

"In certain despatches from one of Your Majesty's ministers, the Right Honourable Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, Baronet, Secretary of State for the Colonies, dated Downing Street, 20th October and 3rd December, 1858, the Right Honourable Baronet therein states, that the whole question of the land tenures in this Island is engaging his most anxious attention, and that it would give him unfeigned pleasure to receive such suggestions for their amicable settlement as could be accepted by Your Majesty's Government.

"Having taken these despatches into consideration, after mature deliberation, and with an earnest design to terminate the disputes which have so long disturbed the peace and harmony of the Colony, the House have adopted the following resolutions:—

"Whereas certain questions arising out of the original grants of the lands in this Island, severally called the Escheat question, the Fishery reserve question, and the Quitrent question, have for many years caused much discussion, and difference of opinion amongst the people of this Island, and many delusive projects and impracticable measures have been and are from time to time enunciated respecting such questions, whereby the tenantry have been and are greatly imposed upon and induced to support the propounders of such measures, under the delusive hope that by doing so they will be relieved of the payment of rent; and the attention both of the people and Legislature being occupied with such deceptive schemes, measures intended to develop the resources of the Colony are not only neglected, but a state of society equally opposed to the moral, social, and political welfare of the people, and their true interests, is produced: And whereas various despatches have for a great number of years declared that Her Majesty's Government will not consent to any compulsory interference with the lands and rights of the proprietors, and which has been strongly reiterated in the despatch of Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, now Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies, dated 20th October, 1858, and 3rd December, 1858, from which it is clear that any measures for the benefit of the tenantry must result from an amicable arrangement with the proprietors: And whereas the agitation of hostile measures, such as escheat, fishery reserves, and quitrents, must not only result, as they always have done, in leading the tenantry into cost and trouble, without in any way ameliorating their condition, but will also engender a feeling in the proprietors, rendering them disinclined to listen to proposals, which, if such agitation were at an end, they would be likely to entertain: And whereas Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton in his despatches above referred to, while refusing to sanction measures which in England are considered inconsistent with the rights of property, has expressed the readiness of Her Majesty's Government to co-operate with the Legislature in furthering measures for the settlement of the land tenures, if conceived in a spirit of fairness and conciliation to all parties:

"Therefore resolved, 1st. That an humble address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that Her Majesty will be pleased to direct a Commission to some discreet and impartial person, not connected with the Island, or its affairs, to inquire into the existing relations between landlord and tenant, and to negotiate with the proprietors for such abatement of present liabilities, and for such terms for enabling the tenantry to convert their leaseholds into freeholds, as, without infringing on the rights of the landlords, may be fairly and reasonably asked for to ameliorate the condition of the tenantry.

"2nd. Resolved, That in the opinion of this House the basis of any such arrangement should be a large remission of arrears of rents now due; and secondly, the giving every tenant holding under a long lease an option of purchasing his land at a certain rate, at any time he might find it convenient to do so.

"3rd. Resolved, That a remission of arrears of rent may be reasonably asked, inasmuch as the existence of these arrears, although it is due partly to an unwillingness of the tenants to pay rent, under the idea that escheat or some other delusive scheme would enable them to evade; yet it is also due in part to the laches and remissness of the landlords and their agents in not enforcing it; and because, in many cases, the arrears, however incurred, amount to so large a sum that the exacting them would prove ruinous to a large number of loyal and industrious people, and would further entirely put it out of their power to avail themselves of the plan suggested in subsequent resolutions for purchasing their farms.

"4th. Resolved, That as the circumstances of the tenantry would not in general enable them to pay down any large portion of the purchase money, the best and only means for converting the tenures into freeholds lies in the adoption of the plan which would practically constitute every farm a savings bank for its owner, in which he could from time to time invest his savings at interest, towards the purchase of his farm, an arrangement which could be effected by the following means, viz: that the landlords should agree to permit the tenants to purchase their farms for such sum per acre as shall be fixed upon; and providing further, that when any tenant (whose rent was paid up) should be desirous of paying any sum, not being less than ten pounds, towards the purchase of his land, he should have the option of doing so, and that the interest on the ten pounds, or other amount so paid, should thenceforth go in reduction of his yearly rent, and so on for every payment on account of purchase until the whole was paid, when he should receive his deed, and that similar covenants should be inserted in all future leases for terms over 40 years; such an arrangement would not only give the tenant the advantage of paying an instalment of his purchase money, and at the same time reducing his rent whenever he chose, without subjecting himself to the vexation and costs incident to cases of inability to meet instalments agreed to be paid at a particular day, but would, in the opinion of this House, gradually, but certainly, change the tenures into freeholds, without the aid of loans, and the expensive subsistence of public offices, by which heavy liabilities have already been, and would, if persevered in to a much greater extent, be imposed on the public finances.

"We do therefore humbly pray that Your Majesty will be pleased to take the foregoing matters into Your Royal consideration, and to appoint some fit and proper person or persons, Commissioner or Commissioners to inquire into the relations of landlord and tenant in this Island, and negotiate with the proprietors of township lands for the fixing some certain rate of price at which every tenant may at any time have the option of purchasing his land, or of paying instalments of such purchase, and thereby gradually reducing the yearly rent until the whole price thereof is paid; and also to negotiate with the proprietors for a remission of the arrears of rent in such cases, and on such townships as the said Commissioner or Commissioners, from the circumstances of the tenantry or otherwise, may deem reasonable and expedient; and also to make such report respecting the Fishery Reserve question, and other questions relating to the township lands of this Island, as we confidently hope will effect a final settlement thereof, and prevent all agitation regarding the same in future."

"(Signed) DONALD MONTGOMERY,

"House of Assembly, P. E. Island,

"9th May, 1859."

"Speaker."

That subsequently to the transmission of this address, to your Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies, the following correspondence took place, and was duly transmitted by His Grace the Duke of Newcastle, to the Lieutenant Governor of this Island: