

PERSECUTION OF POLITICAL OPPONENTS.

And then, a system of torture is now applied, under which sentences of six or twelve months or more may be added. How is this managed? There is an old law of King Edward III., directed against rogues and vagabonds and such disorderly persons, which authorises a magistrate to order such persons to give bail to be of good behaviour for a term, and, in default, to be imprisoned. This antiquated law, introduced into Ireland by Poyning's Act, is now being brought into play for uses undreamed of when it was passed. Even if the main charge fails, the magistrates frequently use this law to inflict this penalty. And when they convict on the main charge they may sometimes give a short unappealable sentence for the crime, to which they tack on this further penalty for a longer term. And all this is a matter so far in the discretion of the magistrates as to be practically almost final. By this device there may be a sentence of a month, unappealable, and a second sentence of six or twelve months more, also unappealable. And, after having managed, by executive action, to provide that sentence of hard labour shall disqualify for five years for all municipal offices, these magistrates are using this other engine by giving hard labour sentences to some of the most respected leaders of municipal life in Ireland, and so turning them and keeping them for five years out of office. I wish I had time to give you some examples of the administration of law and order in Ireland of late date. They would make you laugh; they might sometimes even make you weep. But I must press on to a close.

INDICTING A NATION.

All these things are going on to-day. Many of the most trusted men in Ireland are suffering these penalties. Tremendous issues—national, political, and social—are being tried. A supreme struggle is being made by a subjugated people, who, while absolutely refraining from those crimes of violence and outrage which have marked some former agitations, are yet endeavouring, by combined and concerted action, to make manifest and effective the popular decision and to convince the English people of the need of concession. Now, much can be done in this direction without transcending the real limits of the laws, and their interpretations, new and old—sometimes perplexing and obscure—which are invoked, if there were only a just and equitable application of those laws to present conditions. Those limits are in some cases vague and indistinct. They may well be—sometimes unintentionally and sometimes intentionally—overpassed in the struggle for the people's life which is now going on in Ireland. It may not be the case that everything which has been done in every instance in the course of, that struggle is justifiable under the imperfect and antiquated man-made English laws, or even accords with every notion of abstract justice or of the higher law. That is not at all the question. The question is how and in what spirit the matter shall be