

MR. T. P. O'CONNOR, M.P., ON THE SITUATION.

THE following report of the brilliant speech delivered by Mr. T. P. O'Connor, M.P., at the great land demonstration held in Glasgow on Monday night, April 18th is taken from the *Glasgow Herald*:—

Mr. T. P. O'Connor, M.P., who on being introduced was received with cheering loud and prolonged, said he did not feel inclined to speak at all, because he always thought that when a demonstration reached the gigantic proportions which the demonstration that evening had reached—the most extraordinary demonstration within the walls of a hall which he had ever witnessed—the feeble voice of a single speaker almost detracted from its significance (cries of "No"). It was not only on account of kinship that the Land League had a right to a welcome in Scotland. Scotland was the motherland of political economy, and the most fundamental fact about the Land League was that for the first time it endeavoured to apply to the land system of Ireland the only true principles of political and economic science. There were those whose idea it was that if you benefited one nation you injured another. He denied that doctrine. The greatest benefit to humanity must consist of the greatest good to the greatest number. Let us do as we like, we were international in spite of ourselves, and the man who was a benefactor to one nation was necessarily a benefactor to mankind (cheers). So it was with regard to this land question. The land system of England and of Scotland was built up in the feudal times. Through all the centuries it had been a source of misery and poverty to some portion at least of the English and the Scotch population. For let Englishmen and Scotchmen mark this—that their lands would to-day be as poor and as miserable and as oppressed as the land of Ireland if the feudal system had been allowed to work its will, undeterred by the manufacturing industries of the country. It was the riches below the soil of England and of Scotland that had saved Englishmen and Scotchmen from the evil results of the feudal aristocracy. That feudal aristocracy was now tottering, trembling; he believed that before many years it would be levelled with the dust (loud cheers). He did not want to use disrespectful terms; but rats, it was said, left the sinking ship. He thought there were some rats who had discovered that the ship of feudalism was at last sinking, and that it was coming upon the rocks (applause). But what had been the mighty agency by which that feudal system was being undermined? It was not Englishmen, it was not Scotchmen, that undermined the feudal system of England and Scotland and Ireland. American competition was the first thing under which the feudal system of England had broken down; and the second thing was Irish disturbance (applause). And then, who were the two peoples who had broken down these knights of feudalism who had existed in this country since the Norman Conquest? The two peoples who had accomplished this great and magnificent result for England and Scotland were the backwoodsmen of the United States and the cottiers of Mayo (cheers). He would ask them next to look how the moral law of the universe righted that in the end. The backwoodsman of the United States was the man whom the feudal system drove out of England and Scotland and Ireland. He was the outcast of feudal civilisation; and the cottier labourer of Mayo—in all his misery, his illiterateness, and his poverty—was the work of feudal oppression. But these two men—the man whom the feudal system cast out, and the man whom the feudal system trampled down—were coming back, the one for vengeance in the shape of American wheat, and the other for vengeance in the shape of a strike against the rent under which Irish landlordism was down to-day and English landlordism would be down to-morrow (cheers). And therefore he said that they were international in spite of themselves, and they lied who said that the Irish party did not represent the Irish people (cries of "Hear, hear"). It is said that they were only a minority of the Irish members ("No")—that they were only thirty-five or forty. Well, thirty-five Irishmen who could fight for eight weeks against—(loud applause, in which part of the sentence was lost)—proved at least that they inherited some of the noblest traditions of the Celtic nation (cheers); and he asked was there one of these 35 or 40 members who, during that prolonged and fierce struggle, was not backed by thousands of sympathetic Irish hearts in Ireland, England, and Scotland—not only in the farms and cottages of their people at home, but in the mines of England and in the darkest lanes of Glasgow (applause). Therefore he said that those who declared that the League did not represent the vast and overwhelming majority of the Irish race lied (cheers). Mr. O'Connor proceeded to give the history of a small farm in Ireland, which was an example of a great many more. Thirty-three years ago, he said, this farm was let at 10s an acre. At the beginning of the famine the tenant gave it up. Probably he had died of cholera (laughter). The farm was then let at 13s an acre to a county Cork man, and county Cork men, as everybody knew, were very bold fellows (hurrah). After three years the county Cork man became a bankrupt, and the Duke of Leinster got the farm into his own hands. Now a most remarkable thing occurred. Their graces were always ready to cry out about the invasion of the rights of property, and they talked about the tenant crying out for relief, but the moment the shoe pinched their graces nobody cried out so loudly for relief. Well, the duke took the land into his own hands, and it formed part of 500 acres that he could get no one to take. What did he do; He went to the tax officer, and said, "I cannot let this land, it's so bad; and that being so, I do not think I ought to pay taxes." And accordingly he demanded that his taxes should be remitted. He (Mr. O'Connor) wished that something like the same rule could be applied to Irish tenants that had lands from their lordships the dukes. Well, times improved. Another tenant took the land at 18s an acre, with a twenty-one years' lease. That tenant farmed, and he farmed well. He was a Scotch farmer—and let particular attention be given to that fact, for the statement constantly made was that if the Irish tenants were poor and miserable it was because they lacked industry and energy and self-reliance. "Why isn't Ireland like Scotland?" asked some one of a proud and arrogant and dogmatic doctrinaire. "Because," replied the doctrinaire, "the Irish-

man has not the self-confidence and the energy and the thrift and the farming skill of the Scotchman." Mr. Gladstone, speaking a good word for the country from which he derived his blood, naturally used this argument in the House of Commons the other night. The Premier said that what Ireland wanted was the habit of self-government. That was exactly what they thought (laughter and loud cheers.) Well, he had brought them to the fourth era in the history of this farm. Did this Scotchman succeed by dint of his Scotch energy and self-reliance and thrift and skill in farming, all of which qualities the speaker readily admitted? Did he succeed? Not a bit of it. Before half the lease was up he retired, because he also became a bankrupt (laughter.) Now he came to the fifth stage in the history of this farm. The next tenant went to the Scotch farmer who was going out, and gave him £400 for his stock and his crop, and £330 in name of good will. This was a Scotchman, too. He farmed the land as well as any man could farm it. He brought down 13 to 14 tons of manure every year by the canal. When his lease expired, he asked for a renewal from the agent at the old rent. And what was the reply of the agent? This tenant, by his expenditure in manure, by his own industry, and by his Scotch skill, had increased the value of this farm. At one time, let it be remembered, it was so waste that no tenant would take it, and his grace had to pay no taxes on it. But what did the agent say to that man when he asked for a renewal of his lease at the old rent? He said: "Sir, you have been robbing the duke; this farm is worth 20s an acre more than you have been giving." And he put up the rent to 31s an acre and served the tenant with a notice to quit. The man had to submit, because he did not want to lose his improvements; and that man estimated the loss of his tenant-right, the loss of his property, the result of his skill and capital and his labour, which was confiscated by his grace the duke, at £1500. That £1500 was robbed from that Scotch farmer (cheers) by that Irish nobleman as much as the thief that met a man and picked his pockets (cheers). Then there was the second farm. The first tenant paid £1 an acre, and after eleven years became bankrupt; the second tenant bought the crops, and in three years he became bankrupt. Then a man named Try—a good name for him—came into the farm. He had a six years' lease to run. He grew turnips that were eaten by the sheep, and bought a large quantity of oilcake. Then the new agent came, and the new agent raised the rent or turned the tenant out—he did not know which. That tenant was awarded £260 by the county court judge. The man thought he should have got three times the amount, and he appealed to the judge of assize. But when he went to the judge of assize, whom did he find before him but Mr Whiteside—one of the greatest Tories that ever lived. Mr Whiteside said that £260 was far too much, and fined the tenant £10 for having dared to appeal against it (laughter.) There was a case of the farm in Ireland conducted by a Scotch farmer—a man deprived of his capital and robbed by the landlord. As for this bill of Mr Gladstone's, for which he was asked to be so thankful, if he had any gratitude for the bill at all, and he had not much (laughter)—if he had any gratitude for the bill it was for the real author, not for the pretended author of it (cheers). The men who brought in that bill were not the men who were sitting on the Treasury bench—but many of them were either in the convict cell at Portland or within the walls of Kilmainham prison. And if the present Government had any decency it would, as he heard a Unitarian clergyman declare in Dublin, have sent an advance proof, an early copy of this bill to the man who really brought it in—the noble convict Michael Davitt (loud cheers). And let him say in passing that he was asked to be generous to those men. He said let the generosity begin on their side. Michael Davitt was his friend, and he was proud of it. The generosity Davitt got was a convict cell. He held that the leader whom he was proud to follow was far superior in moral worth to the so-called Liberal statesmen. These men for elevation of character could not be compared with Charles Stewart Parnell. Members of the great old Irish race had this as a consolation to them in the hour of their sorrows—it had been a consolation to him in the unequal battle they had had to struggle through—that in moral worth and political integrity the Irish people stood foremost among the people who spoke the English tongue (cheers). It was not amongst Irishmen that there were found statesmen who had one set of opinions in opposition and another in power. They were proud of their leaders, because, whatever might be the difference in social position or political power, in moral worth their leaders could bear favorable comparison with the best and most eminent of them (cheers). Generosity! Generosity to these men!! Generosity to these men!!! Within the last two or three days eviction had been going on in Ireland. A few days ago they came to a village and turned out a man and his family, and two of the people who were turned out were lying on a sick bed; and a few days before that they went to a village—he thought it was in Mayo—and they evicted a man who had ten or eleven children, one of whom was a sick girl, and it was only because the sub-sheriff was a humane man that this sick girl was not left to die by the roadside. These were the things that these men in power permitted—nay, more than permitted—that they encouraged; because they had put the weapon of coercion into the hands of the evicting landlord. Generosity to such men! Why, on the same day they were permitting the landlord to evict those sick people they were clapping into prison his friend Mr Harris and other friends of the country. He was not quite sure they would find it necessary to swallow portions of this bill; but even if they had to do so he would have his own thoughts about the Government, and these would find vent at the proper time (cheers.) Mr O'Connor proceeded to read some extracts from a book written by an Englishman—when he wanted evidence he always went to English or Scotch authorities, so that he might be on the right side (laughter)—describing the condition of the Irish people in a way which showed, Mr O'Connor argued, that he could not afford to be generous in this matter. He had often seen, when living in Galway, a poor peasant woman haggling ten or fifteen minutes over a halfpenny or a farthing in selling butter or eggs. It was not because she was mean that she did so, but because there was such dark and profound poverty at