

A LETTER TO THE EARL OF PEMBROKE.

(From the *Labourers' Chronicle*.)

KING HENRY VIII. resolved to confiscate the property held by the abbays and monasteries. According to Sir Edward Cole, an eminent authority, Parliament was informed that if it would pass an act for the purpose the proceeds should go towards filling the King's treasury and relieving his subjects of taxation, for he promised that he would take care that the ancient revenues of the monastic houses should never be converted to private uses. Parliament took the King at his word, but no sooner had it passed the required act than King Henry began to distribute the abbey lands right and left among his courtiers. There is hardly an acre in Wiltshire which you own but was intended by Parliament to relieve the burden of taxation.

Amongst the courtiers who obtained grants of Church lands from the King was William Herbert, his slice being Wilton Abbey. I suppose that you are aware that Wilton Abbey was one of the most ancient monastic houses in the kingdom. It was founded more than a thousand years ago by King Egbert, and was re-constituted by Alfred the Great. It is upon the site of Wilton Abbey that Wilton House—your house—is built. As for the lands belonging to the Abbey, they included the manors of Avon Washerae, North Burcombe, Ditchampton, Wily, Little Langford, South Newton, Little Wishford, Stoford, Barden's Ball, Ugford, Chilhampton, Swallowcliffe, Forant, Chilmark, Berwick, St. John, Aston, Broadchalke, etc., with lands at Whiteparish and other places. This certainly was a royal gift indeed, save that in making it King Henry broke faith with his Parliament.

The Herberts afterwards bought Little Langford and Fiamstone, and sundry lands in three other parishes, and acquired Stoke Verdon by marriage; but with these exceptions your lordship's 39,600 acres are derived from a grant of the King for which not a single penny was paid. As was promised to Parliament, these lands ought to have gone to relieve our taxes, but the Herberts stepped in and swallowed the whole. And this was not all. There were no less than nine rectories which belonged to Wilton Abbey; the Herberts came in for the great tithes of these rectories, and for the right of appointing the vicars, which they hold to the present day. What a nice thing it is to be the descendant of a courtier!

At the time when William Herbert came into possession of the Wilton Abbey lands their estimated value was £652; your Wiltshire rent-roll is now £43,000. Knock off £13,000 for what your family has acquired by purchase and marriage (and that is a very liberal estimate), and there remains £30,000 a year derived from King Henry's fraudulent grant. When King Henry died he left a son—a mere boy—and your ancestor became a member of his Government.

The oppressive conduct of the nobles goaded the people of the West of England into a rebellion which he helped to put down. To repay the cost, Herbert and his colleagues put a quantity of bad money into circulation, His share of the transaction amounting to £7,000, a much greater sum of money in those days than in these. His next step was to get himself created Earl of Pembroke by the boy-king. During Edward's short reign he obtained fresh grants of church land in half a dozen different counties, which have subsequently passed out of the hands of his descendants. When Edward died and the Catholic Queen Mary succeeded him the nuns were restored to Wilton Abbey. Your ancestor, the Earl of Pembroke, came to Wilton and fell upon his knees before the Lady Abbess begging her pardon for all that he had done; but when Mary died and Elizabeth came to the throne the fawning hound came back to Wilton like a tiger, exclaiming, "Get out, ye harlots! To work, to work; go spin!"

In this brief history of your house, my lord, I do not think that there is anything extenuated or ought set down in malice. It is simply a plain, unvarnished tale which can be substantiated by Wiltshire county histories. You owe almost everything you possess to an Act of Parliament which was obtained under false pretences. If the promises of King Henry VIII. had been carried out, you would not have obtained your forty thousand acres of land in Wiltshire. Surely this consideration ought to have some weight with you. Compared with most Wiltshire peasants you are an interloper and a usurper. How much does a farm labourer earn on your estates? I presume twelve shillings a week would be about the average. Is it safe for you and your order that the men who till your fields should vegetate on such a wage? It was you, my lord, who, not long ago speaking as a landlord, said "There are too few of us." That is true, my lord, as you and other landlords know to your cost in Ireland. Do you think that you will always have your own way in this country?

HOWARD EVANS.

The *New York Sun* of March 21 publishes this interesting note:—"William P. Ross, the present chief of the Cherokee Indians, is a graduate of an eastern college, remarkable for intelligence and culture, and a fine orator. The tribe occupies a reservation of 4,000,000 acres, bounded on the north and east by Kansas, Missouri, and Arkansas. The Cherokees of pure and mixed blood number 20,336, about one-half of whom speak the English language, which is the only one taught in the schools. In the entire male population there are but sixteen whose occupation is given in the last census as hunters and five fishermen, the great majority being farmers. There are 107 schools supported by the nation, a male and a female seminary for advanced pupils, and an orphan asylum. There is a regularly-constituted government and an adequate administration of justice. In short, the Cherokee nation is not to be distinguished from a frontier State, except in the character of its inhabitants, their relations to the general Government, and their system of holding the land in common, which affords an interesting example of practical Communism."

HOW A PRISONER CAN ESCAPE?

LUCCA, says an Italian correspondent of the *N.Y. Sun*, the old capital of the microscopic duchy, has a penitentiary. An inmate was Eugenio Fiocchi, from Varlungo, a village near Florence. He was serving a term of twenty-nine years for the murder of a girl and a sacrilegious robbery. He was a cabinet-maker, so skilful that he won a golden prize at the last Milan exhibition. He quarrelled with the prison superintendent, and he planned and executed a wonderful project of escape. Removing a few bricks from the flooring of his cell, he made his way into the subterranean chambers of the prison. During the day the brick flooring was kept firm by an ingenious contrivance, and all shavings were carefully concealed. There were five chambers in the vaults. From the last one Fiocchi dug a tunnel twenty yards long. He says that it took him only eleven months to do it, but competent engineers assert that it must have taken him at least two years. He made a wheelbarrow to cart the earth from the tunnel. The earth filled one of the subterranean rooms. Once he was stopped by water, but he did not lose his courage. He improvised a pump, and worked for several nights waist deep in water before he drained the tunnel. He slept only two hours a night for eleven months, and he was always in his cell when the watchman called. His good behaviour and his skilful work in the daytime lulled all suspicion, and he carried out his plan of escape totally undisturbed. He finally completed his tunnel, and escaped. He went to Florence, where his mother resided. As his affection for her was well known, the police raided the house and recaptured him. Drawing his knife he fought like a tiger, and the officers shot him down with their revolvers. He recovered from his wounds, however, and was taken back to prison. A special commission made an examination of the tunnel, and of his makeshift tools, and declared them marvellous. The superintendent of the prison is to be dismissed. When Fiocchi heard of it he said: "I knew that they would catch me again. I ran away only for the purpose of getting the superintendent into hot water."

NO MORE FOX-HUNTING.

AN Irish paper gives an ironical report, headed "Another Dastardly Outrage," saying:—

"Another dastardly outrage—this time in Tipperary. We do not refer, of course, to the seizure of the cow of some unfortunate evicted family by Capt. Creigh, at Cloughleigh, for aid arrears. That was all right, of course. It is the poisoning of five fox-hounds on the same day near Cashel that draws tears from our eyes. The worst of it is, that such retaliation is perfectly legal, and does not even come under the Crimes Act. Ah, if it did, how quickly our Vice-regal Nimrod would give the hint to his sporting stipendiaries, and law and order would triumph once more in this dreadful land. This time, however, the law is on the side of the people, who have only to chalk up notice to all poaching squireens, or advertise that their lands are poisoned, and then may shower down strychnine as if it was guano.

"The way in which the fate of the Cashel hunt is chronicled in the *Express* would touch the heart of a special juror. 'After a short time it was discovered that five of the hounds had been poisoned. I need not say the hunt was given up, and such cowardly and brutal conduct condemned. It is certainly an un-English mode of expressing indignation against fox-hunting. The man who is capable of doing such an act to a dumb animal would do worse.' He would. And the man who is capable of hunting 'dumb animals,' panting their lives out, over miles and miles of country, and taking pleasure in seeing them torn to pieces by dogs in the end, would also 'do worse.' Some such persons have actually been known to hunt human beings out of house and home to perish in the snow in winter; to corrupt peasant women, and to degrade, beat, and insult trembling men. Thank God they do not forget these things in the homes of Tipperary.

The Cashel huntmen made so "indignant" on Saturday were Capt. Langley, Col. Kellest, Col. Mangles, and the officers of the 20th Hussars. Surely if the Tipperary people had known that they had spoiled sport on "Col. Mangles" and the officers of the 20th Hussars," they would be deeply grieved. Are they not over here to protect process-servers and sheriffs, and assist the Crowbar Brigade, and how can their vacant hours be filled in, when they get leisure from eviction duty, if fox-hunting is to be prevented? There were only 50,000 people evicted in Ireland last year. Pshaw."

The *Daily Tribune* of Detroit, Mich., says:—"Foreign capitalists have recently bought of the Northern Pacific Railway three million acres of land, which comprises about all the lands the company owns, both in Minnesota and Dakota. It is intimated that a tenant system like that in vogue in England is to be inaugurated by the syndicate which has gained control of this vast domain. Here is a retrograde movement entirely foreign to the spirit and meaning of our land laws, and to the settled policy of this Government since the disposal of its public lands became a question of importance. That policy has been to give the lands in comparatively small quantities to actual settlers, and thus build up independent communities, such as constitute the best state and republic. But to allow an old country system of land tenancy, a grinding and oppressive yoke hung upon the neck of agricultural industry, to gain a foothold in this country, is to retard the growth and development of our great resources, and to set in motion a train of attendant evils the number and disastrous consequences of which no man can prophesy. One of these, and one of the first which would make itself felt, would be that a syndicate controlling such a wide and productive area of the best territory in the northwest, farmed by tenants of the old country plan, would soon be a monopoly in production, forming a damaging competition to all small farmers. The United States wants no tenant system within its borders."