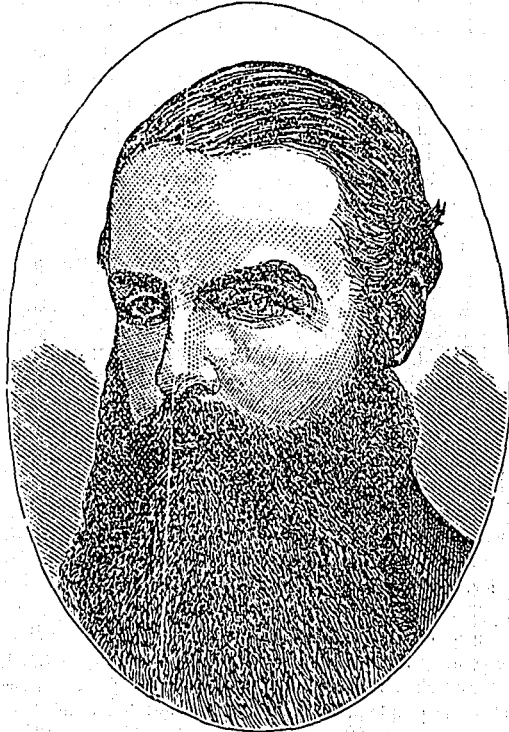


MR. R. P. BLENNERHASSETT, M.P.

Around the youthful and gifted member for Kerry, Roland Ponsonby Blennerhassett, centres a public interest which will always give him a foremost place in such a scene as this. The public sentiment has universally recognised the fact that his election was the decisive battle that made Home Rule in our day an irresistible question for the politician and the statesman. It is little exaggeration to call the Kerry election of 1872 "the Clare Election of Home Rule." It was indeed a struggle worthy

a sief jointly by two great families—one seat being the appanage of the Catholic earldom of Kenmare, the other the property of the Protestant commoner, "Herbert of Macross." The territorialists on both sides, and their following among the small gentry, Whig and Tory, Catholic and Protestant, thus shared the county between them, on an implied contract that the forces of both were to unite to crush any attempt to invade or disturb this "arrangement," whether emanating from the Catholic or Protestant side. It was unquestionable that under this odious and most insulting yoke



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to be placed in Irish history amongst the most important of political events. Home Rule elections had been previously carried elsewhere, as in Menth and Limerick; but it was possible for sceptics to say these seats were won more by the force of the personal popularity of the candidate in each case than by the force of Home Rule principles. Kerry was ordained to present, by universal assent, an instance in which the issue, "Home Rule or no Home Rule?" was clearly knit. For a generation the representation of that great county was held as

Kerry manhood had long chafed and groaned but it was considered utterly hopeless to dream of shaking it off; for the landlordism of the whole county, Whig and Tory, was ready to come down savagely in a united phalanx to stamp out such an uprising of their serfs.

In December, 1871, the Earl of Kenmare died, and Viscount Castlerosse, just then the Kenmare-family-member for the county, was elevated to the House of Lords. Here arose a difficulty. The new peer had no son old enough to succeed to the family-seat in the