

MR. MILL'S PLAN FOR THE PACIFICATION OF IRELAND EXAMINED

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649329205

Mr. Mill's Plan for the Pacification of Ireland Examined by Lord Dufferin

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

LORD DUFFERIN

**MR. MILL'S PLAN FOR
THE PACIFICATION OF
IRELAND EXAMINED**

MR. MILL'S PLAN
FOR
"THE PACIFICATION OF IRELAND,"
EXAMINED.

Extracted from the Blue Book of 1868
BY LORD DUFFERIN.

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.
1868.

PREFACE.

ALTHOUGH many questions connected with Ireland are occupying the attention of the public, I have, for obvious reasons, avoided alluding to any of them in the following pages.

I cannot, however, let this humble contribution to the mass of ephemeral literature which the present political state of Ireland has evoked, go forth to the public, without expressing a hope that Parliament will at last make up its mind to satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the great bulk of the Irish nation.

The most vital, the most important of these, is the establishment of Religious Equality on the broadest basis. In the recognition of this principle will be found the resolution of most of our difficulties.

Notwithstanding the untoward symptoms which have of late appeared in Ireland, I feel no alarm as to the real condition of the country. Our material prosperity is steadily, though slowly, advancing. If external influences have unsettled the minds of the least enlightened portion of our fellow-countrymen, the sympathies of the educated classes, no matter of what creed or party, are more completely in harmony with those prevailing in the sister kingdom than they have been for the last fifty years. Opinions which recommend themselves to

the approval of the most intelligent sections of the nation cannot for ever remain unshared by the rest of the community, and the unmistakable yearning of public opinion in England towards Ireland must eventually touch the hearts of a sensitive people.

If, further, something could be offered to satisfy the craving of a proud nation for some visible sign of its corporate existence,—to be at once a gratification to its affections and to its imagination,—if some of those gracious influences, which history tells us have so often reawakened the loyalty of a discouraged people, were shed abroad upon the hearts of the gentlest and the bravest race in Europe;—if, when Parliament shall have fulfilled its task, one Fair Presence would but show herself on Ireland's untrodden shore, the foul phantom of an alien disaffection, which has found a temporary lurking place within our pale, would flee beyond the western horizon as fly the shadows of night before the face of Dawn.

MR. MILL'S PLAN
FOR
THE PACIFICATION OF IRELAND
EXAMINED.

MR. MILL has recently submitted to the consideration of the public a plan for the pacification of Irish discontent.

Whatever proceeds from the pen of so great an authority will command the attention of his fellow-countrymen, and the fact of his suggestions being out of harmony with prevailing prejudices must be accepted as a characteristic common to all original ideas.

His proposal is a simple one, and may be described in a few sentences. The landed estates of all the proprietors of Ireland are to be brought to a forced sale. Their price is to be fixed at the discretion of parliamentary commissioners. Should the rent-roll of any estate be above the figure which may recommend itself to the approval of these gentlemen, it will be reduced to more legitimate proportions, and its owner compensated on the amended valuation. The vacated properties will then be handed over to that section of the Irish agricultural class who may happen to be in the occupation of farms at the moment the projected Act receives the Royal assent, and the accruing quit-rents will thenceforth be collected through the instrumentality of Government land-agents, Government bailiffs, and Government process-servers.

Certain stipulations against subletting are to be enforced for a limited period against the new proprietors; for the

infraction of which they will, I presume, be prosecuted in the courts of law at the public expense, by Government officials appointed *ad hoc*.

So many of the present owners as may happen to have land in their own hands, will be allowed to retain possession of it, at all events until further notice, but all existing leases or other terminable contracts will be overridden by the new settlement.

Whether perpetuity of possession is to be extended to the conacre cultivator and cottier subtenants of the Irish peasantry, Mr. Mill does not mention, but as they amount to several hundred thousand persons, their future status will be worthy of his consideration.

There is one other important point with respect to which it is desirable Mr. Mill should explain himself in any further exposition of his views; viz. whether in future the aggregation of landed property in Ireland, and the re-creation of tenancies, is to be a legal or a criminal proceeding; and, on the latter supposition, what is to become of the peasant proprietor who, from sickness, infancy, or any temporary impediment, is unable to cultivate his own land, and is forbidden by the law to sublet it.

Having thus stated the leading features of Mr. Mill's proposition, I shall venture to point out some objections which may be preferred against them. In using this freedom I hope no apology will be thought necessary. Under other circumstances I should have hesitated to enter the arena with so august an antagonist; but when your house is broken into, you have no time to examine whether the intruder's thews are mightier than your own. You close with him on the spot. Even should he prove to be a policeman in plain clothes, you may be excused for assuming an attitude of self-defence.

However strenuous my opposition to Mr. Mill's views, I shall endeavour to review them with equanimity. Unfortunately, Mr. Mill has communicated his opinions in language calculated to irritate the susceptibilities of the class with whose most cherished interests he deals so freely. This is to be regretted on every account. In discussing the

limits of property in land, or the policy of transferring the management of that property from private individuals to the State, or from large landholders to peasant proprietors, it was quite beside the question to stigmatise the former as 'drones,' while the implied application of such expressions to thousands of educated gentlemen, including most of the representatives of Ireland, is unjust. It has often been my duty, as member of a Private Bill Committee, to listen to counsel, showing cause why some landholder's lawns or pleasure-grounds should be sacrificed to the exigencies of public traffic, but I never remember the sufferer's moral obliquities, and still less those of the previous possessor, being adduced as an additional reason for cutting his park in two with a canal or railway. A little reflection will show that much inconvenience might arise if the tenure of property were made dependent, not on deeds of sale, but on testimonials to the owner's virtue, or that a man should only enjoy his estate 'during good behaviour.' On the other hand, it must be admitted, if the amount of virtue necessary to render a citizen capable of holding property is to be determined by his less affluent fellow-countrymen, a very lofty standard of morality will probably be adopted.

Without therefore stopping to enquire how far the criminal conduct of the landholders in Ireland may have vitiated their title-deeds, we will examine the more serious argument by which Mr. Mill would justify the procedure he proposes.

Mr. Mill states, that 'because land is a thing which no man made, which exists in limited quantity, which was the original inheritance of all mankind, which, whoever appropriates, keeps others out of its possession,' it is competent for Parliament to deal with private estates in land in whatever manner may prove most conducive to the well-being of the community.

If there is truth in this principle, its application must be extended. When God contrived this world for man's habitation, He did not limit his possession of it to a few inches of its surface. Its wealth of waters, its secret stores of gold and silver and precious stones, its fields of

buried fuel, were equally left to reward the industry and ingenuity of our race. On the theory invoked by Mr. Mill, the subordination to imperial exigencies of an individual's property in a coal-mine or mill-dam, would be as complete as in the case of a corn-field. Nay, even a man's house or manufactory would be overridden by the same liabilities, for though transmuted by human labour into artificial shapes, the materials out of which they were constructed are but the original raw material, 'which, whoever appropriates, keeps others out of its possession;' nor will this be found a forced application of the principle when we remember, that the conversion of a brick-field, or of a stone quarry, into a street or palace, is hardly a less magical transformation than that of a Lincolnshire fen, or a lagoon of Holland, into tracts of golden wheat-land. Mr. Proudhon's pithy sentence, *La propriété c'est le vol*, as extended to every description of property, is a more logical expression of opinion than Mr. Mill's limited application of it to the landed estates of the country gentlemen of Great Britain and Ireland. Nor in practice has the State ever consented to recognise the greater immunity from parliamentary interference of one description of property as compared with another. A Committee of the House of Commons will send a railway through a householder's parlour with the same impartiality as through his neighbour's kitchen-garden. Probably in time of war, or any such public emergency, the principle would be extended to horses and chattel property. Indeed, Mr. Mill himself acts on this broader basis, for he sweeps into the maw of his commission not only our estates, but the farmhouses and cottages we have built upon them.

There is one important limitation, however, to this imperial supremacy; viz. that so violent an interference with private rights can only be insisted on under the plea of a paramount and indisputable necessity, which the bulk of the community agree in acknowledging, otherwise it is calculated to provoke a Civil War.

Mr. Mill and a very able writer in the 'Spectator' think that they have obviated all reasonable objection on the part of the landlords by their scheme of compensation. No doubt