

## MR. DILLON'S CASE.

(United Ireland, Dec. 18.)

It is the curse of all legal procedure in Ireland that the law is inevitably and invariably strained. It is directed and administered by partisans, who twist and knot it into meshes to catch and strangle political opponents. Catch them; that is the main thing, it does not really matter how so they are caught. Each party derides those quasi-criminal proceedings when it is out of office, and directs them when it is in. The Attorney-General and his colleagues, on their way down to the Queen's Bench, in company with Kings Edward III., Charles I., and James, to prosecute Mr. Dillon, had to run the gauntlet of Lord Salisbury's biting sarcasm and scathing denunciation. Not four years ago Lord Salisbury had ridiculed and denounced the Liberals for the same course of procedure on which his own law-officers, on Saturday, Monday, and Tuesday last, were engaged. They were trying to catch noble game with the rusty old rat-trap which had been dug out and fitted up by predecessors in office. Not merely did they adopt a mean expedient, but they worked it meanly. Mr. Dillon was denied the liberty of defence to which the meanest criminal is entitled. The case of the most vital importance to the nation was conducted after the fashion of an unscrupulous attorney in the Petty Sessions Court. The morals of the law-officers of the Crown were the morals of the midnight poacher—bag your bird anyhow. It doesn't matter about the means, provided he is bagged. Mr. Holmes seemed almost to have a double identity in the progress of his opening statement. His figure seemed to swell and his voice deepen as he read to the breathless court the magnificent appeals of Mr. Dillon to his fellow-countrymen who looked to him for light and guidance—his earnest appeals to them to drop once and for all the ignoble weapons of midnight violence and secret crime, and trust for the future the protection of themselves, their wives and families to the nobler defence of mutual good faith and honest self-reliance. Some spark of manhood and patriotism hidden far down in the inner conscience of the Attorney-General seemed to be lighted as he poured out these splendid speeches of the pure-souled patriot with a declamation not altogether unworthy of the subject. But he relapsed at once into the small, narrow-minded, keen-witted Crown Prosecutor when he dropped from the region of exalted eloquence, into which for a moment he had soared on borrowed wings, down to the dull, prosy platitudes about the "majesty of the law, the criminality of agitation, and the sacred duty of cheerful submission to merciless oppression." We are so dead sick of those silly sophisms here in Ireland. There is no Irishman that has earned a place in the affectionate remembrance of his people to whom they have not been addressed in his day. Let the admirers of O'Connell, if there be any such who hold aloof from the present agitation, remember that by the same class O'Connell was attacked, maligned, prosecuted, and persecuted. He, too, had to submit to the virulent invective of the law-officers, and the solemn condemnation of the judges when, in his day, he attempted to raise his fellow-countrymen from their condition of hopeless, constantly-recurring misery in which they were plunged. Dan O'Connell has stood where John Dillon stood on substantially the same charge. The case against Mr. Dillon was narrowed down to the speeches he had himself delivered. By those speeches he may be well content to stand or fall. The Attorney-General proclaimed them powerful and dangerous. So they were—powerful in the cause of justice and freedom; dangerous, deadly dangerous, to fraud and to oppression. He declared that the speeches were seditious, that they incited to a criminal conspiracy; that everyone who followed the advice of Mr. Dillon was liable to an indictment. Why was no man indicted? Why was the only man sought to be made liable dragged by the dead hand of King Edward III. before a prejudiced tribunal which, as part of the Privy Council, directed the prosecution, and precluded the accused from giving evidence in his own defence? The Plan of Campaign the Attorney-General considers illegal. He had never hesitated in that opinion. Methinks the Attorney-General doth protest too much. His own written words on the subject have stared him in the face in every newspaper we might almost say in the Three Kingdoms. Let him attempt if he dare to explain or to deny them, "I do not see how the Executive can interfere." The first law officer of the Crown does not see how the Executive, of which he is a member, can interfere with a "criminal conspiracy." Is that the opinion that, upon better advice, Mr. Holmes is prepared to deliver? Mr. Dillon had been guilty of sedition—of treason-felony. Again, why was he not tried? He had set class against class. He had severed the bonds of mutual respect and affection, which had heretofore existed between the rackrenting landlord and evicted tenant. This charge, as Mr. Healy pointed out, was copied *verbatim* from the celebrated twentieth count in the indictment against Mr. Parnell—the count, which was dropped the moment evidence was admitted to disprove it, and which is now revived when evidence is excluded. Of the Solicitor-General's performance in the case it is unnecessary to speak. With forcible feebleness he reiterated the points of the Attorney-General. His voice and manner suggested his brother, but it was a hollow and delusive resemblance, and reminded one throughout of the single pungent sentence with which he damned his maiden speech: "The voice was indeed the voice of Edward, but the platitudes were the platitudes of John." We shrunk from any criticism of the speech of Mr. Dillon in which cogent reasoning and noble sentiment were equally conspicuous. He proved that the crime with which he was charged was the attempt to save an admittedly impoverished people from absolute starvation. He showed that Sir Michael Hicks-Beach and General Buller were only less criminal than himself because they had failed in the work of mercy which he hoped to accomplish. The charge against Mr. Dillon is that he has encouraged the tenants in their refusal to fulfil their contracts. Lord Salisbury, with a brutal candour all his own, defined the nature of the tenant's contract.

"Their obligation," he says, "is this—they are bound either to pay their rent or surrender their land (loud cheers). It is not a simple obligation, it is an alternative obligation—they are bound to do one or the other, and to say that they cannot fulfil their obligation is obviously incorrect. If they cannot fulfil one side of the obligation, they can the other."

Sir James Caird has reported, and the *Times* endorses the report, that 538,000 tenants in Ireland can pay no rent at all. How many find it impossible to pay their full rent it would be impossible to estimate. Lord Salisbury's doctrine is that these 538,000, say two millions of people all told, should surrender the homes and means of livelihood which their own industry has created; should subject themselves, their wives and families, to utter ruin, misery, and death, in the cheerful fulfilment of a contract they never made, to which, at most, their poverty and not their will consented. The land should be suffered to pass out of cultivation; the community should be ruined rather than a few thousand aristocratic rack-renters, in London and elsewhere, should be asked to bate one jot of their legal rights. This is an aristocratic view of the situation with a vengeance. This is the view that the Liberals of England are invited to endorse. This is the view which Mr. Dillon, with all the sustained fervour of his nature, disclaims and denounces. Everyone knew the result of the application beforehand. The application was made in the Queen's Bench because the result could be there foretold with the same certainty as a spring-tide or a new moon. The Privy Councillors on the Bench were truly not going to make fools of the same Privy Councillors who in the Castle directed the prosecution. It was a pitiable spectacle to see Judge O'Brien attempt to pose as a Bhadramantus and prate about the "unflinching discharge of his duty." The rejected and renegade Home Ruler paraded himself as the self-sacrificing martyr to duty at a salary of £3,500 a year. If he have no sense of shame, a sense of humour ought to have been sufficient to deter him from the miserable display. The most startling thing in the whole startling proceeding was the terms in which the judges felt themselves constrained to speak of their victim. "As to the objects and motives of Mr. Dillon," Judge Johnston declared, "no one can entertain the smallest doubt, and it is because of his high position and the purity and earnestness of his intentions I consider it a case which should be dealt with in the highest court." He might have added that it was only in the highest court that evidence for the defence could be excluded. Even Judge O'Brien was compelled to bear unwilling testimony to "the fervour and missionary zeal and the unquestioned purity of motive which seemed to have animated the speaker." It was by his speeches alone those men knew Mr. Dillon. It was for his speeches they praised him. It was for his speeches they tried him, and in the same breath and for the same reason they pronounced him "a fervent and pure-minded missionary, whose motives were above suspicion," and a person of evil fame, to be ranked with night-walkers and petty pilferers, and compelled to give bail for his good behaviour. The roar of applause with which Mr. Dillon was greeted on his exit from court, his triumphal progress through the metropolis and the country is the best answer to the slanderous charge.

## INVERCARGILL CATHOLIC TEMPERANCE SOCIETY.

A TEA meeting in connection with the above-named association, was held in the boys' school, Liddle street, on Thursday evening, 3rd inst., and came off very successfully. The Rev. Father McEnroe, S.J. presided, and the tables, which were very tastefully decorated with most beautiful flowers, and heavily laden with the choicest eatables of every description, wore a very enticing and charming appearance. After justice had been done to the good things provided, a very entertaining programme was gone through. As every performer played his or her part in an excellent and creditable style, it is needless for me to attach high-sounding words of praise to each item. The contributors were:—Convent school girls, opening chorus; Mrs. Gavin, song; Mrs. McGrath, song; Mr. D. Bradley, recitation; Mr. O'Connor, address; Mrs. McGrath and Miss Butler, duet; Mr. M. Gavin, song; Mr. J. Reid, recitation; Master E. Reid, recitation; Mr. J. McGrath, song; Mr. P. Reid, recitation; convent school children, closing chorus. Of these, Messrs. McGrath and Gavin had each to submit to an encore. Mesdames Wills and Dalton and Misses Hughes and Shepherd assisted at the tables, and to them, together with Mr. P. Reid, was mainly due the praiseworthy manner in which everything in connection with the entertainment was carried out. After the programme had been gone through, the Rev. Chairman expressed his satisfaction at seeing so many present, who, he was sure, had thoroughly enjoyed themselves. He thanked those who had taken part in making the meeting an enjoyable and successful one, and complimented them on the result they had achieved. After this the vast assemblage dispersed, having spent a very happy evening.

SCRIPTOR.

Invercargill, Feb. 5, 1887.

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The *North German Gazette*, Prince Bismarck's organ, publishes the text of an allocation addressed to Mgr. Klein, the new Bishop of Limburg, on the occasion of his official reception at the Vatican. The Pope dwelt especially upon the necessity of showing a spirit of gentleness and moderation towards Protestants, recommending the new bishop to cultivate good relations with the royal authorities also, and expressing the hope of a speedy and final reconciliation between the Holy See and Prussia.

Mr. J. W. Dunne, J. P., Queen's County, is at once a landlord and a tenant, and the fact that his being a landlord does not blind him to the necessity which exists for a reduction of rents speaks for his good sense. Mr. Dunne told the Land Commissioners last week that he is a member of the committee of Lord Lansdowne's tenants who have adopted the "Plan of Campaign," and will not pay unless they get a reduction of 20 per cent. We like Mr. Dunne's pluck.—*Dublin Freeman, Dec. 4.*