

THE PASSING HOUR. BY THE EDITOR.

Bishop Clancy, Bishop of Elphin, Ireland, and, in so far as his ecclesiastical office will permit, a supporter of landlordism, having accused Michael Davitt of "propounding doctrines which are at variance with the teachings of the Catholic Church," the latter, through the columns of the *Freeman's Journal*, replies thus vigorously to the Bishop :

"I beg to tell the Bishop of Elphin that he speaks not for the Church but for himself. We know what happened to those who condemned the late Dr. McGlynn, of New York, for advocating rent theories alleged to be contrary to Catholic teaching. They had to eat humble pie. They are men of brains in Rome, and they know how to differentiate between the true duties and responsibilities of an ecclesiastic and the over-zealous dogmatizing upon economic theories and principles by some exponents of Catholic doctrines, who don't always too clearly understand what they are condemning, and are in the habit of upholding themselves behind the Church's name and authority when their vanity gets a little hurt in some controversy or discussion."

It has not seemed to us that Michael Davitt, intellectually the first man of Ireland to-day, has always kept as close to the true principle of the "Land for the People" as he might have done ; it has seemed to us that he has on one or two occasions consented to weaken the agitation by lending an ear to the demands of exigency, and because of this attitude that the movement in Ireland is not so far advanced as it should be. But no suspicion of insincerity attaches to Davitt's apparent minimizing of principle.

Landlordism in Ireland to-day has arrived at an acute stage. The suffering by recent evictions is appalling. We have previously had occasion in these columns to comment on the editorial stand of the *Cork County Eagle* and *Munster Advertiser*, one of the ablest journalistic champions of the people's rights in all Ireland. From a recent issue we quote the following.

In making a concession to the advocates of compensation, it is clear that the *Advertiser* makes no concession of principle. Yet we cannot help but think that even for the minimizing of the opposition of minor landlords such concession is needless.

"It is apparent on all sides that the present system of land tenure in Ireland is doomed. Its final dissolution is only a question of time. It is too unjust to hold together before the growing intelligence of the people. Realizing this, many of the weaker and poorer landlords would be glad to be freed from their false position if they could only secure reasonable compensation for what is termed their right of ownership. This is not the place to question the why or the wherefore of this alleged right ; it is taken for granted that landlords will be compensated, and, to effect a speedy settlement, it would be advisable to resort to reasonable compensation. The point at issue, then, is really the substitution of a system which will be equitable and just to all parties. Undoubtedly, this cannot be secured by what is commonly designated peasant proprietorship, for it would substitute one privileged class of proprietors for another, with the inevitable result that the way would be opened for a more objectionable system of landlordism and rack-renting. Discontent and agitation would be perpetuated, emigration would continue, and the last state of the country would be worse than the first. The landlords, generally speaking, are inclined to dispose of their claims. They have influence with the Government, and by utilizing this in a judicious and equitable manner they have it in their power to confer a lasting and almost incalculable advantage on the country. As was suggested at their recent Convention, let them deal with the State direct and independent of the farmers. Strictly speaking, it is a matter of utter indif-

ference to the latter to whom they pay the rent, and that they should pay an economic rent for the special privilege of the exclusive use of the earth, both equity and justice demand. The State then having reverted to its original and rightful position as supreme and direct owner of the soil, it could be let in usufruct at an economic rent to the present tenants. No disadvantage would be inflicted upon, or injustice done to, the community by such a settlement, for the transaction would be absolutely sound from a financial standpoint, as in a given period the State would be recouped the initial expenditure; the farmers' improvements would be secured to them; and, as the economic rent would ultimately abolish all taxation, they would be saved from the direct and indirect imposts which are now almost equal to a second agricultural rent, and in some cases exceed it. The labourers would be benefitted, for the State would be enabled to grant them such holdings as they would be able to successfully manage. The same refers to all other sections of the community, for taxation would be gradually rebated, and they would ultimately be left in full and undisturbed possession of all the fruits of their industry. Taxation of to-day, in its multiplicity of forms, is simply the bane of industry.

"We write not in a party spirit, nor for the benefit of a class, but in the interest of the entire community, whose claim to an economic rent for the use of the soil is absolutely indisputable, if equity and justice are to be considered. Private individuals have no moral right to demand and receive a rent or tax for the productive power of the earth; therefore, no settlement of the land question will be just or final that will not recognize the fact that to the entire community belongs the rent that should be paid for the exclusive use of the soil. In equity there could be no such thing as private ownership of the bounties of nature. They are the gift of God to all His creatures alike. To contend, then, that there are only two sections or classes interested in this gift of the Creator to all mankind is at once an insult to common-sense, an insult to equity, an insult to truth, and an insult to the simplest forms of justice. Hear what the late Bishop Nulty says, in a Pastoral so far back as 1881, on this vital question :

"The land of every country is the common property of the people of that country, because its real owner, the Creator who made it, has transferred it as a voluntary gift to them. "*Terram autem dedit filiis hominum.*" Now, as every individual in that country is a creature and child of God, and as all His creatures are equal in His sight, any settlement of the land of a country that would exclude the humblest man in that country from his share of the common inheritance would be not only an injustice and a wrong to that man, but, moreover, would be an impious resistance to the benevolent intentions of his Creator.'

"In the face of such a pronouncement from one of Ireland's most learned Bishops, and one of the most holy divines, who occupied a high and distinguished position in the Catholic Church, how can the right of all to the land be disputed? But, had the good Bishop never spoken, God Himself has declared it."

Nothing is more ominous in our social and industrial life to-day than the growing tendency to the increase of child slavery. We call it slavery advisedly, since the wages that can be earned by children from eight to twelve in Southern mills are so paltry as to be barely worth considering. But such labor would not exist at all were it not for the fact that an industrial condition prevails in comparison to which the old chattel slavery was in many respects to be preferred. It seems incredible that thirty per cent. of the employes in one mill in