

THE NO-RENT MANIFESTO.

(Glasgow correspondence of the *Nation*.)

At the recent meeting in the grand National Hall, Mr. Ferguson enunciated some views on the question, which, as they have not been hitherto noticed or reported, may be of interest in view of the forthcoming debate. He pointed out how the Government had not dared to say that it was illegal for a man to advise another not to pay rent until certain conditions had been fulfilled, such advice being both legal and moral, and being given daily. Earl Fitzwilliam, in the Reform agitation, advised a run upon the Bank of England, and Earl Russell advised the people to strike against the taxes until reform was conceded. His (Mr. Ferguson's) disagreement with the no-rent manifesto was simply that it was inexpedient. If such a move had been desirable, a year or so should have been spent in educating the people up to the doctrine before the strike was declared, as in the case of Griffith's valuation, when it took the League nearly two years to educate the people into making their demand. The Government declares it illegal to intimidate men against paying rent. No Government can tolerate intimidation, and Mr. Ferguson holds it to be, as he always held it, an immoral as well as an illegal weapon. By careful education in the true principles of the question the agricultural classes could have been united to do what Nassau Senior, a Government man, more than 20 years ago said would settle the question—viz., to quietly, legally, and firmly declare against all rent until the necessary reforms which would enable them to live were conceded. But a better course than this could have been adopted, and that is—the Land Bill having become law, it should have been utilised, not by quietly settling down into the erroneous belief that the Bill is a permanent or even present settlement. The League could have fairly put it before the world that in three years it had carried a bill which contained principles which justified its existence and future action, as well as principles which would benefit the agricultural classes by millions sterling annually. With the prestige of this work it could have then pointed out the artificial and unscientific character of the Bill. A court to regulate rent is as absurd as attempts made on the Continent to fix the price of beef, and have it sold without bone. Now, in fact, if a sixth of the farmers of Ireland went into the court, all the barristers in the country, aided by all the sub-commissioners who could reasonably be appointed, would not in five years have got over half the cases, and in the meantime if the farmers refuse to pay, as they reasonably could, until the fair rent was fixed—by lodging the money in the court or offering to do so—half the landlords of Ireland would be sold off by their creditors, or would sell off very cheap themselves, and this would be "no rent" with a vengeance. All this the League could have pointed out clearly enough as the consequence of an artificial bill which went right in the teeth of economic science, and of which the Duke of Argyll says:—"It is a barbarous enactment against science, and the best that can be hoped it will do is speedily to complete its own death and burial." Mr. Ferguson does not wish to be wise after the event. Those who heard him years ago will recognise the sentiments. He admits that the cowardly and unstatesmanlike arrest of Parnell and the proclamation of the League were enough to make bold and brave men take the course that was taken; still, like the charge at Balaclava, he declares, "it may have been beautiful and magnificent—but then, it was not war." To win the game is the object of the League. We must now close our ranks, and, without discord, or dissension, or talking about the past, see what course is to be taken for the future. If the expression of opinion in Ireland is to be followed by arrest and imprisonment, then it is necessary that a number of meetings be arranged, and that men whose moderation in the past could give no ground for their arrest shall take their places at those meetings and discuss the questions as freely as in England, and if arrested they will break the teeth of persecution—just as the arrest of Bunyan and the Nonconformists in Puritan times, and Southwell, Carlisle, and others in radical times did in England.

WORD FROM KILMAINHAM.

The *Freeman* of Monday, November 7, says:—

On Saturday Mr. Parnell was visited by Judge Little and Mr. George Delaney, two prominent members of the Home Rule League. The country will be glad to hear that Mr. Parnell has almost entirely recovered from his recent sudden and severe illness. He is, however, not so strong as when he entered prison, and the changed conditions of his life are producing visible effects. Mr. Parnell, we learn, entered freely into conversation with his visitors. The rule that Land League policy and business should not be discussed was, of course, rigorously observed, but the workings of the Land Act and the decisions of the Sub-Commissioners were unreservedly discussed.

We understand that in reply to the question what he thought of the Belfast and Castleblayney judgments,

Mr. Parnell stated that the reductions of rent made by the Sub-Commissioners agree with the estimate he had formed—namely, that rents in Ulster should be reduced to Griffith's valuation. This in substance seemed to be the view of the Sub-Commissioners so far, and Mr. Parnell believes that as a consequence large numbers of the Northern tenants will resort to the Land Court.

"What about the South?" was asked.

Mr. Parnell replied—"I believe the reductions in the South will probably not be as large as in the North, and I fear will not satisfy the tenants who appeal to the court. That at all events is my opinion."

Asked how he thought the reduction of rents generally to Griffith's valuation would affect the landlords,

Mr. Parnell said he thought the effect would be to drive many of the landowners into actual bankruptcy, while others would be reduced to great extremity. The bulk of the landlords had mortgages, charges, and claims upon their estates, reaching in the aggregate to

sums equal to the rental of the Government valuation, and when the actual rental was lessened to that standard a state of things would ensue which would compel the Government to adopt the plan of buying out the landlords, or else they would be confronted with a claim for compensation for the landlords, whose living, in fact, depends upon their exaction of rackrents above the Government valuation. The soundness of the policy of land reform based upon the transformation of tenants into proprietors would then become plain even to the most inveterate opponents. Reference having been made to the mass of business now before the Land Commission, Mr. Parnell expressed his conviction that the appointment of six additional sub-commissioners would not remove the block. "It should not be forgotten," Mr. Parnell added, "that an enormous amount of money will be spent in law costs if the Land Court is invoked to the extent that you (the visitors) appear to believe. You say that 500,000 tenants will require to have a fair rent fixed. If they go to the court the cost upon each will be at least some pounds, and millions will thus go into the pockets of the lawyers."

Replying to the observation that such an expenditure upon costs would hardly be made by the tenants.

Mr. Parnell agreed in that view, and said it was probable that a great number of tenants would arrange the rent question with their landlords instead of going to law. In connection with the resort to the Land Court, the furtherance of appeals and defraying of costs, all the advantages, the hon. gentleman felt, lay with the landlord party, who had organised their power and resources for the business, while the tenantry were without any organisation.

Passing from the topic of the Land Court,

Mr. Parnell, answering an interrogation as to the dietary supplied to the political prisoners, made this statement—"The cost of maintaining the suspects now in jail through the country is not less than £400 per week. This is a heavy burden upon the people, and we are now considering whether we shall not all in a little time content ourselves with the prison fare allowed by the Government while we remain in prison."

In reference to the above report the following telegram from Mr. Parnell from Kilmainham appeared in Tuesday's *Freeman*:—

The report published in this morning's *Freeman* purporting to give an account of an interview with me here on Saturday, is in almost every respect inaccurate and misleading, and altogether misrepresents my view of the recent decisions of Mr. Gladstone's sub-commissioners.

The *Freeman* adds:—

In connection with the hon. gentleman's telegram, we feel bound to state that the particulars of the interview were communicated by one of Mr. Parnell's visitors, and the print gives accurately the version supplied to us.

A DASTARDLY WAR.

(From the *Dublin Freeman*)

WAR upon woman is not what might be regarded by wise men as the most suitable and appropriate fact to characterise the reign of a woman. However, Queen Victoria reigns, and others govern. But, notwithstanding that she is actually free of responsibility in the matter, and probably quite ignorant of the extent to which the warfare upon women goes in Ireland, there is no doubt that history will enumerate it as one of those curious paradoxes which sometimes scandalise man's sense of the fitness of things that (under the reign of a woman) women have been bullied and bayoneted in Ireland.

If it were possible to expect any calm and sagacious reflection from those who are in authority in this country it might be put to them forcibly whether they consider they are really doing credit to their Sovereign by sanctioning conduct which will leave a stigma upon her reign so peculiar in its kind as to be indelible. We do not ask them to consider the country, nor the feelings of its inhabitants; we do not ask them to bethink themselves that there are acts which may be rough yet soon forgotten, and acts which are paltry which remain for generations in the memory to envenom every wound. Throughout the island, in various widely severed districts, acts of this kind have been committed and are being perpetrated than which nothing can be more conflicting with the spirit of the Constitution, nothing more outrageous to the principles of freedom, nothing more certain to perpetuate the shame and scandal of petty misrule.

The revelations of the Belmullet inquiry are beyond comment, for comment would be poor and pale side by side with the dreadful facts elicited at the inquest. That armed men, belonging to any force whatever, could bring themselves under circumstances of no real peril to fire into a fleeing mob of unarmed peasants, women and men, boys and girls; that some of these armed troops should have sunk to such a slough of cruel cowardice as to stab women to death who were hastening from them to their wretched homes—these are revelations which recall the barbarities of a past era, and stamp with enduring shame the conduct of all concerned. But the matter does not rest with revelations. When offences such as these are discovered, which revolt the moral sense of mankind and evoke instant condemnation from all just-judging men, the first question thought of must necessarily be the finding out of the offenders and the punishment of the culprits. If such things are frankly begun and honourably executed, the memory of the red stain would be obliterated by the passage of Justice. But if, on the contrary, attempts be made to hush the matter up, to condone the conduct of the criminals, to screen and conceal the designated culprits from the avenging sword of outraged Law, then, indeed, shall the crimson stain be made ineradicable, widened, broadened, and deepened, so as to disserve the nations. It is with regret that we confess to seeing no immediate prospect of such a vindication of justice as that which is so much required.

General Steel is commander-in-chief in Ireland. Steel is a significant name.