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EVICTIION.

ALL thinking persons are agreed in believing that there is an immense amount of nonsense being talked on the subject of Irish affairs. Most persons seem also to think that there is a great deal of unreality, even of a kind of sheer hypocrisy, in the utterances of many of our public men. The meddlesomeness of the legislative bodies of the Dominion at large, and of the Province of Ontario, has been commented upon and rebuked by our most eminent thinkers, speakers, and leaders of opinion. We doubt very much whether those gentlemen who, by their votes, condemned the present effort of the English Government to re-establish law and order in Ireland are not, by this time, heartily ashamed of what they have done. At least, they are perfectly aware that every one knows they did it for no other reason than to catch the Irish Roman Catholic vote.

These are not things to be said lightly or inconsiderately, or, indeed, otherwise than with feelings of shame. No one should feel pleasure in making such statements, or should allow himself to make them at all except as a duty. For the men who have been guilty of the unworthy conduct which we denounce are our own representatives, men whom we have chosen, for whom we are responsible, because their acts are our acts. That which is done in our representative assemblies is done by the country.

It is, then, for this reason chiefly, that the country may know what it is doing—for it knows it very imperfectly,—that we must return to some of the recent doings of our representatives, and point out their flagrant inconsistency.

But first, let us remember the occasion of the Crimes Bill, which is now before the Imperial Parliament. It has been occasioned chiefly by a widespread conspiracy to deprive the owners of property in Ireland of their rents, unless they will accede to the terms laid down by the Land League. If the landlord refuses the offer of this association, then he can be paid nothing; the tenant is as good as compelled to pay what has been offered to the managers of the "plan of campaign;" every means are to be taken to prevent the defaulting tenant from being evicted; and if any one shall venture to enter upon the holding which he has vacated he shall do it at his own risk, boycotting being the least of the dangers to which he is exposed.

Even if the land laws of Ireland were among the worst, we cannot imagine any principles ever sanctioned by civilised man that would justify such a course of action. But the land laws of Ireland are not among the worst, but among the best. Indeed, it may be said that, even as they stand, it is hardly possible for any tenant to be oppressed or burdened, for any length of time, with a rent greater than he is able to pay.

Now, a considerable majority of the legislature of Ontario have actually declared, by their votes, that there is no need to take any special measures to put an end to a state of things in which the law is set at defiance, in which there is a public conspiracy to commit robbery. The charitable supposition is, that these gentlemen did not really know what they were doing. We honestly believe that many of them did not know, but we fear that a good many did not care very much, so long as they felt safe of securing some votes at the next election from disloyal men in this country, who sympathise with the conspirators and rebels in Ireland.

But at least one thing is certain, that the majority of these sympa-

thisers with "Irish wrongs" either did not know what they were doing, or were strangely and grossly inconsistent. The law of eviction in Ireland is by no means a stringent one. As carried out in practice, it is very lax. Very few tenants in Ireland have been evicted if they have paid even a moderate instalment of the rent which was due. Even after being evicted they may return to their holding if they pay their rent within a certain time. At this moment Mr. Kilbride may send Lord Lansdowne, or his agent, Mr. Trench, a cheque for his rent, and return to the stately mansion, with all its sumptuous appointments, of which we have heard so much during the last few weeks. Not a very rigorous state of things is this, by any means. Yet it appears to be highly displeasing to the tender-hearted legislators of Ontario. They cannot bring themselves to think of it with any sort of satisfaction.

And now let us see what these same legislators think of this subject of eviction in their own part of the world. Surely they will not be less tender-hearted to the poor and needy at their own doors than to the same class separated from them by some thousands of miles of ocean. Let us see:

In the session of 1886, the Ontario legislature (see Mr. Douglas Armour's letter in *The World*) passed an Act (chap. 29, sec. 1), declaring that in every demise (or lease) thereafter made, unless otherwise agreed there shall be deemed to be included an agreement that, if the rent, or any part thereof, shall remain unpaid for fifteen days after any day on which it ought to have been paid, the landlord may evict the tenant without making any formal demand for the rent.

It is quite true that we have had a fresh election since this Act was passed, but the majority of the members of the Assembly are the same, the state of parties is the same, and the Ministry is the same. Here is a matter really worth thinking of. Has Mr. O'Brien been furnished with a copy of this Act, that he may tell his countrymen, when he returns home, what is the law of eviction in the country to which some of them will soon be emigrating?

But this is not all. By another Act of the same session (chapter 20, sec. 16) though provision is made whereby a landlord cannot evict a tenant for breach of the conditions in his lease without first giving him an opportunity to remedy the breach, this provision does not extend to non-payment of rent.

The result of this is—as Mr. Douglas Armour quite accurately observes—that if a tenant owes \$10 for a month's rent, and pays \$9, the landlord can evict him if the balance of \$1 is not paid within fifteen days after it fell due; and the tenant is not only powerless to regain possession, but he loses any improvements which he may have made.

The gentlemen who passed these provisions into law are doubtless well acquainted with the circumstances and needs of this country. To ordinary minds these terms seem hard, even slightly unmerciful, but it may be that they are necessary. Far be it from us to decide in a matter which must, after all, be determined by a large acquaintance with the condition and circumstances of landlords and tenants.

But what can we think of the consistency of the men who promulgate a law like this, and then condemn the enforcement of a much milder law elsewhere; nay, who condemn the attempt to put down a conspiracy to defeat one of the most humane systems of land law which can be found anywhere upon earth?

We have little hope of producing an impression upon men who have sold themselves to Party, and who seem to consider any policy good enough if it can only keep them in place. Their answer is simple, and it is ready: "You may argue and bluster as you please, but we must do as our master pleases, or he will not keep us in our seats."

It is very likely that there was some foolish Protestant bluster at the time of the last election; but, if so, the bluster was in the manner, not in the matter. We fear the case is even worse than it was represented; and we believe the electors are beginning to awake to a sense of the mischief which is being wrought by Roman ascendancy in the politics of the country.

We repeat, we do not expect to make much impression upon the gentlemen who can evict "with a light heart" in Ontario, and weep over the much less cruel evictions in Ireland; but we are not without the hope that some of these facts, gravely considered by reflecting men who have votes, may stir them up to require a little more consistency of their representatives, or else to send them about their business.