

THE LANDLORD THUGS.

By John Mitchel.

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‘Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be alone in the midst of the earth!’ – ISAIAH v, 8.

What is to be done with Irish murderers of the better classes?

The canting English House of Commons pretends to be horrified when it hears of a *single instance* of wholesale slaughter; the canting press affects most sanctimonious indignation; and although the murderers are encouragingly told that there *is* no law, and *shall* be no law, to punish them, yet they are at the same time assured that their conduct is much to be deprecated—that they are naughty—that the ‘moral sense’ of the canting ‘House’ is outraged by them; and that the unhappy circumstances engage the anxious attention of Government.

Just as if those canting accessories before the fact, and after the act, did not *know* that the Landlord-Thugs are doing weekly and daily murder on a large scale all over Ireland; and as if they did not know, too, that *they*, by express laws, as well as by their soldiers and police, are helping those Thugs to do that murder.

A certain Mr. BLAKE has been fastened on by POULETT SCROPE, and denounced, with great fury, as if he were a monster in human form. But poor BLAKE is only going by the custom of the country, making his property support his poverty, and doing what he likes with his own, precisely as other landlords do. The man is no worse than his neighbours in Galway county; and Galway is no worse than Cork or Mayo, Roscommon or Clare. The case of Mr. BLAKE is really hard. His property swarms with ‘paupers.’ Government, with its poor laws and quarter-acre clauses, gives him every motive and stimulant to clear them off, sends down an Assistant-Barrister four times a year to eject for him, lends him police constables and troops of the line, to pull down and lay waste the pauper haunts; and then, when the thing is done, if any pertinacious POULETT SCROPE *will* harp on the business, this same Government disavows poor BLAKE,

deprecates his conduct, and even goes so far as to threaten him with the *moral indignation* of the Parliament!

Now, there is evidence that legislators and ministers read THE UNITED IRISHMAN with great diligence. We have looked through the four last numbers; and if our rulers, in their anxious search after 'sedition,' had had leisure, to inform themselves of the state of the county they pretend to 'govern,' they would have found, in those four numbers, the following narratives of slaughter extracted from provincial papers, *within one month*: -

'On Monday last (27th February), the sheriff of Mayo, *assisted by the police*, levelled six houses in the parish of Shruel, the property of Charles Blake, Esq. (*another Blake*), about thirty human beings, the occupants of these houses, are left by the roadside in this inclement season.—*Galway Vindicator*.

On the 4th March, Lord Dunsandle, in the parish of Killimore, Galway, ejected four widows, and their four families, and three other families. And on the next day, John Connolly, Esq., of Rashane, cleared away three families from his property, in the same parish.—*Galway Mercury*. [All the names are given.]

On Saturday last (March 11th), we witnessed the wholesale levelling of *twenty-one* houses, and the extermination of one hundred and four unhappy individuals, in the centre of this town, by a writ of *habere*. To add to the melancholy spectacle, the rain poured down in torrents the entire day; and to have looked on the hapless inmates as they issued from the homes that were being destroyed over their heads, and heard their pitiful lamentations, would have appalled the stoutest heart.—*Athlone Sentinel*.

The *Limerick Examiner* gives a list of *one hundred and sixty-six* persons ejected from the property of Mr. Westby, an absentee English proprietor (near Kilrush, County Clare), during the first week in March. The writer adds—The friends who were left in were warned, at the peril of the agent's displeasure, not to admit to a night's lodging those who were turned out; and on the very night that their houses were thrown down, they let in some of them by stealth, but sent them out before day, *lest Mr. Kean's men should see them on the land*.—*Limerick Examiner*.

Dr. Derry, Bishop of Clonfert, in his Lenten Pastoral (published in all the newspapers), makes the following statement, with respect to his diocese: - 'In almost every parish, the work of extermination is ruthlessly carried on. The smoking ruins of *thirty-one dwelling-houses, on one townland*, all levelled in one day, lately filled our hearts with anguish; and on our inquiring the fate of the unhappy outcasts, we have learned—that for a time they clung to the ruins—

that their exposure, during the snow, brought on sickness, and that some, with limbs already mortified, ultimately sought refuge in the union workhouse.'

Every one of these slaughters, and far more, the Queen's ministers knew; they knew also that the Queen's troops, as many of them as could be spared from protecting the Castle of Dublin, were aiding and abetting in the perpetration; and they were receiving the price of this help in the shape of 'addresses of confidence.' We presume that Mr. BLAKE, both the Mr. BLAKES, all the Mr. BLAKES, signed such an address, and will, so far as they are concerned, help Lord CLARENDON to make the 'laws' respected in Galway. To be sure they will. And even the BLAKE who has been so unlucky as to be singled out by Mr. SCROPE, and threatened with the high moral indignation of Parliament, he is not disconcerted at all; he knows that all the virtuous indignation is a mere tribute to the decencies of British society; and he will go on with his work till the estate is cleared to the required state of depopulation.

But what are the People to *do* with these assassin landlords? To keep conciliating them, we suppose? wooing them to 'nationality?' conjuring them to join with us, and against their present friends and allies, and demand from England the 'Constitution of '82?' Surely, if we do but wheedle, coax, and tenderly entreat them yet a little while, they will throw themselves upon their fellow-countrymen, and realize our dream of an united nation, banded together in all its ranks and classes, to win an Irish Senate, an Irish Army, an Irish Flag!

Is there any dreamer yet in Ireland who has not awakened from that vision? Who does not see that the Times and the Men are all different, and that '82, or the like of '82, can never appear on this island more? Seventy years ago the gentry were for Ireland—now they are against her. Seventy years ago the condition of the labouring and farming classes was still *tolerable*; there was no struggle of class with class for the bare means of life. 'Free-Trade,' 'free Parliament,' and the honour and dignity of the Irish nation, were then the themes; men had leisure to think of them. Hunger had not swallowed up all other feelings and passions. The several 'interests' of society could still exist together here without the one devouring the other; and it was then possible for the Irish gentry to trust themselves in the hands of their

own countrymen without English body-guards. But *now*—now there is a total break-up of the system; the old aristocratic social arrangement here will hold together no longer. The nation is in bankruptcy; the people and the gentry are at *war*—war, as necessary and as desperate as that of two shipwrecked men in a raging sea, when they find that the single spar they hold by will sustain but *one*.

Irish landlordism is near its latter-day. Earth or Heaven will not endure it much longer—and the monster knows this well, and instinctively clings to the only power that can yet save it for a time. The two blood-stained old oligarchies of Ireland and England feel that their only chance of preservation is in the union of their forces. They see Democracy surging and chafing around them, gathering strength for his fatal spring; and they know that if they are parted for a moment, they go down to perdition. *Therefore* they are in alliance. Therefore Lord Clarendon sends troops to exterminate surplus tenants; and the landlord signs an engagement that he will help Lord Clarendon to butcher mutinous citizens.

Show us your materials for this constitution of '82. Let us see that the landlord that will ask it, or tolerate the thought of it. Let us see the tenant or labourer that will ever pull a trigger or push a pike for it. The ambition of your gentry now is not to unfurl a national flag, but to screw the uttermost mite out of the poor man's blood and marrow: the one great want—the prayer and passion of the poor—is not 'Queen, Lords, and Commons of Ireland,' but, simply, Land and Life.

What need of more words. We must strike at English sway through the heart of this Landlordism. The English Government, indeed, is our enemy; but the Landlords are traitors within our camp. We must crush them first;—or, rather, one blow, rightly planted, will abolish both together.

For the *Government* of a country is simply the disposal of its produce. It is out of the pasture-fields and haggards of Ireland that England keeps her mercenaries here; without them (melted down into *taxes*), Lord CLARENDON could not buy so much as a whetstone for his slaughtering-knife; without them (diluted into *rents*), your better classes could hardly procure paper whereon to write 'addresses of

confidence.' If the men who plough and dig, who saw and reap, will but eat the food they raise—if they will but consent to live like Christians, instead of dying like dogs, there is an end both of foreign sway and domestic tyranny and treason: Landlordism in Ireland, we say, is doomed—its cup is full:—its gale-days are numbered.

Would to God that it could yield peacefully to its destiny; and that the new order of things might come about by negotiation and pacific enactments of law;—with *compensation* for vested interests! Would to God the evil days before us could be averted! But what hope is there of such pacific death-birth? Consider the two notable examples of extinguished feudalism in modern Europe, France, and Prussia. In the latter the powers of government were in the hands of an absolute autocrat outside *both* the warring classes; and a bold minister was found, with a will of iron, to abolish, alter, modify, and settle 'rights of property' by royal edict, and *compel* obedience. Here, then, landlordism died in peace, and serfs rose into lauded citizens without a struggle. But in France, *as in Ireland*, government was in the hands of the aristocrats themselves; in France, *as in Ireland*, they stood upon their 'rights of property,' and hardened their hearts against hunger and despair, until the People stormed up around them in frantic wrath, read them the rights of man by the glare of their own burning mansions, and scourged them from the face of the land for ever.

Is it *thus*, in flames and blood, that Irish landlordism is to perish, and Ireland to be born again? Alas! our unhappy 'gentry' have no autocrat to coerce them—no sage to advise them; Government and Law are all their own—they are left to the devices of their own hearts; and so surely as 'sorrow tracketh crime,' a terrible doom will come upon them.

Be it so! Foreign dominion and home oppression must be struck down at any rate, at any cost, with any weapon that comes to hand. These landed men of Ireland have industriously sown the wind for two hundred years;—let them reap now and garner up their whirlwind harvest!