

of manufacturing a religion of his own, he constructs a creed for himself, and worships a god of his own creation. He sets up his own lar in his own household, and this he bows down to and adores.

When Cicero drew his friends around him at Tusculum, they reviled the gods, the *Dii Majores*, and laughed at the simple paganism of Numa, but those men bowed down before less illustrious deities, in the Capitol and eulogised a grosser form of worship in the Senate. Cicero, Seneca, Atticus, Lucullus and Varro, have their counterparts in modern society. The Greek philosophy made infidels and unbelievers of the Grecian aristocracy, but the mysteries of Ceres and Proserpine celebrated at Eleusis, and into which the aristocracy and philosophers were alone initiated, was perhaps the hugest superstition that the world has yet beheld.

Religion and morality among the pagans were not only disassociated; they were things entirely and totally distinct, and hence the pagan priesthood felt it no part of their duty to instruct the people in morality. Indeed the pagan priesthood themselves were the most profligate and depraved among the Roman people. Julius Cæsar, who was the most debased man of his time, was *Pontifex Maximus* at the time of his death, so was the cruel and cold-blooded Augustus, so was Julian the Apostate. Religion among the pagans never was intended to encroach on the domain of the philosopher, but philosophy then, as at the present day, was entirely unable and unfitted to cope with the evils of society, and utterly incompetent to discharge the functions of religion. In fact, between priests and philosophers Rome became the common cesspool of the world into which all the conquered nations discharged their impurities, a city where every species of wickedness and crime and loathsome sin were encouraged and practised.

The most awful feature, however, in the condition of pagan civilisation was that the evils which it entailed on society were regarded as being as a matter of course, as being irremediable, and that they were constant and wide-spread. But worse than this, all those evils went on deepening and widening and increasing in guilt exactly in proportion as the people advanced in material prosperity and enlightenment—in fact, as they increased in civilisation. Had the world been left to its own management up to this time; had we not been blessed by the presence on earth of our Divine Lord; had the world been allowed to go on as it was going, our unblest lot to-night would have been far more pitiful and deplorable than that we have been picturing among the heathens. We are heirs to the same sad legacy of sin that they are, we are prove to the same failings, the victims of the same passions; if, therefore, we are not sunk so deep in dismal abyss of sin as that in which they rioted, it must be certainly owing to some restraining power, some sustaining hand that has happily preserved us from such a calamity. If fathers and mothers are not exposing their offspring to the fires of Moloch and of Melcarth to-day as they did in those days of which we speak, it is simply because these is a power on earth to-day of which the ancients knew nothing, a Church which restrains and guides them.

In conclusion, I have now shown you that the highest civilisation which the world has yet beheld was possessed by a people who were at the same time sunk in a profound abyss of moral turpitude. The height to which their civilisation rose has never been attained by any modern nation. They wielded over the world a power that may be said to be absolute. From their senate issued edicts on which hung the fate of kings and decided the destinies of nations. In every country they subjugated they left behind them the foot-prints of the conqueror, and the impress of powerful genius was stamped upon all their works. In almost every department of art they have left us works which have been the study and the admiration of all succeeding ages. Our most gifted artists, poets, philosophers and scholars are unanimous in bearing testimony to their unrivalled skill, and to the marvellous beauty, polish, and grandeur of their works. The writings of their poets and philosophers are, even to-day, so highly prized that it is not too much to say that acquaintance with them and the knowledge of them is the measure of a gentleman's education and gives him a passport to polite society. But more than all this, more than their learning, their genius or their skill, the wealth, magnificence and luxury of the Romans astonished the world, and gained for them the proud title of "a populace of kings." Yet mark! in the midst of all this dazzling splendour and wealth, this national prosperity, this civilisation, those people were immersed in the most unspeakable depravity, sanctifying every sensual indulgence, prostituting every power of their body, and every faculty of their soul to the unrestrained indulgence of their passions. Their lives were wasted in a continuous whirlpool of riotous and vicious enjoyments from which nothing that was human could turn them away. The lascivious games of the circus and the amphitheatre, the festivals of Bacchus, of Flora, of Ceres, of Venus and of the Lupercales which were frequented and encouraged by the Roman matrons and their patrician lords, and which were under the supervision of the priests and the patronage of the gods, were so gross and immoral, so intensely debasing, that they seemed to owe their existence to the inventive genius of devils. This is not only true of Rome, but of all the other ancient civilisations whose history has come down to us. The abominations revealed to us in the Bible of the ancient heathen nations are simply appalling when read in the light of ancient history. Tyre, Sodom, Sodom and Gomorrah, Babylon and other places, were all at one time or other of their history, perched on the very summit of national prosperity and power; but yet their crimes were so terrible, their wickedness so great, that a long-suffering and patient God felt himself constrained to sweep them off the face of the earth, so that the memory of them is all that remains to posterity. . . . There is a lesson and a moral in their history, and in their sad fate, which the world at the present day can scarcely afford to ignore and which we would do well to study. From the knowledge thus gained you will see how easy it is to combat the sophistries of those who draw comparisons between the material prosperity of Protestant and Catholic countries, with the view of establishing an argument in favour of Protestantism by the contrast. You have seen that the most absolute state of

moral debasement may co-exist with the greatest wealth, commercial importance, and national greatness. Once more! let it be understood, and it cannot be too well understood that neither wealth nor power, however great, necessarily involve or carry with them the true faith or the grace of God. I may go further, and state that from all we can gather from the teachings of history, the very contrary would seem to be the case. I have shown you in this lecture, that nations in the plenary possession of all those things were at the same time walking in loathsome and unshadowed sin, rioting in crime, and debased beyond the comprehension of baptised Christians. Symmachus, the illustrious prefect of Rome, confessed to St. Ambrose that he could not repent in his old age. Alas! he had been so contaminated in his early life, that he needed to go back again into the womb and be regenerated, before he could become a Christian. This was classical Rome, this was heathen antiquity, pagan civilisation. Mind, I find no fault with the conveniences nor luxuries of civilisation, for, beyond dispute, they increase the pleasures and enjoyments of life, and when used with due moderation, and when they are subordinated to religion, will undoubtedly add to our comfort and well-being. But these things are not the stronghold of a nation's power. It is not its wealth nor its power, nor the multitude of its inventors, nor the breadth of its dominions, but the virtuous integrity of its people, their probity and rectitude, the purity of their lives, their respect for truth and its allied virtues, that can call down on any country the blessings of heaven, and save it from the doom of those nations whose fate we have been deploring to-night. . . . Why was not Rome swept away with the other nations of antiquity? When she and all her dependencies were sunk in an abyss of guilt from which nothing that was human could extricate them.—behold! her Saviour and her Redeemer comes, and she is saved. As the first summer sun tinges the earth with beauty and re-animates the drooping form of nature, so the Church of God, fresh from the hands of its Divine Founder and radiant with the brightness of eternal truth, lights up a benighted world, and restores a fallen race to its lost inheritance. Coming with tidings of great joy to man, she fills a discordant world with harmony, and out of chaos and confusion draws forth a new creation. Standing, as it were, on the very promontory of the world, she holds out a bright light to the storm-tossed nations and points them to a haven of safety. Opening wide her portals, she offers an asylum to the whole human race, and a shelter they cannot find elsewhere. Fulfilling her divine mission, she lifts the needy out of the dunghill, and brings down the mighty from their thrones, to pay homage to the lowliness of the Cross. All that is beautiful and good in art and in civilisation is of her and from her; all that is holy, all that is great and glorious on earth and in heaven by divine right belong to her. Finally, all that we have now, or ever will have of God's best gifts in time or eternity are, and will be given to us through her. What a mother she must be who can be all this to us. Let us hear her, then when she speaks, for her teachings lead to a higher, a nobler and a more enduring civilisation than was ever possessed by any of the nations of antiquity.

NOTE ON THE LAND ACT IN IRELAND.

(From the Norwich (Eng.) Daily Press.)

THE total amount of rent reductions made by the Irish Land Courts up to June 30, 1884 (including agreements made out of court between landlord and tenant, and confirmed in court), is £440,000, or about 2.6 per cent. of the total rental of Ireland, which is estimated at £17,000,000.

Up to December 31, 1884, the reduction may probably amount to half a million sterling or less than 3 per cent. (say one-third-fifth part, or 7d in the £) of the total rental of Ireland. It is pretty evident that a rent abatement of 7d. in the £, which is very much less than the fall in value of agricultural produce during the past few years, is not likely to be accepted by Irish farmers as anything approaching to a final settlement of the land question. Nevertheless, in individual cases of extreme hardship, the Land Court reductions have, no doubt, caused considerable relief to tenants, and so lessened the incitements to commit agrarian outrages.

By the famous "Healy" Clause of the Land Act, it is declared that no tenant is to be charged rent on improvements, which term includes dwelling and out-houses, made by himself or his predecessors. But the Land Courts (chiefly composed, as before stated, of men of the landlord and land-agent class) have ingeniously made this clause of little effect, by declaring that enjoyment of his improvements for a number of years partly compensates a tenant for the cost of making them. There is no authority in the Land Act for this rendering of the Clause, which, rendering has, nevertheless caused heavy loss to tenants, and is partly the reason why in the case of rents adjudicated on up to the 30th of June, 1884, the net reductions amount to less than 19 per cent.

An extreme case, but by no means a solitary one, illustrating the way in which the Land Act frequently fails to do justice, is that of a poor widow living near Kilkee on the west coast of County Clare, the particulars of which are as follows:—

This woman, and her husband before her, had for 30 years paid a rent of about £11 for 11 acres of very poor land. She took her case into the Land Court and the rent was reduced to £5. Yet the landlord in vengeance evicted her for £19 arrears of the old rack rent, leaving her at once both homeless and penniless.

So that taking the judicial rent of £5 as a simple or basis of fair rent, the landlord had taken in 30 years, 30 times £6, or say £180 (less £19 arrears due) over and above what the Court declared to be a just rent; in other words, the fee simple had been paid for by the tenant more than 1½ times (£160 is over 1½ times 20 years' purchase of £5), and yet the landlord evicted the tenant without any compensation, thus legally robbing her, under the Land Act, of £160; or, counting interest, of more than £200.