

TO MR. SERGEANT HOWLEY, ASSISTANT-BARRISTER FOR TIPPERARY.

By John Mitchel.

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LEARNED SERGEANT,—Your worship must have remarked—for you are a diligent student of THE UNITED IRISHMAN—that I sometimes take the liberty of throwing my ‘wicked and manic addresses’ (so you term my articles) into the form of letters to persons of quality. This week I aspire to inscribe one of my ‘incendiary publications’ with the highly respectable name of your worship.

I am pleased with the idea of writing a letter to the learned Assistant-Barrister who has signed more ejectment decrees than any other in Ireland—who has been instrumental, under the Queen and the Devil, in goading, torturing, and maddening, the great and noble county of Tipperary to utter savagery, till it is at length a horror and scandal to our island and to the earth.

Your worship seems a tender-hearted man, upon some occasions. You cry out ‘Gracious God!’ at the sight of a pitchfork, and shudder to think that those two horrid prongs, though made for hay, might possibly enter the abdomen of a Christian man. Not but that your worship has shown firmness enough in the way of your duty. You have gazed without ever blenching on an ejectment decree, a far deadlier weapon than Roscrea blacksmith ever forged:—you have handled these instruments delicately, even affectionately, as you turned over a few quires of them, and impressed each death-dealing tool with your respectable name (which was more than the blacksmith ventured to do with his two-pronged ‘pike’), though you know that they not only might be, but infallibly *would* be, used in levelling villages and destroying, with wholesale slaughter, innumerable families of men, women, and children. A curious psychological fact this:—you, the chairman of Tipperary county, can look calmly upon a sheaf of

ejectments; but 'your blood rushes back to your heart' when you see a pitchfork! Perhaps the phenomenon can be explained, however:—An ejectment is in the line of your business; you have 'law' for it; you have '6th and 7th Wm. IV,' for it; and, what is better, you get *money* for it;—yes, indeed, ten shillings and more upon every one—that is to say, four shillings and eight pence more on signing the decree, and two shillings and six pence upon taxing the costs, which is far more than poor Kennedy, the Roscrea blacksmith, makes by forging a pike. Your blood, therefore, does not rush to your 'heart,' when the Clerk of the Peace presents you with a whole magazine of this murderous artillery. On the contrary, you feel that you are doing a good action, and are a blessing to the country;—you call to mind all that has been said by our ameliorators about the advantage of enlarging farms, and introducing more profitable modes of culture. Small farmers do cut up estates so awkwardly, and then they exhaust one another's 'capital,' buying and selling amongst themselves, the greedy rogues! and then their labour is less profitable (to their betters) than horse-work; and then they sometimes commit 'crime,' which horses, and drill-ploughs, and improved harrows, never do; and then—in short they *eat too much*—more than they are worth (to their betters), and Tipperary would be well rid of the half of them. Thus your worship reasons as you write your autograph, and earn your ejectment fees.

I find also, most learned Sergeant, that even in the matter of edge-tools for cutting and stabbing you make distinctions; you do not look with equal horror upon every tool of this sort. On the contrary, you speak with a kind of enthusiasm about the valour of the soldiers, who 'will never desert their colours,' you say, 'nor dishonour their cloth:' and as for the police, your praises of that chivalrous force are even touching; noble cavaliers, like the Knights of old, who scorn delights and live laborious days, that they may ameliorate mankind! Why, Sergeant, Sergeant! do you not know that all those heroes are armed to the teeth with most unequivocal weapons of slaughter? You need not go to 'Johnson's Dictionary' to justify you in calling *these* articles 'arms.' Consider, now, I pray you, the musket and fixed bayonet of this grenadier; a wicked weapon, is it not?—the bright steel spear just projecting far enough to run you through and through, and

stop only when the muzzle of the gun comes with a rap against your breast-bone! Think of the villainous saltpetre, too, actually dugged out of the bowels of the harmless earth to do this bloody business! What, Sergeant! Do you not cry *Gracious God?* Does your blood not rush back to that intestine which you call your *heart?* Not a bit of it. Your worship knows better: you know that these fellows are paid and armed by the better classes to keep up the same system that yourself is paid and wigged to maintain: you feel that their bayonets and ball-cartridges are fighting in the same great cause with your own more fatal weapons; and you, the Assistant-Barrister of the English and the landlords, sympathize and fraternize with these their assistant-butchers.

It is a very different matter when mere peasants, especially *surplus* peasants, who are to be ejected, transported, or shovelled into graves, happen to get hold of an instrument that might by possibility be used in self-defence. If things of this nature became common, and men knew the proper use of them, the Queen's writ or the Sheriff's warrant might 'run' no longer, the ejectment trade might stop, and who knows but if such atrocities were allowed to go on, the very corn and beef and mutton reared in Tipperary might be illegally and unconstitutionally devoured by the people who live in Tipperary;—a monstrous and revolutionary result, which every Assistant-Barrister of the better classes is bound to resist. Therefore, let all 'proclaimed' districts know that, for the future, not only a pitchfork is illegal, but, by dint of Johnson's Dictionary and the Coercion Act between them, a spit for meat, a *grape* for manure, a fishing rod with a spike in the butt of it, a crowbar, a chisel, nay, a tooth-pick, is 'within the act.'

Do not be too sure, Sergeant, that you can frighten men out of their pitchforks so easily: they will soon, I do assure your worship, have need of good and improved pitchforks in Tipperary, the season is fast coming round for them; and I am highly gratified to learn that the people are fast providing themselves with the articles. It seems this particular two-pronged 'pike' was made upon a model described in THE UNITED IRISHMAN: and you think that when the notable finding of your Thurles jury comes to be known to the 'maniacs' who conduct that paper—'perhaps it will have the effect of checking their

insane career.' Ah! but perhaps *not*. Indeed, for my part, I have no scruple in advising my countrymen, in 'proclaimed' districts to provide themselves still more diligently with arms—unequivocal *arms*—when juries are so complaisant as to find that a fork is a pike, and when Assistant-Barristers, like your worship, are prowling about with their acts of Parliament and JOHNSON'S dictionaries, it is more needful than ever to possess the means—the *only* means I know—of self-defence. Men can conceal their arms in Tipperary and Limerick till they may use them in open day; but, in the meantime, the thing most essential is to *get* them, and keep them, and in good order.

But if you catch any of my disciples, you will sentence him to a year's imprisonment, with hard labour! Yes, I know it; such is the infamous and cowardly 'law'—a law on which, as well as on the law-makers, the people of Ireland, if true to themselves, will shortly set their heels:—but it is better, Mr. Sergeant, that a man here and there should be fed in gaol, and kept to hard labour for a year, than that many thousand men should perish of hunger and law in Tipperary, year after year, while Ireland lasts:—more especially as the same man, if out of gaol, might, with all his hard labour, not be fed at all. Better to run some risks, while we make preparation to overthrow this villainous structure of British landlord-law, than lie, bruised and groaning, beneath it for ever. This 'disarming law,' let me inform my Tipperary readers, is a base and ruffian law, enacted on false pretences, and for foulest purposes: it is no law at all, but a murderous device of the foreign tyrant; and to disobey it is a righteous deed before GOD and man.

And, to come to the mere consideration of relative danger, I ask the small farmers and labourers of Tipperary which is the more dangerous course, upon the whole—to arm universally, with a determination of holding the crop now in the ground, for their own use, and ending foreign dominion here at the same time (but with the occasional risk of encountering your worship and 'Johnson's Dictionary' at Quarter Sessions)—or to give up arms and arming altogether, as matters which only soldiers and foreigners ought to meddle with, to labour patiently for others, so long as they are considered of use,—and then patiently to give up house and home,

when the bailiff appears with Mr. HOWLEY's autograph,—patiently to go, with their wailing wives and little ones, into the poor-house, if there be room,—patiently into their graves, if there be not,—and so manure the consolidated farms of Tipperary with their bones?

Whichsoever of these two courses is the less dangerous in the end, Mr. Sergeant HOWLEY, I advise my readers in your worship's county to follow. I tell them that they have, every one of them, a right to be well armed, and also to be well fed,—rights which no pretended 'law' can take away from them. I bid them be sure to assert both these rights—and especially the *first*, that they may have wherewithal to assert the second. I tell them that Tipperary belongs *to them*, the farmers and labouring people who live here; and that if there is to be any extermination at all, it ought to be of the idle and genteel classes, with their Assistant-Barristers and Assistant-Butchers. But, above all, I warn them, I conjure them, I 'obtest' them, that September next must see an end of the whole murderous system of society, 'commerce,' 'government,' and *general* 'civilization' in Ireland—or we are down, *down*—conquered finally and unredeemably this time—and the Irish nation are henceforth strangers and sojourners in their own land.

This is the kind of advice I give the people of your Quarter Sessions district, as well as every other district in Ireland; and I have the satisfaction to know that it will be read with approbation by a very large number of tall Tipperarymen.

As for my lecture on the improved pitchfork—the best kind for saving the grain crop—I will take the liberty of repeating the substance of it here; not for your worship's edification, as I know you are already familiar with it, but for the advantage of the tall men before mentioned, lest any of them should not have studied it sufficiently before:—

'The new pitchfork is nine inches long in the prongs, two inches in circumference, or in the round at the shoulders, and tapering gradually to sharp points. These pitchforks are made of the best iron and steel, well-tempered. The tongue (*tang*) should be at least seven inches, and barbed, so as to prevent it from coming out of the handle, which should be of good, sound ash, and seven feet six inches long. All labourers should be provided with pitchforks of this sort, instead of the flimsy, little, useless things heretofore in general use at hay-making and

harvesting the crops of grain. Besides, such pitchforks would be of the greatest use in proclaimed districts, where robbers, in the garb of policemen, pay nocturnal visits, and carry away the property of honest men.'

Johnson's Dictionary, sir, may call this a pike: but be it pike or fork, it will be found an admirable instrument to *save* this year's crop withal.

Leaving your worship to spell out, by help of your dictionary, the meaning of this last remark, I have the honour to remain your worship's very humble servant,

JOHN MITCHEL.