,496, leaving 37,430. Cornwall, total 869,878, cultivated 583,421, leaving 286,457. I should like to have information from this county, for as there is an increase of 3,811 acres in the cultivated area since 1884, reclamation is probably going on. Cumberland, total 970,161, cultivated 579,069, leaving 391,092. Derby, total 656,243, cultivated 514,660, leaving 141,583; here too, and apparently in most cases, there is a slight increase of cultivated land during the year. Devon, total 1,655,161, cultivated 1,193,108, leaving 462,053. Dorset, total 627,265, cultivated 491,123, leaving 136,142. Durham, total 647,592, cultivated 423,421, leaving 224,171. Essex, total 1,055,133, cultivated 835,529, leaving 219,604, which of course includes Epping Forest.

Gloucester, total 804,977, cultivated 659,011, leaving 145,966. Hants, total 1,032,105, cultivated 711,521, a very slight reduction on the year, leaving 320,584. In this county in the 15 years since Admiral Maxse wrote, the cultivated area has increased about 36,000 acres, and on p. 208 of the *Fortnightly Review* article, Admiral Maxse then showed how small quantities of land on Titchfield Common had been profitably reclaimed by separate cultivators since 1862; how he had personally reclaimed 40 acres the previous year so as to show 12 per cent. per annum on his outlay; and that Mr. Blundell, an eminent land agent, "calculated that at least 120,000 acres of waste land in Hampshire might be profitably absorbed into cultivation". Hereford has a total 532,898 acres, of which 446,621 acres is cultivated, leaving 86,277. Hertford, total 391,141; cultivated 341,381, leaving 49,760. Huntingdon, total 229,515; cultivated 210,628, leaving 18,887. Kent, 1,004,984; cultivated 753,065; leaving 251,919. Lancaster, total 1,207,926; cultivated 809,927, leaving 397,999; here about 3,700 acres is shown increased cultivation since 1884. Leicester, total 511,719; cultivated 473,827 (a slight decrease), leaving 37,892. Lincoln, total 1,767,962; cultivated 1,510,615, leaving 257,347. Middlesex, total 181,317; cultivated 114,709, leaving 66,378, no very large quantity, when growing London is reckoned. Monmouth, total 368,399; cultivated 243,832, leaving 124,567. Norfolk, total 1,356,173; cultivated 1,090,967, leaving 265,206. Northampton, total 629,912; cultivated 559,325, leaving 70,587. Northumberland, total 1,290,312; cultivated 714,432, leaving 575,880. Notts, total 526,176; cultivated 455,077, leaving 71,099. Oxford, total 470,095; cultivated 417,822, leaving 52,273. Rutland, total 94,889, cultivated 86,477, leaving 8,412. Salop, total 841,167; cultivated 716,599, leaving 124,568. Somerset, total 1,049,815; cultivated 867,469, an increase of 3,150 acres in the year, leaving 182,346. In Somerset there appears to be a considerable quantity of common land at Storgursey and on the Quantock Hills capable of being made of high value, but which cannot be well cultivated under present conditions (Little's 4th Report Royal Agricultural Commission, 1882, pp. 35, 36). Stafford, total 732,434; cultivated 604,757, leaving 127,677. Suffolk, total 949,825; cultivated 781,860, leaving 167,965. Surrey, total 483,178;

cultivated 299,089, leaving 184,089. Sussex, total 934,006; cultivated 680,943 (an increase of 3,100 acres in 1884), leaving 253,063. Warwick, total 566,458; cultivated 496,840 (a decrease from the previous year of 915 acres), leaving 69,618. Westmoreland, total 500,906; cultivated 250,465, leaving 250,441. Wilts, total 859,303; cultivated 757,196, leaving 102,107. Worcester, total 472,453; cultivated 402,845, leaving 69,608. York: East Riding, total 804,798, cultivated 662,506, leaving 142,292; North Riding, total 1,361,664, cultivated 854,605, leaving 507,059; West Riding, total 1,716,389, cultivated 1,211,928, leaving 504,461.

By the report of Mr. Coleman, Assistant Commissioner to the Royal Agricultural Commission (p. 151), it is tolerably clear that there is moor land in North Yorkshire, some of which might be reclaimed for farming, and more for planting trees. At Newburgh, near Coxwold, Sir Geo. Wombwell has actually reclaimed "large tracts of moor land".

Again (p. 171), speaking of the head of the Calder Valley, Mr. Coleman says:

"I saw several very successful instances of the breaking up of the moor and the growth of really good grass, where the elevation was under 1,000 feet. Above that point it will not pay either to plant or improve; the climate is too severe. Steep hill sides and gorges might be planted with advantage; and if this were generally carried out, the effect on the climate would be apparent and beneficial. Where the moor is tolerably level and the soil of a fairly light nature a good deal might be gradually improved if the moors were enclosed."

Anglesey, total 193,511; cultivated 148,006, leaving 45,505. Brecon, total 460,158; cultivated 204,052, leaving 256,106. Cardigan, total 443,387; cultivated 281,478, leaving 161,909. Carmarthen, total 606,172; cultivated 441,108, leaving 165,064. Carnarvon, total 369,482; cultivated 187,283, leaving 182,199. Denbigh, total 392,005; cultivated 269,518, leaving 123,487. Flint, total 169,162; cultivated 128,346, leaving 40,816. Glamorgan, total 547,070; cultivated 279,659, leaving 267,411. Merioneth, total 385,291; cultivated 157,098, leaving 228,193. Montgomery, total 485,351; cultivated, 257,061, leaving 228,285. Pembroke, total 393,682; cultivated 306,783, leaving 86,899. Radnor, total 276,552; cultivated 157,483,

leaving 118,069. Aberdeen, total 1,258,510; cultivated 611,424, leaving 647,086. Argyll, total 2,092,458; cultivated 124,797, leaving 1,967,661. Ayr, total 729,186; cultivated 317,484, leaving 411,702. Banff, total 412,258; cultivated 168,595, leaving 243,663. Berwick, total 296,362; cultivated 196,290, leaving 100,072. Bute, total 140,327; cultivated 25,115, leaving 115,212. Caithness, total 446,149; cultivated 106,710, leaving 339,439. Dumbar-ton, total 168,863; cultivated 47,305, leaving 121,558. Dumfries, total 685,519; cultivated 238,158, leaving 447,361. Edinburgh, total 232,603; cultivated, 139,648, leaving 92,955. Elgin or Moray, total 308,368; cultivated 106,004, leaving 202,364. Fife, total 316,089; cultivated 250,918, leaving 65,171. Forfar, total 563,266; cultivated 254,012, leaving 309,254. Haddington, total 173,637; cultivated 117,220, leaving 56,417. Inverness, total 2,708,237; cultivated 149,521, leaving 2,558,716. Kin-cardine, total 246,810; cultivated 121,496, leaving 125,314. Kinross, total 49,182; cultivated 32,246, leaving 16,936. Kircudbright, total 582,982; cultivated 182,490, leaving 400,492. Lanark, total 568,840; cultivated 256,083, leaving 312,757. Linlithgow, total 77,256; cultivated 59,258, leaving 18,003. Nairn, total 125,918; cultivated 26,152, leaving 99,766. Orkney and Shetland, total 612,649; cultivated Orkney 113,246, Shetland 58,538, leaving 440,865. Peebles, total 227,869; cultivated 42,514, leaving 185,355. Perth, total 1,656,082; cultivated 345,136, leaving 1,310,946. Renfrew, total 160,407; cultivated 95,529, leaving 64,878. Ross and Cromarty, total 2,044,217; cultivated 134,399, leaving 1,909,818. Roxburgh, total 428,464; cultivated 184,322, leaving 244,142. Selkirk, total 166,524; cultivated 23,320, leaving 143,204. Stirling, total 295,285; cultivated 115,058, leaving 180,227. Sutherland, total 1,347,033; cultivated 40,058, leaving 1,306,975. Wigtown, total 313,576; cultivated 147,214, leaving 166,362. Isle of Man, total 145,325; cultivated 100,322, leaving 45,003. Jersey, total 28,717; cultivated 20,931, leaving 7,786. Guernsey, etc., total 19,605; cultivated 10,848, leaving 8,857. Antrim, total 711,276; cultivated 233,418, leaving 477,858. Armagh, total 313,036; cultivated 154,201, leaving 158,835. Carlow, total 221,294; cultivated 72,326, leaving 148,968. Cavan, total 467,011; cultivated 142,810, leaving 324,201. Clare, total 768,265; cultivated 145,164,

leaving 623,101. Cork, total 1,838,921; cultivated 405,761, leaving 1,433,160, of which 100,301 is "bog or marsh", 236,341 "barren mountain land". Donegal, total 1,190,269; cultivated 233,173, leaving 957,096; of this 337,036 is "barren mountain land", and 160,485 is "bog or marsh". Down, total 611,927; cultivated 284,443, leaving 427,484. Dublin, total 226,895; cultivated 78,594, leaving 148,301. Fermanagh, total 417,665; cultivated 102,142, leaving 315,523. Galway, total 1,502,362; cultivated 212,145, leaving 1,290,217, of which 246,546 is "bog or marsh", and 237,609 "barren mountain land". Kerry, total 1,159,356; cultivated 163,232, leaving 1,004,124, of which 113,668 is "bog or marsh", 275,371 "barren mountain land". Kildare, total 418,497; cultivated 119,461, leaving 299,036. Kilkenny, total 507,254; cultivated 147,080, leaving 360,174. Kings, total 493,019; cultivated 114,911, leaving 379,608. Leitrim, total 376,212; cultivated 84,112, leaving 292,100. Londonderry, total 513,388; cultivated 180,269, leaving 333,119. Longford, total 257,221; cultivated 68,022, leaving 189,199. Louth and Drogheda, total 201,618; cultivated 91,546, leaving 110,072. Mayo, total 1,318,130; cultivated 174,386, leaving 1,133,744, of which 341,386 is "bog or marsh", and 225,520 "barren mountain". Meath, total 578,247; cultivated 134,920, leaving 443,327. Monaghan, total 318,806; cultivated 125,316, leaving 193,490. Queens, total 424,854; cultivated 130,559, leaving 293,295. Roscommon, total 585,407; cultivated 129,555, leaving 425,852. Sligo, total 451,129; cultivated 85,916, leaving 365,213. Tipperary, total 1,048,969; cultivated 260,070, leaving 788,899. Tyrone, total 778,943; cultivated 237,528, leaving 541,415. Waterford, total 456,198; cultivated 81,419, leaving 374,779. Westmeath, total 431,017; cultivated 93,752, leaving 337,265. Wexford, total 575,700; cultivated 201,200, leaving 374,500. Wicklow, total 499,894; cultivated 103,917, leaving 396,977. The area of Ireland in 1883 was made up as follows; under crops, including meadow and clover, 4,936,701 acres; grass or pasture, 10,109,625 acres; fallow, 24,824 acres; woods and plantations, 331,245 acres; bog, waste, and water, 4,843,536 acres (of this 133,035 acres is under water); larger rivers, lakes, and tideways, 494,726 acres.

A very sad feature in connexion with Ireland is that

since 1881 no less than 238,248 acres have relapsed into an uncultivated state; Clare and Leitrim being the only counties in which there is not a decrease of cultivated acreage. This is the more remarkable because the agricultural statistics of 1883 showed a decrease of bog land in one year of 28,925 acres; the increase is described as "barren mountain land".

It is, perhaps, not unimportant to note that in 1885 12,296 agricultural laborers came from Ireland to England and Scotland for harvest employment, and that of these nearly 4,000 were, in their own country, tenant cultivators of from 5 to 40 acres, and 95 had holdings of above 40 acres. The bulk of these were from Connaught. It is, of course, needless to add that in most of these cases the poor Irish harvester came to this country to earn for the Irish landlord the excessive rent payable for the Irish holding.

Whilst my present proposition is only directed against uncultivated land, there is much of the land which is returned as cultivated in England which is by no means in a high state of cultivation. The Royal Agricultural Commission throws some light on the why; "the conditions and covenants under which land is let are, as a rule, particularly narrow and stringent". Mr. Little, on "Cornwall", p. 7, says: "Compensation for unexhausted improvements does not appear to be secured by any custom"; p. 8: "In one case (not exceptional) which I met with the tenant would not, when quitting, be paid even for the hay which he was expected to secure and leave without compensation. He was literally entitled to nothing." In Devon (same report, p. 19) a farmer writes: "Tenant-right I have none; it is all on the landlord's side. My lease (fourteen years) gives me no allowance for permanent improvements. I am not paid for produce left on the farm, or allowed to sell or remove." Mr. Little, in his general remarks, says (p. 48): "Restrictions as to cultivation are almost universal"; p. 52: "The impoverished and beggared condition of farms which have been given up by tenants on some estates and are now unlet is due to the ill-advised attempts of the landlords to get an extreme rent for their land".

It is not very easy to say how much of the land now uncultivated is cultivable with profit. By cultivable with profit, I mean land which, being cultivated, would leave

any surplus whatever after providing life for the laborer and reimbursing the necessary capital invested in ensuring the successful cultivation.

Mr. John Bailey Denton, in his evidence before the Royal Commission (6,325) stated the irreclaimable land in England and Wales at 4,722,100 acres, the cultivated land at 27,000,000 acres, and the uncultivated land "capable of improvement" at 5,596,600 acres.

Professor Baldwin and Major Robertson, in their joint preliminary report to the Royal Commission, affirmed that there are 6,000,000 acres of land in Ireland "comparatively worthless", and they declared that the greater part of this land ought to be cultivated, and could be profitably reclaimed. Professor Baldwin, in his evidence before the Duke of Richmond as to Ireland, said: "There has been a good deal of exaggeration with regard to the waste lands of Ireland. I have gone very carefully into the matter, and I do not believe that there are more than 1,500,000 acres of waste lands that would admit of reclamation; but there are at least 1,000,000 of acres of bog-lands in Ireland that would admit of reclamation"; and he added there was "at least three or four times that" of "semi-waste". These 4,000,000 acres of semi-waste Professor Baldwin thinks could make provision for a large number of families if they were allowed to cultivate. Major Robertson agreed that there were large quantities of waste and semi-waste lands on which people might be profitably planted.

Mr. A. J. Kettle, in his evidence, illustrated the hindrances to reclamation in Ireland: "In the greater part of Mayo, and, in fact, all over the mountain and bog sides in Tipperary and Kerry, the land had been reclaimed by the tenants". . . "They created property in a rude way, and the moment that it by means of their exertions furnished a crop, the landlords raised their rents from 1s. per acre to 2s. 6d. per acre, in order to reap a profit on it. Since the bad times began it was never able to bear two interests." "These small tenants were put on some bog or swamp or mountain land, and they reclaimed this either from a state of nature, or barrenness, or a state of swamp." Describing Connaught, the Most Rev. Dr. Duggan said: "We have bogs and mountains unreclaimed; not only that, we have agricultural tenements not half tilled". Mr. E. D. Leahy said: "There is no question that there is in

Ireland a vast quantity of reclaimable land". Mr. E. Murphy said: "I have seen large tracts in the south and west of Ireland where there might probably be a good deal of reclamation". Mr. J. Hegarty stated to the Commission that a large quantity of land in Ireland might be made into productive land, and he added (15,457): "I have imported potatoes and planted them on a tract of mountain that I think to this moment never yielded a crop of any kind before. I have reclaimed and brought it into cultivation, and it is now promising to be as good a potato-garden as there is in any part of my country." Mr. A. L. Tottenham, M.P., a Leitrim landowner, conceded that the bog of Allan and other bogs lying in the centre of Ireland might be reclaimed by the population.

The difficulties of reclaiming waste as the law now stands are shown in the evidence of Mr. T. Elliott, a Selkirkshire farmer (38,493):

"I farmed for my father. He held 1,000 acres without a wall or drain upon it, and I reclaimed 800 acres of it, subdivided it into fields of about 25 to 30 acres, with 5-foot stone walls. I drained it all pretty fairly, and made roads through it in different directions to gather in the crops, and drew lime for 25 miles to it, and improved it and made it good arable land, and we did not get a shilling from the landlord."

Again, as to some marsh land reclaimed at Holderness, Mr. Coleman says:

"Although the tenant has drained a large portion of the land entirely at his own expense, and laid out much money in other works of a permanent character, he is a yearly tenant, and has not any security in the form of a tenant-right on his outlay, so that he is liable to lose everything."

Mr. Druce, one of the Assistant Commissioners, reporting as to the Royal Commission on Agriculture, 1882, as to the counties of Bedford, Bucks, Herts, Cambridge, Leicester, Suffolk, etc., says:

"When so much arable land is either actually out of cultivation, or is only partially cultivated, and when, too, so much of that which is nominally in a state of cultivation is in such a foul and neglected state as much of the arable land in my district, I regret to say, is, the questions arise, can the land be brought back to a proper state of cultivation, and if so, how, and by whom?"

Chatmoss is one of the instances of reclamation of

"quaking bog" land which should encourage the most despairing. The history of this is given by Mr. Coleman in his report on Lancashire, p. 33, and he also shows how marsh land is being reclaimed on the Ribble; during the last twenty years moss land has been reclaimed on the estate of Lord Winmarleigh. In the same report we find evidence of the profitable reclamation of land at Holker; "reclaimed moss over which the poor people had at one time rights of turbary".

The Hon. Charles Gore, in his evidence before the Royal Commission, showed that nearly 6,000 acres of reclaimed forest land in Lincolnshire had been brought into cultivation during the last twenty-five years, and he adds "that land that has been covered by the sea and has been reclaimed grows wonderful corn crops".

Three thousand acres of what was Whichwood Forest (Oxon.) were converted into farms. On the Isle of Man 13,000 acres of waste unenclosed land were disafforested in 1860, and are now producing "substantial rents".

Much land has recently been reclaimed in Caithnessshire, and there is an immense tract which might be reclaimed if the inducements were sufficient.

Mr. G. J. Walker, in his evidence before the Royal Commission, said (30,170):

"In up-lying districts in Scotland people sometimes come forward and make a proprietor an offer for 5 or 10 acres of mossy moor land on some hillside to settle down upon, and in that case a portion may be taken in by the men themselves or with the assistance of the proprietor, and they get it at a cheap rent, with the liberty of extending their borders by improving the adjoining waste land just as they find it convenient to do so. They do that very much through the assistance of their families. That class of land is generally of a moor land character, or mossy, gravelly, or a mixture of gravel and moss, or sand; sometimes it is clayey soil."

In Lincolnshire there is land which would be greedily taken by laborers in small plots for cultivation if opportunity were afforded on reasonable terms. It is alleged that on this stiff clay land heavy crops may be harvested and dairy produce profitably raised. In the Furness district experiment has already shown that on Kirkby Moor, Pennington Moor, Asmotherly Moor, and Lowick Common, reclamation of waste and cultivation with profit

are possible. In Northumberland lands are reclaimable by planting highlands with firs, as at Riddleham Hope, affording shelter for other cultivation; stones for dividing fences are all ready to hand; clover can be grown by dressing heath land with lime, thus affording good feeding for sheep; and on some of the reclaimed lands oats, barley, and green crops have been raised. In Devonshire, at Tawton Common, the laborers have actually profitably reclaimed lands in spite of difficulties raised by the Duchy of Cornwall, so that land once valued at 4d. per acre is now rented at 25s. A reliable correspondent writes:

“South Tawton Common contains 2,634 acres, over about three quarters of which the Duchy claims right as lord of the manor of Lydford. The other fourth belongs to a Mr. Fursdon as lord of the manor of South Treal. There is no fence between; only a few stone posts mark the boundaries, so that cattle can go freely over the whole. About five years since the enclosures were mapped, valued, and charged in the parochial assessments. In the Duchy's assumed rights there were enclosed 110 acres. The amount paid to the Duchy for the land was £55 7s., and £2 2s. costs of conveyance. It appears that the incentive to this claim was the desire to rob the poor men, who had reclaimed the waste, of the fruits of their industry merely to enrich the Prince of Wales. There were on both rights 208 enclosures, the gross value of which was £223 18s. 9d.—rateable £217 15s.; the smallest containing 9 poles, the largest 4a. 2r. 34p. The consideration paid for these reclamations when sold is a fair test of their value. About two years since 5a. 2r. 11p. was sold for £160, about £28 per acre; another containing 3r. 30p. was sold for £19 7s. 6d.; about a month since another containing 1a. 1r. was sold for £27. There had been no loss to the Duchy by these enclosures, for until the poor men had reclaimed the land the Duchy had never received anything from the commons. It is the commoners that have suffered by having their grazing and other rights limited near their homesteads. There are 96 acres enclosed on the Fursdon rights, but no demand has been made on the cultivators, and as most of the enclosures were made more than twelve years since it is not likely that Mr. Fursdon intends to make any claim. Such conduct bears a favorable contrast to the rapacity of Duchy authorities. It was a credit to the commoners to give up their rights to benefit the industrious poor, but it was not to the credit of the Duchy to enforce so paltry a claim on the poorest of the community.

“The number of acres now capable of improvement is over 600, but they are becoming less, as there are parties still

enclosing. It is highly gratifying to say there is no want of employment in this neighborhood, and no time lost except through the inclemency of the weather. The owners of these enclosures are as proud of their landed possessions as the aristocracy are of theirs, and can very justly be more so, for they have won theirs by honest industry."

Speaking of Exmoor, Mr. Little, Assistant Commissioner, in his report, says :

"A considerable portion of what was once a rough moor maintaining a number of Exmoor ponies and sheep has been cultivated. Farmhouses, buildings, and cottages have been erected, water-meadows have been laid out in suitable spots, and on the better soils the natural pasture has been replaced by a sward of greatly superior character."

Penstrase Moor, in the Union of Truro, Cornwall, is an illustration of what might be done in the way of reclaiming waste lands if inducements be afforded to the tenant cultivator. This moor was formerly "agriculturally worthless". It is a strip of land of 478 acres, about two miles long, varying in width from a furlong to half a mile, on the property of Sir T. Dyke Acland. "The barrenness of the common in its unreclaimed condition was owing to a thin stratum of spar stones about six inches thick. On this grew nothing except coarse heath with black peaty accumulation; the peat had been, as usual, skimmed for fuel. On the removal, however, of the spar stones the subsoil proved to be a kindly loam suitable either for cereals, roots, or grass crops. The stones when collected were useful for building houses." This land has been let to about 70 persons, the holdings being, 26 under 4 acres, 13 more than 4 and not exceeding 6 acres, 20 between 6 and 10 acres, and 8 above 10 acres. Each holding is for three lives at a nominal quit rent of 5s., out of which the tenants have an annual dinner. The landlord permits a new life to be added as one drops out on payment of a fine calculated on the existing value of the holding on the Carlisle tables at 4 per cent. Some of this "worthless" land is now realising a gross produce of £10 per acre, not counting poultry or garden vegetables. The landlord has received in ten years for fines for renewals of leases no less than £1,087. He estimates the land which formerly paid no rent to be worth £1 per acre per annum, and more than 50 families are living in comfort on less than 500 acres.

Mr. Little, one of the Assistant Commissioners for the southern district of England, in the 4th report of the Royal Commission of Agriculture, 1882, on Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, and Somerset says: "I was most agreeably surprised by the nature and condition of the homesteads"; "I found comfortable and substantial houses"; "nearly all the cottages had a gay little piece of flower garden, and some had a number of fruit trees"; "that this moor, once a barren waste, exhibits a great improvement, cannot be doubted; that the gross produce raised from it is very large is equally indisputable"; yet Mr. Little is not so certain as to profit, as "it is a question how much of their gross profit is to be placed to remuneration for labor, and how much to the occupation of the land". He adds:

"In every case which I investigated the occupant was either a miner working in one of the neighboring mines, or the widow of a miner, or a returned emigrant who had purchased from one of the original reclaimers his homestead. The capital is then imported either in the shape of weekly wages earned in an employment which does not occupy the man's whole time, or in the shape of accumulated savings. Those who work in mines work alternately in night and day shifts, and they utilise their spare hours on their farm; the wife and children, however, do most of the farm work. The family have a much more comfortable home and many advantages, such as milk, butter, eggs, which they would not otherwise enjoy. The man has a motive for saving his money and employing his spare time, and if he does not gain a large profit as a farmer he enjoys a position of independence; he is elevated in the social scale, his self-respect is awakened and stimulated, and he acquires a stake and an interest in the country."

In the seven counties of Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Wilts, Somerset, Berks, and Lincoln, through which the estates of the Duchy of Cornwall extend, there are many thousand acres waste now, which men would be glad to cultivate. In Durham, at Cornsay Common, men are anxious to be allowed to cultivate, but are not encouraged. Two or three have experimented with success, but, having no security of tenure, are afraid to do too well lest they should lose their holdings. In the Black Country there are thousands of acres in South Staffordshire laid waste by mining operations which might be cultivated with certain profit. Landlords, often only lords of the manor, have received large sums for compensation for injury to surface.

The compensation ought to have been applied in levelling spoil-heaps, filling holes, and otherwise restoring surface. It has been pocketed by the lord, and the surface left waste. There are cases near Wednesbury in which a few acres of pit-soil have been profitably reclaimed by spade husbandry, and on which strawberries are now grown.

In the present Session the Hon. P. Stanhope, the Liberal member for Wednesbury, has introduced a Bill to compel the cultivation of the waste lands in mining districts, his own constituents being specially affected. At Mr. Stanhope's request I have gladly consented to back his Bill, and feel grateful that he has allowed me to share in his attempt.

Mr. F. Hackwood, of Wednesbury, who has special knowledge and takes great interest in the question so far as it affects the Black Country, wrote in 1886 in the *Midland Advertiser* :

“The Black Country is characterised not only by an unevenness of surface, but by a desolateness and sterility of appearance. For this must be held responsible, *in a great measure*, the gross carelessness of colliery managers and the callous indifference of coal-owners. It has always been the aim of mine-owners to raise their mineral at the lowest possible cost; and it has always suited a manager's interests, and at the same time benefited his pockets, to carry out this economical programme by ruthlessly ripping open the bowels of the earth in the readiest and cheapest manner possible. If crownings-in were dropped; if miniature mountains rose to obstruct the view; if green fields gave way to deserts; if the whole country became an abomination of desolation—all this mattered not either to the owner or to the managers so long as profits accumulated and fortunes were made. The owner lavished his wealth which he thus acquired in some other and distant part of the country in which his fastidious taste had led him to take up his residence—in most instances in some paradise of a park, or amidst the luxuriance of nature's verdant beauties in a far distant county, as remote as possible from the smoke and grime of the Black Country. To ameliorate the condition of the dwellers in this Black Country of ours, and, if not to increase the beauty of its landscape, at least to lessen in some degree its hideousness, it is proposed to invoke the aid of the present Parliament. A Bill to Promote the Better Cultivation of Land in Rural Districts (backed up by the names of Messrs. Bradlaugh, Labouchere, Burt, and Arch) is down for its second reading on the 14th of April next. To this Bill it has been proposed

to add clauses affecting the Black Country; that is, the whole of the district under the jurisdiction of the South Staffordshire Mines Drainage Commissioners. This is certainly not a rural district, but it nevertheless requires a little attention, and it is proposed to bring its colliery wastes back into cultivation wherever practicable. Radical as this proposal may seem, yet the interests of the mine owner are to be safeguarded by two very important conditions; the first is, that *the cultivation may be shown to be profitable*; the second, that the operations of the Act shall *not apply to unexhausted mines*. Only those lands would be touched which are now lying as absolute wastes—as idle, profitless disfigurements.”

How much of the great total of uncultivable land is really cultivable with profit it is, as I have already urged, not easy even to guess. It is, however, fairly certain that some millions of acres might be so cultivated. That is, that there is land which—if entrusted to a laborer on conditions stimulating him to exertion, the laborer being reasonably assisted with facilities for cultivating—would subsist the laborer, repay capital invested, and leave a surplus, though such land might not in addition pay rent, and would not be cultivated at all by a laborer who knew that his improvements would be all swallowed up by the landlord. Here is employment ready to hand for the unemployed. Employment which would not cost the State a single farthing. Employment which would not demoralise by artificially attracting masses of unemployed into one district, as would be the case with great public relief works, but which would create in each district a law-abiding and stable population, the individual members of which would feel that they were promoting the permanent well-being of themselves and their families. The employment given to resident cultivators would relieve the poor-rates, would increase the tax-paying quantity of the district, and would encourage the development of self-reliant effort by the attractive prize of increased comfort following each successful reclamation. This employment would not be in the nature of charity. The character and nature of the employment would develop the best and most citizen-like qualities of those engaged.

It is urged by opponents of compulsory land cultivation that it is an unjustifiable interference with private right to compel cultivation by the freeholder. But is there any right in land now known to English law that is not

admittedly subject to the well-being of the State as from time to time construed by Parliament? and if there be at present any such freehold right or privilege, ought Parliament to permit its continuance? Land which could bear produce and does not, not only evades its fair share of the local and imperial burdens, but it denies to the dwellers about it occasions of earning an honest livelihood. If, as is probable, the produce of the present 47½ millions of acres of so-called cultivated land could be as largely increased as by the addition of one-fourth, and if some ten or twelve millions of acres of land now uncultivated could be forced into different kinds of cultivation, the effect in temporarily reducing the pauperism of the country would be magical; and if at the same time notions of prudential restraint could be encouraged amongst the newly-employed cultivators, the reduction of poverty would be permanent. It is urged that the land now uncultivated cannot be cultivated with profit, that is, that it will not keep landlord, tenant-farmer, and laborer; that the farmer cannot pay rent and wages and escape ruin. This, under present conditions, is very likely quite true; but if at present the land lies idle because it cannot keep three, and if that land cultivated would find life for one who is now added to the ranks of the starving unemployed, then preference and opportunity for existence should be given to the one. The uncultivated area benefits not the landlord, the tenant-farmer, or the State; in the hands of the willing tenant cultivator it would benefit him immediately and individually, and the State generally and certainly. My proposal is no Mansion House charity scheme; it is an effort for radical justice.

It is said that the laborer could not cultivate without pecuniary aid, and I would therefore authorise the local authorities to make temporary loans at very low rates of interest. With reference to lands in Wiltshire which have gone out of cultivation, Mr. W. C. Little, Assistant Commissioner for the Southern district, says:

"I could not state any particular reason why those lands should go out of cultivation rather than others, except that the margin of profit on them is smaller than on others: and that, therefore, they are the first to go out of cultivation. The expenses of cultivation being large and the returns being comparatively small, the margin between expenditure and receipts

has gone, and consequently the land has gone out of cultivation. Of course, where a landlord is in a position to cultivate his own land, he may prefer to do it for a time at a loss with the hope of things recovering; on the other hand, the landlord may not be in a position, or may not care to cultivate his land, and that land goes out of cultivation."

That is, the land would not keep three classes, landlord with his rent, tenant-farmer with his profit, and laborer with his wage, but it might well have kept the latter in comfort.

The advantage of small cultivating proprietorship would be enormous. Even under the present system in which laborers' allotments are let at preposterously high rates the following are stated by Mr. Coleman to be the advantages of Cow Cottage Allotments:

"(1) That the possession of an allotment enables the occupier to save something for old age, and this often tends to the relief of the rates, as well as to the independence of the laborer.

"(2) That the opportunity of acquiring such as the result of the possession of character and capital, encourages thrift in the farm servant, who saves his money instead of spending it improperly, as is too often the case.

"(3) That the children are early trained to farm work by having to care for the animals and work on the allotment; and this is specially valuable as regards the girls, who learn to milk, and are in consequence much more valuable servants than those brought up in towns, or where they have not such opportunities.

"(4) The possession of an allotment, or the prospect of having one, is a powerful counter-attraction to the high wages of manufacturers or miners, and helps materially to keep the best laborers in the district, whereas, where no such inducements exist, it is the general experience that the best part of the labor often migrates.

"(5) The advantage to the children of a plentiful supply of skim milk. This, though placed last, is probably the most important of all the points named. The result, as compared with those deprived of such nutriment, is visible in superior physical development."

I would have the local authorities authorised to let on conditions which should encourage cultivation, and would therefore let at first for a short term of years, with a right to the tenant cultivator to require an extension of the term at the same rental in the proportion of improvement made in the value of the land. That is, if the original letting were for seven years the tenant should be entitled at the

end of the first three or five years to have the land valued; if it showed a clear surplus of produce after all outgoing he should be entitled to three years' renewal, and to an additional year of holding for every five per cent. of added value. The local authorities should be authorised to borrow money and to make advances to the cultivating laborer to facilitate cultivation, or for cottages, provided that for every £100 or lesser sum of advance the tenant laborer could get three persons who had known him for at least five years to be jointly and severally bound to secure the due repayment. In cases where a tract of land needed draining the local authorities should be authorised to borrow money and to execute the necessary drainage works, apportioning the cost and its repayment over the various plots.

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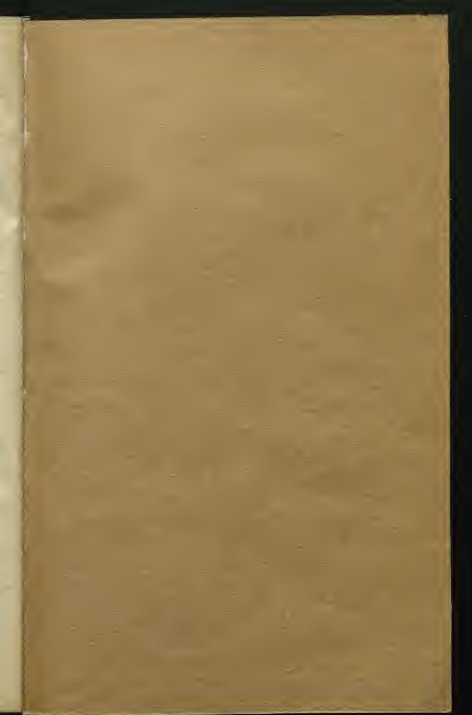
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