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## Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

THE  
HON. DAVID  
PLUNKET.

AS we might have expected, in the present struggle, the hereditary and monstrous enemies of the Irish race, the "anti-Irish Irishmen" who have always taken so large a part in oppressing and belying their fellow-countrymen, have not been backward, but in all things true to the traditions of their class. The other day, for example, we saw Lord Plunket lending his influence in the house of Lords to throw out a measure intended to benefit the people in question, and now we find his brother, the Hon. David Plunket, with a similar purpose, addressing a meeting of Conservative working-men at Chesterfield. Mr. Plunket, it would seem, had been lately spending some time at the residence of Lord Ardilaun, at the head of Lough Corrib, a place in the immediate neighbourhood of these bleak hills above Lough Mask where, some twenty years ago, the evictions of Partry took place—carried out by the orders of the then Bishop of Tuam, Mr. Plunket's uncle, and under the inspection of that Right Reverend nobleman's honourable daughters, who, well cloaked and booted against the harshness of the weather, stood by without a tremor, while a whole village full of people, the aged, the sick, the infant, all together, were ruthlessly flung out beneath the wintry sky. And within a day's drive, moreover, lie the Balla estates of Mr. Plunket's cousin, Sir Robert Blosse Lynch, on whose lands the last few months have witnessed some of the most heartless evictions of the times. Mr. Plunket, then, claims to know something of the neighbourhood referred to, and there is no doubt but that, in return, the neighbourhood has a good right to own an acquaintanceship, at least, with this honourable gentleman's kith and kin—their fame, as it may be seen, has even "gone out to the ends of the earth," and we have every reason to believe it still abides intact at home. But to come to Mr. Plunket's speech: amongst other things, he spoke as follows:—I have spent the greater part of the last three months in a house which is situate on the borders of the counties of Mayo and Galway, and belongs to one of the most popular landowners in that province, and when I say that Lord Mountmorres met his terrible fate within two miles of that house, that I myself saw the blood of the murdered man while it still curdled in a pool upon the high road; when I tell you that the now famous farm of Captain Boycott lies but a couple of miles in another direction, and that I have had frequent interviews with Captain Boycott, both before and after the Protestant boys came gallantly to his assistance, you will admit that I must know something of the very centre of disturbance." A man, may, nevertheless, have been in the very centre of disturbance without having learned in the slightest degree to appreciate the cause of the disturbance. When a man who, like Mr. Plunket, belongs to a family noted for an almost insane pride, and which has been the very creature of the existing evil condition of Ireland, sits in judgment upon it, it would almost take a miracle to open his eyes. Nothing of this kind, however, has been wrought in the present instance, and Mr. Plunket remains blinded by his self-importance and the interests of the parasitical class to which he so especially belongs. Meantime let us mark his sensational allusion to the blood of Lord Mountmorres—by no means proved to have been shed in the agrarian cause, but if anything rather the contrary—and let us note, again, his adroit appeal to the "no-popey" sentiment in his reference to the Orangemen, or as he calls them, Captain Boycott's "Protestant boys,"—whose "gallantry" nevertheless, the Captain seems so little to have recognised; for, said he to Mr. Gladstone, twelve labourers whom he might have himself obtained would have been sufficient for his purposes, and it was none of his needs that brought a whole army marching into Mayo. The "Protestant boys" made fools of themselves, and so their ungrateful client has given them to understand. Mr. Plunket, then, goes on to say that all the horrors reported from the district have been true, and he adds, "As an Irishman, I make that admission with shame and sorrow." It is, rather, the shame and sorrow of Ireland that such men as this may call themselves Irishmen. They are, like the young of the pelican, a monstrous brood that, as it were, live and thrive upon

the life-blood of their father-land. They bear to their fellow-countrymen the same relationship that the promoted negro slave, who was ready at the bidding of his master to whip a fellow-slave to death, bore to his brethren in bondage. They are the shame of Ireland, and the product of her centuries of servitude; men without a country, the creatures of tyranny, and incarnations of selfishness, in all its most exaggerated forms. Their word is worse than worthless. But Mr. Plunket complains that the people he speaks of have been spoiled; if left to themselves, he says, they would have continued well-mannered and submissive. They still would have raised their hats to "his honour," and borne with patience such treatment as we have already described, inflicted on them by the order and under the un pitying eyes of Mr. Plunket's own nearest and most tender relatives. They would have continued to bear, almost without a murmur, the being cast with all their sick, their old, and young, out upon the road whenever it suited the convenience of their landlords. Mr. Plunket, however, is apologetic on behalf of these people. "I have lived among them," he says "before the Land League was invented, before they were possessed by that agitation as men were formerly possessed by devils. I have seen them good-humoured and light hearted, patient under conditions of life that were often hard and difficult enough; I have known them faithful to their employers, kindly with their landlords, honest to their engagements, and grateful for kindness. Such were their characters and such their habits before the Land Leaguers came among them; and if you now see in them the opposites of all those virtues, I beg you to consider with what manner of influences they have been plied." It would, nevertheless, be necessary, rather to apologise for a people so intensely servile, so grovelling, and altogether spiritless, as to continue content with slavery and misery when once the word of hope that deliverance was possible had been spoken amongst them. Mr. Plunket, who is not ignorant, even though he be a bigot and a sycophant, must know that the Irish people have never been content, that the manliness has never been wholly crushed out of them, and that at any time it has only required some one to raise his voice in their defence in order to secure their hearty support and adherence. Had he the heart of a man, and not that of the lowest of all creatures upon earth, the one that to fill its own belly is ready to outrage all the common rights and feelings of humanity, he would side with his fellow-countrymen in their struggle, and seek for a true importance by joining in their battle rather than by the restitution of the "hat worship" that seems to have been so dear to his soul, and so necessary to remind him of the patent of cheap nobility, that has glorified his otherwise by no means noble house.

Among the other accusations brought by the Hon. GREEED AND David Plunket against the Land League, he says AMBITION. they "called up greed and ambition" in the peasantry. Let us see, then, in what this "greed and ambition" consist. Let us see what it is the peasantry desire to gain, or rather, what it is that they seek to be delivered from, for we fancy that, for the present at least, their "greed and ambition," for the most part, take this negative character. A stranger, then, in Ireland, in the reign of Elizabeth could describe the condition of the people as reduced beneath that of the very beasts of the field. To-day, a stranger there can still tell us that, not in all the world—not in India nor China, not in Anatolia nor Bulgaria, is anything to be found that equals the misery of the peasantry in question. The state of the Irish, he says, "is worse than that of any people in the world, let alone Europe." And again, he tells the English public, to whom he writes through the columns of the *Times*:—"These people are made as we are—patient beyond belief, loyal, but, at the same time, broken spirited and desperate; living on the verge of starvation in places in which we would not keep our cattle." It is that distinguished officer, Colonel Gordon, whose fame in connection with his services in China and Egypt is world-wide, who has spoken thus, and all honour to him for it. But other visitors to Ireland had already told us the same thing. Mr. James Redpath, for example, is a gentleman also of Scottish origin, and we have all seen the pictures he has drawn for us. Nor, were those pictures exaggerated, we have seen nothing described by him the equal at least of which we have not looked upon with our own eyes. It is now more than thirty years since the worst days of the great famine passed away, but those