

CHAPTER III.

THE IRISH LAND LEAGUE MOVEMENT.

1881-1882.

AGE, 42-43.

TWO days before Mr. George sailed for Europe news had come that Parnell and two other Parliamentarians, John Dillon and J. J. O'Kelly, had been sent to jail, which swelled the list of political prisoners under the crimes or coercion act to something like five hundred. While George was on the sea, Patrick Ford of the "Irish World," cabled to Patrick Egan, the Land League treasurer, suggesting that the League retaliate with a manifesto calling upon agricultural tenants to pay no rent whatever until the Government would withdraw the coercion act. Egan approved of the idea and transmitted it to Parnell in Kilmainham jail. The latter disliked to strike so radical a blow at the landlord interests, but nevertheless he yielded to the necessity of using the only weapon left in his hands. The no-rent manifesto was accordingly sent out in the name of the Land League. At that the Government advanced another step and suppressed the League; whereupon Patrick Egan went to Paris to protect the war chest, while the women, headed by Miss Anna Parnell, organised the Ladies' Land League to carry on the field-work.

As has been said, Mr. George sailed for Liverpool, but

he changed his plans and got off at Queenstown when the ship put into that Irish port. He hurried to Dublin, after stopping a few hours in Cork.

"With an area of only 32,000 square miles and a population of little more than five millions," Mr. George said at one time, "Ireland now required for its government in a time of profound peace 15,000 military constables and 40,000 picked troops." The regular army and the Royal Irish Constabulary, the soldier-police, he described in a few words in his first letter to the "Irish World" (November 3):

"The police are a stalwart body of men, clad in comfortable, dark-green uniforms; the soldiers are the pick of English and Scotch regiments—strong, active men, in the very prime of life, wearing smart, clean uniforms. . . . Every now and again you meet a detachment marching down the street with rifles on their shoulders and blankets on their backs, on their way to the country to guard somebody's castle, or help evict somebody's tenants."

Touching the nature of the government, he said:

"It is not merely a despotism; it is a despotism sustained by alien force, and wielded in the interests of a privileged class, who look upon the great masses of the people as intended but to be hewers of their wood and drawers of their water. . . .

"I leave out of consideration for the moment the present extraordinary condition of things when constitutional guarantees for personal liberty are utterly suspended, and any man in the country may be hauled off to prison at the nod of an irresponsible dictator. I speak of the normal times and the ordinary workings of government."

But, wrote Mr. George, "the people have become accustomed to act together" in wielding the weapon of passive resistance. It is from his private letters to Patrick Ford that we get the clearest and most intimate view of some phases of the movement. For instance, on November 10 he wrote:

" . . . The truth is that I landed here at a most unfortunate time for my purpose, and have found more difficulty in 'getting my feet down' than I could have imagined would be possible. . . .

"The first intimation I got was on the tender [in Cork Harbour] when the agent who had the passenger list from the steamer, called me aside and asked if I was Henry George, and telling me he was a Land Leaguer, told me I was expected. He wanted to change my name [on our trunks] telling me I should certainly be dogged from the moment I landed and possibly be arrested. I, of course, refused any such kindness, telling him that I did not propose to disguise myself and that the whole detective force was welcome to listen to all I had to say.

" . . . As I said before, it seems hard for a stranger to get to the bottom, and things change. But one impression has not changed. I got indignant as soon as I landed, and I have not got over it yet. This is the most damnable government that exists to-day out of Russia—Miss Helen Taylor [step-daughter of John Stuart Mill] says, 'outside of Turkey.'

" . . . As to the clergy: Croke struck a harder blow than Gladstone. It was as Dr. Nulty said to me, '*Et tu Brute.*'"

"If I had told you what the general statement of the men I met at first was, it would have been that the clergy were the greatest force the Land League had to meet. It is really better than that. The majority of the clergy are, I am inclined to think, with the people

¹ Archbishop Croke became radical later and gave encouragement to the popular cause.

and the no-rent fight, but they are for the most part 'bull-dozed' and the others are most active. . . .

"Miss Helen Taylor came [to Dublin] last week to propose that she should . . . take charge, letting Miss Parnell go to Holyhead and direct from there. Her idea was that as soon as the Government found that the Ladies' League was really doing effective work in keeping up the spirit of the people they would swoop down on the women, too, and that it would hurt the Government more to arrest her [an English woman] in Ireland than it would to arrest an Irish woman, and would hurt them much more to arrest Miss Parnell in England than it would to arrest her in Ireland. (Miss Taylor, who is one of the most intelligent women I ever met, if not the most intelligent, says the existence of the Gladstone Government is involved; that they will stop at nothing, rather than lose power.) . . . Miss Parnell's objection was that she could not be spared.

" . . . I am certain that everything is working together to the end we both desire—the radicalisation of the movement and the people. . . .

"Bishop Nulty told me that the English Catholics and the Irish Catholic land-owners had been deluging Rome with complaints. But, he said, the Pope is a man of strong common sense, and had refused so far to interfere."

Mr. George had not been long in Dublin before four committees waited on him to ask him to deliver a public speech. Edward Dwyer Gray, proprietor of the "Free-man's Journal," advised him to speak in England first, as that would give him more influence; but writing Ford on the matter (November 10), George said: "My sympathies go so strongly with this people that it would seem to me cowardly to refuse anything that might encourage them; and besides at this time it is *extremely* important to get them into line. . . . I will not talk politics; but I will not stint the truth." Mr. George had not yet

come to his full powers as a speaker and his wife wrote to their sons (November 10) that she was very anxious about the lecture. "I earnestly hope it will be a success," said she, "but somehow I think he will suit an English audience better, as he is unimpassioned like them, and not demonstrative like Irishmen." Mr. George spoke on the 14th. The result satisfied him, as he wrote to Ford (November 15):

"My lecture last night was a grand success, and I had the hardest work possible to avoid being dragged through the streets. It was, in fact, the only chance the Dublin people had had since the suppression of the Land League to show their enthusiasm."

The demonstration after the lecture to which Mr. George alludes was a custom with which he became abruptly acquainted when a crowd surged about his carriage and attempted to unhitch the horse, with the intention of themselves drawing the vehicle. He got almost indignant. He ordered the driver to whip up and gave him a liberal fee when he cleared the crowd. When addressing another Dublin audience some months afterwards Mr. George referred to the incident. He said the custom was undemocratic and savoured too much of the subservience to which through the long generations they had been habituated in giving rent and thanks for the privilege of living on the common soil. The audience applauded to the echo. The people were ready to hear plain speech and to embrace new ideas. A few days after the Dublin lecture (January 1, 1882) George wrote to Taylor: "The majority of the Irish don't know yet how to get at what they want. Like all great movements, it is a blind groping forward. But it is the beginning of the revolution, sure."

Bishop Nulty had been made to feel the displeasure of

the higher Catholic authorities for his by this time famous pastoral letter declaring common rights in land, and was probably secretly reprov'd for an interview with him which Mr. George had published in the "Irish World," and which in garbled form was cabled back to a London paper. Following this George wrote to Ford (December 28) :

"I presume we have at last got Dr. Nulty into the trouble he has been so anxious to avoid. One of the reasons I went to Mullingar was to sound him about the publication of his platform [from the pastoral letter].¹ I believe I told you that I got the Ladies [Land League] to order a lot printed just as it appeared in the 'Irish World.' Alfred Webb, who was printing them, suggested to me that perhaps the Doctor would not like it, and that he was doing such good work that we ought to be very careful not to embarrass him.

"So I did not ask his permission, for I did not want

¹ This passage from the Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Nulty's pastoral letter to the clergy and laity of the Diocese of Meath, ran :

"The land of every country is the gift of its Creator to the people of that country ; it is the patrimony and inheritance bequeathed to them by their common Father, out of which they can, by continuous labour and toil, provide themselves with everything they require for their maintenance and support, for their material comfort and enjoyment. God was perfectly free in the act by which He created us ; but, having created us, He bound himself by that act to provide us with the means *necessary* for our subsistence. The land is the only means of this kind now known to us.

"The land, therefore, 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 in 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."

to commit him. I merely told him it was being done, and he made no objection.

— “Well, the thing is beginning to tell. It is going all over the country and some of the priests are distributing it, and it is getting pasted up, and the Tory papers and all the English papers are reprinting it as an outrageous *official* declaration of communism from a Catholic bishop; and from all I have heard of their temper, I shall be surprised if the English prelates don't try to raise a row at Rome about it.

“But it is going to do an immense amount of good.”

In the same letter George made some comments from his inside point of view upon persons in the movement and its management.

“There is a great amount of ‘whigging’ in this Land League movement, more than I thought before coming here. And I think this is especially true of the leaders. With very many of those for whom it is doing the most, the ‘Irish World’ is anything but popular. And I have felt from the beginning as if there was a good deal of that feeling about myself. We are regarded as dangerous allies. I have, of course, never pretended to see or notice this, though I have had some curiosity about it, as to how much was due to conservatism and how much to influences from America. But come what may, this movement is going to assume a much more radical phase. In spite of everything, the *light* is spreading.”

Mr. George then related how when “United Ireland,” the official league organ, was seized, the plates of the number just to be issued were got off to his lodgings and hidden under his bed, whence they were sent in a trunk to London, where the League managers, instead of putting them to press at once, lost several days and much money in negotiating about the matter. Ultimately “one paper was got out in London, and another totally different in

Dublin, and an edition from the Dublin plates worked off in Liverpool." He observed to Ford in a letter from London:

"Some of them told me that this was splendid, as showing the Government that when one paper was suppressed three would spring up; but I told them that in my opinion the Government would laugh at such work and see how easy it was to make them spend their resources.

". . . To sum up: It appears to me that there is in many things a lack of management, and consequently, waste both of opportunities and resources.

"Sometimes it seems to me as if a lot of small men had found themselves in the lead of a tremendous movement, and finding themselves lifted into importance and power they never dreamed of, are jealous of anybody else sharing the honour.

"I do not refer to Parnell, who, I think from all I hear of him, is a first-class man, though he lacks qualities and powers in which Davitt is strong.

"I wish I had got here before the suppression, that I might have seen the thing in free play.

"Miss Parnell, from all I learn, is really an extraordinary executive and organiser, and the Ladies are and have been doing their work wonderfully well, considering all the difficulties. . . .

"Miss Taylor urged me not to return to Ireland, saying that I was greatly needed, and that the Government will certainly arrest me before long. But while I won't put myself in the way of that, I don't feel like turning aside for fear of it. My sympathies are so strongly with this fight against such tremendous odds of every kind that it is impossible for me not to feel myself in it."

It was at this time, when Mr. George was in London and his wife and daughters in Dublin, that Miss Parnell got word from a confidential source inside Dublin Castle

that the Ladies' Land League was to be proscribed; that she and her able assistant, Miss Nannie Lynch, were to be arrested at once; and that one of the Dublin jails was actually being cleared out for the reception of the women. These two ladies needed no further hint; they immediately sped for London, Miss Lynch sending her official books to Mrs. George for safekeeping. The remaining ladies invited Mrs. George to preside that day over the regular business meeting of the Ladies' League. She never before had attempted to preside at any kind of a meeting and her embarrassment was heightened by the presence of men, whom she afterwards was told were Government detectives, and a number of reporters and correspondents. But the women triumphed. The absence of Miss Parnell and the appearance of an American woman in the chair completely nonplussed the Dublin Government officials and the Ladies' Land League escaped proscription.

Mr. George's post of special correspondent of the "Irish World," the mouthpiece, so to speak, of the Land League in America, the chief source of the "sinews of war," gave him an introduction to all the prominent men in the Irish movement, from Parnell in Kilmainham jail to Justin McCarthy in London and Patrick Egan in Paris, while his reputation as the author of "Progress and Poverty" and of "The Irish Land Question" gave him a standing outside political circles. He therefore had little difficulty in making acquaintances. But he quickly discovered that the members of the Irish Parliamentary party, while cordial enough at dinner parties and on other social occasions, and polished and polite under all circumstances, were always guarded in speaking with him on the affairs of the movement, and many of them absolutely uncommunicative. As time passed on this condition of aloofness grew.

Aside from these formal acquaintances, Mr. George while in Dublin formed some friendships of a deep and lasting kind. One of these was that of Dr. James E. Kelly, who, upon the American's arrival in the city in the period of national despondence consequent upon the arrest of the leaders, was one of the first persons to welcome him to Ireland. Dr. Kelly was thoroughly in sympathy with and made many sacrifices for the popular cause. During the Georges' stay in Dublin he frequently entertained them at his house and almost daily saw and talked with Mr. George on social or political matters, or on questions of philosophy.

Another warm Irish attachment formed at this time was with Rev. Thomas Dawson of the Catholic order of the Oblate Fathers, who then lived at Glencree. He had read "Progress and Poverty" and had become imbued with its spirit and with the belief that no matter what its author called himself, the final chapter of the book proved him to be essentially a Catholic. It was to Father Dawson that Mr. George subsequently wrote the letter touching his religious faith which has already been quoted.¹

As we have seen, Miss Helen Taylor was another of the important acquaintances made in Dublin. Acquaintance strengthened into warm friendship, and when the Georges went to London in January they accepted her hearty invitation to share her hospitality at South Kensington. She possessed sufficient means to make her independent, and for years had been doing all in her power, with voice, pen and purse, to advance public ideas along the lines taught by her famous step-father, John Stuart Mill. She believed that were Mr. Mill alive he would have been heart and soul with the Irish in their struggle and would have

¹ Pages 311-312.

been among the first to greet "Progress and Poverty" as containing the truth, notwithstanding its contradiction of much that he had previously taught.

After spending several weeks with Miss Taylor, the Georges visited Mr. and Mrs. Henry M. Hyndman in Portland Place, and afterwards Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Briggs at Dulwich. Mr. Hyndman had long been one of the leading writers on the London press, but a too active sympathy with the Irish movement had caused him to be "boycotted." An intense socialist, he was president of the Democratic Federation, which propagated those doctrines in England. For a time he seemed hopeful of converting Mr. George to his views, while the American thought socialism in his friend was weakening. Hyndman had found at the British Museum a copy of a lecture by Thomas Spence on "The Real Rights of Man," delivered before the Philosophical Society of Newcastle, November 8, 1775, a year before the publication of Smith's "Wealth of Nations," and for which the Society, as Spence said, did him "the honour to expel him." In the lecture Spence proclaimed common rights in land and proposed that land values be taken for public purposes, all other taxes to be remitted. George had never heard of Spence and was delighted at the discovery. He urged Hyndman to publish the lecture in tract form, believing that it would do much good. Mrs. George suggested that this might prove disadvantageous to Mr. George, for people might say that if the idea of taxing land values had been proposed a hundred years before and had since been ignored by the world, there was little use of George in his "Progress and Poverty" trying to popularise the principle now. Her husband answered that most people hesitate to accept an idea thought to be new; that if the proposal in "Progress and Poverty" could be shown to be

really an old one, it might make much more rapid way. And so he urged Hyndman to publish the lecture, which the latter did; while George himself sent a copy to Patrick Ford for publication in the "Irish World."

It was while they were guests of the Hyndmans that Mr. George met Herbert Spencer. Through the Hyndmans, Mr. and Mrs. George were invited to a reception at Mrs. (since Lady) Jeune's. It was a "London crush," the drawing-rooms thronged and many notables present, among them, Tennyson, tall, careless and dreamy—in appearance every inch a poet; and Browning, on this occasion at least, smart and dapper, and so far from appearing a great poet, looked, as Mrs. George said, "like a prosperous merchant draper." Mr. George admired both of these men, but was introduced to neither. He met Spencer, however, as soon as the latter appeared. This gave him real pleasure. He had been hearing stories of vanity in the English philosopher that he could scarcely credit, as he put him on a high plane, not because of the evolutionary philosophy, for it was that to which George referred when, in writing to Charles Nordhoff before leaving San Francisco, in 1879,¹ he said he would like sometime to write a book dissecting "this materialistic philosophy, which, with its false assumption of science, passes current with so many." But he had all along held Spencer as immovably against the institution of private property in land, and had in "Progress and Poverty" quoted from the English philosopher's scathing ninth chapter of "Social Statics." He, therefore, expected to find a man who, like himself, saw in the agrarian struggle in Ireland the raising of the question of land ownership and fundamental economic principles. Their conversation quickly

¹ Page 828.

turned to Ireland, for scarcely had they exchanged civilities when Spencer bluntly asked what George thought of Irish matters. The American condemned the Government and praised the League. Spencer burst into vehement dissent. "They," said he, meaning the imprisoned Land Leaguers, "have got only what they deserve. They are inciting the people to refuse to pay to their landlords what is rightfully theirs—rent." This speech and the manner of its delivery so differed from what was expected of the man who in "Social Statics" wrote, "equity does not permit property in land," that Mr. George was first astonished and then disgusted at this flat denial of principle. "It is evident that we cannot agree on this matter," was all that he could say, and he abruptly left Mr. Spencer. The meeting had proved a deep disappointment. Mr. George seldom outside the family circle spoke of it, but to Dr. Taylor he wrote soon after the occurrence (March, 1882): "Discount Herbert Spencer. He is most horribly conceited, and I don't believe really great men are."

It was about this time that Mr. and Mrs. Walter Wren entertained Mr. and Mrs. George at dinner. To put Mrs. George at her ease, Mr. Wren, in the American fashion, presented the other guests to her, among them Mr. and Mrs. Walter Besant. But Mr. George was made acquainted with the inconvenience of the English custom of not introducing. For after the dinner Mrs. George asked her husband how he liked Besant. He said he did not know. "Why, you were apparently on good terms with him?" "Good heavens!" he exclaimed. "Have I been talking with Walter Besant all evening without knowing him?"

A little while after this came a meeting with John Bright and Joseph Chamberlain, who were members of

the Gladstone Cabinet. To Ford, George wrote privately (April 22) :

"I dined with Walter Wren at the Reform Club last night and he had John Bright and Joseph Chamberlain there to meet me. We started in on Irish affairs with the soup, for Bright asked me point blank what I thought of what I had seen in Ireland, and I had to tell him, though it was not very flattering. We kept it up to half past ten, when Mr. Bright had to go down to the House, having left his daughter in the gallery, but Chamberlain remained until nearly twelve.

"Bright has got to the end of his tether, and will never get past where he is now; but Chamberlain is an extremely bright man, and his conversation, which was unreserved, was extremely interesting to me, and would make a most interesting letter if I could use it, which of course I cannot. . . .

"Chamberlain has evidently been reading the 'Irish World,' for he alluded to some things in my letters, and he told me laughingly to look out when I went back to Ireland that I did not get reasonably 'suspected.'

"I told him that I wanted to see Michael Davitt; that Harcourt had refused me; and asked him if he could help me. He said he could not, as the Home Secretary would be jealous of any interference by him; but he added that he thought I should be able to see Davitt before I went home, which I took to mean that Davitt would be released before long. This I sincerely hope, for he is badly needed in Ireland.

"Of course meeting a Cabinet Minister in that way I could not catechise him about what the Government intended; but I gathered from what he said that he at least was in favour of going further with the land-bill and relieving the rigours of coercion, which I take it, at least in the line of the suspect business, will be the policy of the Government. . . .

"Kegan Paul told me this morning that he met Justin McCarthy at dinner last night, and that he told him that the Irish members were getting frightened at the

length to which the movement was going, and were disposed to unite with the Government on fixing up the land bill. I only tell you this sort of stuff for what it is worth, but my notion is that there will be some sort of joint attempt all around to settle the Irish land question, and—that it won't settle! . . .”

Justin McCarthy's reported utterance and Chamberlain's reference to the probable future policy of the Government were of a piece. Although the “no-rent” movement was as strong as ever, if not stronger, Parnell and some of his immediate associates had had enough. Asserting for an excuse that the no-rent movement had failed, they had run up the white flag. Through Captain O'Shea and others, Parnell had entered into a pact with the Government, by which he was to “slow down” the Land League agitation, while the Government was to release the suspects and extend the existing land act, both of which it was glad enough to do. George wrote to Ford (June 6): “Kettle says that O'Kelly, who came over to Ireland to get Parnell to make some compromise, and got put into prison, to the amusement of all inside, gradually worked on his fears.”

But there was at the time no public talk of a dicker with the enemy and no previous word that there was to be a liberation, so that when Parnell and his Parliamentary associate prisoners, Dillon and O'Kelly, walked forth from Kilmainham on May 2 there was general astonishment and rejoicing over what appeared to be the Irish leader's victory and Gladstone's defeat. But at least some of the insiders suspected, if they did not know of, the treaty. George wrote to Ford (June 6): “The evening Parnell was let out, the Ladies [Land League], instead of rejoicing, were like mourners at a wake.”

On the other side, to liberate Parnell or in any way to

treat with the man who had been denounced as "steeped in treason to the lips" was to discredit the policy of the Viceroy and the Chief Secretary. So Cowper and Forster resigned. Earl Spencer and Lord Frederick Cavendish were appointed to the respective places, and on May 6 made their official entry into Dublin. At seven o'clock that evening the new Chief Secretary and Mr. Burke, the Under Secretary, were killed by a band of political assassins calling themselves "Invincibles."

Mr. George had hurried that day from Dublin to London to meet Michael Davitt, who as publicly announced, and evidently as a part of the Government's more lenient policy, was to be released from Portland prison. In his "Irish World" letter of May 9, Mr. George said that he had been with Davitt until late that night and was to meet him next day.

"We did meet, but earlier than either he or I expected. I was awakened early in the morning by a telegram from a friend in Dublin [Dr. James E. Kelly], telling me that the new Chief Secretary and the Under Secretary had been stabbed to death in Phoenix Park. But for the terms of the despatch and the character of my friend I should have thought the story a wild rumour, for Dublin is a good place for rumours. But these left no doubt, and getting out as soon as I could, while all London was yet asleep, I after awhile managed to find a cabman dozing on his cab, and rousing him with some difficulty, got him to drive me to the Westminster Palace hotel. I went at once to Davitt's room, woke him up, and handed him the despatch as he lay in bed. 'My God!' was his exclamation, 'have I got out of Portland for this!' And then he added mournfully: 'For the first time in my life I despair. It seems like the curse that has always followed Ireland.'

"I went and woke Dillon. He, though less surprised,

was hardly less impressed. It seems that before they went to bed on Saturday night, or rather on Sunday morning, word was brought to them of the murders by one of the reporters of the 'Central News'; but it seemed so incredible that both the Chief Secretary and the Under Secretary should be stabbed to death in Phoenix Park, that it was at once set down as a hoax. Davitt, his mind filled with the vivid impressions of the first hours of freedom, after fifteen long months of imprisonment, and with friendly greetings ringing in his ear, had gone to sleep without reverting to the report again; but Dillon said he had been thinking over it all, and that the more he brooded over it the more it seemed 'too strange not to be true'; its very improbability seeming, as he thought of it, proof that it could not be wholly invention.

"After waking up Mr. Dillon, I went at his request to Mr. O'Kelly's room with the same intelligence, and soon the only London Sunday paper, the 'Observer,' came with the confirmation of print. Mr. Dillon went out to find Mr. Parnell, who came to the hotel, and after a conference the manifesto to the Irish people was written by Davitt, and having been submitted to the Parnellite members, who nearly all gathered in the hotel towards the afternoon, was signed by Parnell and Dillon as well as Davitt, sent out to the papers, and telegraphed to Dublin, where Alfred Webb had been holding his printing office in readiness to strike it off, and whence prominent members of the party had been asking by telegraph for the issuance of something of the kind."

The manifesto that Mr. George speaks of was addressed to the Irish people. It denounced the crime as "cowardly and unprovoked" and hoped that the murderers would be brought to justice. George said in his "Irish World" letter of May 9 that Parnell's "first impulse was immediately to resign his seat, but after consultation with other members he contented himself with sending a message to Mr. Gladstone offering to do this if it would in any way

make the Premier's position easier, but received a reply expressing a hope that he would do no such thing."

That Sunday was a day of confusion. Fearing that the English would rise in violent retaliation against the Irish residents, some counselled the Irish leaders to seek safety in France, and this was the sentiment among most of the guests at the dinner party at A. M. Sullivan's, where Mr. and Mrs. George had been invited. For when Mr. George put the question as to what Davitt should do, Mrs. George was alone in saying that Davitt "should go to Ireland by the first train, and be a leader to the people in this hour of dismay!" An exclamation went around the table, and some one said that if Davitt went there in the then state of passionate feeling he would be killed by the Government supporters. Mrs. George replied: "How could Michael Davitt die better than with his people?" Mr. George said little more than that his wife's words expressed his own feeling; but he never forgot those words, and he repeated them to her fifteen years later when his own supreme moment for decision came.

Contrary to expectation, no disturbances anywhere followed the news of the Phœnix Park murders, though the Government was compelled by public opinion to reverse its intended policy of leniency, and turned the screws of coercion even tighter than they had been at the height of the no-rent agitation. Parnell inside the House of Commons opposed this; yet outside he did all he could to kill the old movement. He had no intention of reviving the Land League in any form. Indeed, the day that Davitt was released from Portland, Parnell had denounced the Ladies' Land League to him, saying that it "must be suppressed" or else he would "leave public life,"¹ and he

¹ "Life of Charles Stewart Parnell," by R. Barry O'Brien, Vol. I, p. 364.

actually did kill it by refusing it money from the general fund. Dillon thought that the land agitation should be carried on, and he went to Parnell and asked: "What are your intentions? Do you mean to carry on the war or to slow down the agitation?" "To slow down the agitation," said Parnell.¹ By October he had succeeded so effectually with the "slowing down" that he organised a new league. It was the old Irish National Land League with "Land" left out. He became president, and Home Rule was made the primary aim. Nothing was heard of the principle of "The Land for the People," with which Michael Davitt had set Ireland aflame. On the contrary, in his first speech under the new auspices Parnell said that "no solution of the land question can be accepted as a final one that does not insure the occupying farmers the right of becoming owners by purchase of the holdings which they now occupy as tenants."

It was the old peasant proprietary cry—a proposal to swap landlords, and to swap largely on the terms of the existing landlords. All thought of the agricultural labourers and of the great mass of the Irish nation who were too poor to buy land—all reference to natural, equal rights to land, was ignored.

But the fact of a Kilmainham treaty and of the surrender of the movement by Parnell to the Gladstone government came out only by degrees. In writing to the "Irish World" George tried to put the best face on the thing, refusing at first to write what he suspected; but in his private letters to Ford he spoke without reserve. On May 17 he wrote: "The whole situation is very bad and perplexing. The Land League in its present form on both sides of the water seems to me to be smashed. But

¹ "Life of Charles Stewart Parnell," by R. Barry O'Brien, Vol. I, p. 365.

the seed has been planted. . . . We who have seen the light must win because much greater forces than ourselves are working with us." Three days later he wrote, "Parnell seems to me to have thrown away the greatest opportunity any Irishman ever had. It is the birthright for the mess of pottage."