

Madden he probably would not have gone home alive on that occasion. And the reason for this detestation is not far to seek. Mr. Bence Jones seems to combine in himself all those qualities which have provoked the present crisis. As a harsh landlord he seems to hold the first place. He has been an exterminator on a large scale. He himself farms a thousand acres, which contained the homesteads of many a happy family who are now scattered to the ends of the earth. He has been a rackrenting landlord. His tenants pay the highest rents of any in the south of Ireland, and we all know that their heads are bowed down and their spirits depressed under the hard yoke of his rackrents. The rules of his estate are the worst of their class. Whenever a tenant dies, his successor, son, wife, or brother, must pay an increase of rent, sometimes to the extent of nearly 100 per cent. When poor Michael White, of Cloheen, died a few years ago, he raised the rent on Mrs. White from £50 to £80. When Jatrack Hayes died, and for many years before his death, Mr. Bence Jones did not fail to send messengers to inquire whether he had as yet died. He raised the rent on the farm, where he had built a dwelling-house and out-offices at a cost of £300, from 25s to £2 an acre, and insisted, on threat of eviction, that he should take a lease of 31 years, which confiscated the improvements. It is only the other day—when Mrs. Walsh, of Ballinscarthy, died—that he sent for her son, and asked him to consent to an increase of £15 a year. I mentioned this latter fact only yesterday to a gentleman who has two thousand a year landed property in this county, who lately forgave his tenants a half year's rent, though they held their farms for the mere fraction over Griffith's valuation, and who offered them leases for one hundred years at the present rents, consenting to pay half of all rates. When I told him this fact he said, "*Quem deus vult perdere prius dementat*"—"When the gods wish to destroy one they take away his senses." I cannot go through the history of all his farms, nor is it necessary, for they have all nearly the same tale to tell, and in this case we may well act on the principle "*Ex uno disce omnes*." Take, then, that farm which has been vacant for more than a twelvemonth, and in which I lately saw one of the most luxuriant crops of thistles and dockleaves that it has ever been my lot to witness. The farm consists of about twenty acres, and is within a short distance of the town. The valuation is 10s and 6d an acre. It was held some years since by a man named Dempsey at 17s 6d an acre. On Dempsey's death, according to the rules of the estate, the rent was raised to £2 an acre. Mrs. Dempsey, unable to pay the increased rent, fled the farm, and it was given to Holtsbaum. He too fled, and the farm passed on to Bateman. Bateman failed, leaving a year's rent unpaid, and it was taken by M'Carthy. M'Carthy soon failed, carrying with him the year's rent unpaid, and there since it lies. In this populous district, where there is quite a mania, where the goodwill of a farm held under Lord Shannon will bring twelve or fourteen years' purchase, there it lies, unoccupied, unsought for, with quite a thicket of thistles, and by no means unknown to the cattle of tinkers and trespassers. Mr. Bence Jones never gave a lease before 1870. Since that time he has insisted that those tenants who had largely improved their farms should take leases for thirty-one years ingeniously contrived to make the Act of 1870 a dead letter. Being thus notoriously an exterminating, rackrenting, rent-raising, confiscating landlord, how is it any wonder that the tenants should view him in the light illustrated in the following anecdote, which a Cork gentleman lately told me? He asked a tenant of Mr. Bence Jones who was his landlord. The tenant answered, in Irish, *An diabhoil*—Satan. I had this from the gentleman's own lips, and he is alive to bear witness of it. But it is not only as a landlord that he is regarded as harsh and despotic. Take one of the last cases in which he adjudicated as a magistrate on the bench. He fined Cornelius Donovan £5 for selling a glass of beer on a Sunday, and got the fine recorded on the license. Mr. Beecher, the only other magistrate present—a highly educated gentleman and a good landlord—dissented, but Mr. Bence Jones would not listen to his remonstrances. On an appeal, Donovan's fine was reduced to a minimum and was not recorded on the license. Look at Mr. Jones's action last year, when the people were threatened with famine: look at his action last year when the people were threatened. He went over to England, denied the existence of distress in the district, and, on his return home, sought to put a stop to the relief works, which had kept many families in town from either dying of starvation or being thrown on the rates. Then look at the way he writes of himself—of Ireland. He is fond of posing himself before an English audience, in the pages of *Macmillan*, as the son of a gay young officer, but he is unparagonably silent about his grandfather. Billy Jones, the well-known Town Clerk of Cork city when Cork was a close corporation. (Cheers and laughter.) How he writes about Ireland—he loudly expresses his contempt for his brother magistrates on the bench, accuses Irishmen of slovenliness, idleness, drunkenness, and dirt, and charges them, especially the clergymen of the Disestablished Church, with being nothing better than liars: and yet the man who speaks in this way wrote to the *Times* a few weeks ago that potatoes were being sold this year in Ireland for about two pence per stone—which is about as true as if he said that all Irishmen are about four feet in height—and that he loses £800 a year in improving his tenants' farms—which is about as true as that he gives £800 a year to the poor of this town; and we know on Tuesday last, when there was question of the baronial guarantee for the railway, Mr. Wright, the eminent solicitor—who, if anyone, knows Mr. Bence Jones very well—stated in a full court, and more than once, that Mr. Bence Jones was a liar. He styles himself, in his late diatribe against Ireland, as a man who has tried to do his duty. Do his duty! Granted. But Cromwell did his duty at Drogheda; Captain Campbell did his duty at Glencoe; Governor Eyre did his duty in Jamaica; and I have no objection that he should go down to posterity with those worthies in the category of men who did their duty. If it be a duty to depopulate the country he certainly has done his part, and his last article tells us that he is prepared to do more. As we read in Holy Writ that the heart of Pharaoh was hardened not to let the people go, so assuredly Mr. Bence Jones's heart is hardened not to allow the people stay. If it be a duty to be well versed in the

business of rack-renting he certainly has done his part, for Mr. Bence Jones has raised rack-renting to the level of a science. He is no chimerical operator. He is by no means in a hurry. His selfishness is not confined to the present. He looks far into the future. He takes a pleasure in dealing with a rich tenant who comes into his hands as a cat might play with a mouse; he will praise him for his honesty and industry; he will encourage him to make improvements; he will ask after his family; and then, when the proper time has come, down Mr. Bence Jones swoops with an increase of rent which will have confiscated all that the tenant possesses, and will make himself and his family for ever his slaves. "There is no tenant-right on my estates," "I can deal with my farms," he said to a clergyman, "as with any other chattels." That was said in reference to a farm held by Edward Lucy, in Castlelisky, in this parish. When the farm came into Mr. Jones's possession, he began by asking an increase of 6s. per acre, saying that on the death of Edward Lucy, who was then advanced in life, he would add at least another 6s. per acre. Lucy gave up the farm and died of a broken heart. Such being the facts about Mr. Bence Jones, how can we be surprised that in the present excited state of the country even these notices, which we strongly condemn, should be posted? But whilst we condemn outrages or threats of outrage on Mr. Bence Jones or his bullocks, we loudly applaud the determination of his tenants to refuse paying their rackrents. Too long have they been slaves. Now is their time to assert their freedom. If, according to the high authority of the Bishop of Ossory, rackrenting landlords are bound to make restitution, I would ask is Mr. Bence Jones more entitled to get than to give? In what measure he meted to others in the days of his power, after that measure shall it be meted to him to-day. The applause of the county, of the entire country, shall follow his tenants asserting their independence. The hearts of many a brave exile in New York and New Zealand will throb within them with joy when they read that the whirligig of time has brought about its revenge, and money in thousands of pounds shall not be wanting if necessary to sustain them in the struggle against one who was so long such a despot in his sphere, but whose domination is fast passing away (immense cheering). The League then made arrangements about the monster meeting which is to be held at Ballinascorthy, near Mr. Bence Jones's property, at which it is expected there will be 20,000 persons present.

THE DUKE OF LEINSTER AND HIS TENANTRY.

ON Saturday afternoon, December 18, his Grace the Duke of Leinster received at the estate office, 30 Lower Dominick street, a deputation of the tenantry on his Athy and Castledermot estates. Mr. C. R. Hamilton, his Grace's agent, was present during the interview, the object of which was to present a memorial agreed to at a meeting of the tenantry, held at Athy on Tuesday last, and at which the following resolutions were adopted:—

"That the rent, taxes, losses and expenses incident to farming have left the occupier worse off for the last three or four years than he was, and that in view of the competition with foreign countries, we believe that the rents hitherto paid for land cannot continue with successful farming.

"That this meeting would respectfully ask his Grace to make such permanent abatement in his rents as will enable the tenants to repair their past losses and meet the contingencies of the future.

"That a deputation be appointed to meet his Grace, and represent to him the views of this meeting in their requirements for a reduction of rent.

"That in the event of his Grace refusing to accede to the wishes of the deputation, they be authorised to request his Grace's acceptance of Griffith's valuation, together with that percentage of money borrowed from the Board of Works for improvements in the farms, pending the settlement of the land question in Parliament.

"That the following gentlemen be appointed as a deputation to wait on his Grace:—James Leahy, M.P.; Alexander Duncan, Thomas Flewman, Thomas Orford, John Gaunon, P. J. O'Kelly, George Low, M. J. Minchin (Secretary)."

Mr. Duncan introduced the deputation, and read the memorial.

The Duke of Leinster, having expressed his pleasure at meeting the deputation, said that he understood that the object of the deputation was to impress on him the necessity of accepting Griffith's valuation as the rent of the holdings in the Athy district. He did not consider Griffith's valuation as at all a correct standard by which they could arrive at a settlement of the present question of rent. The grass lands, for example, were very productive, and Griffith's valuation, as applied to them, was far and away below the real value.

Mr. Duncan said the case of the tenants of his Grace at Maynooth and Kildare was quite different from that of the tenants of the Athy district. The latter was an agricultural and not a grazing district, and barley had in recent years, and especially last year, been a very unproductive crop.

The Duke of Leinster said he had offered 10 per cent. reduction to the tenants of holdings whose valuations were under £50. He was now prepared to extend the offer to all tenants. He himself had felt the pinch of the times; his estate, he should add, was encumbered to the extent of about a quarter of a million of money. He was of opinion that the smaller tenants had suffered more severely than the large ones.

Mr. Low said that, on the contrary, the large tenants had suffered in a far greater ratio than the small farmers. The labour and expense of tillage farms was, moreover, much greater than that of grass farms. The failure of Mr. Mechi, just announced, showed the presence of the agricultural depression on men having all the appliances that skill and capital could command.

The Duke of Leinster said that Mr. Mechi was rather an experimental than a practical agriculturalist. He was also rather inclined to attribute Mr. Mechi's failure to trade depression.

Mr. Low said that from his own experience he was satisfied that Mr. Mechi could not have borne up even until now but for other sources of income.