

## A NOBLE PROTEST.

MR. FREDERIC HARRISON MAKES "AN APPEAL TO LIBERAL-UNIONISTS" AND BLOQUENTLY STATES AN UNANSWERABLE CASE AGAINST THEM.

The leading feature of the December number of the *Contemporary Review* is a noble appeal by Mr. Frederic Harrison to Liberal Unionists, who, as he says, maintain that the cause of morality, justice, and honour rests with them, but who are linked irretrievably with immorality, injustice and dishonour. After a brilliant sketch of Irish history in the past, Mr. Harrison thus powerfully sums up the features of coercion in the present:—

"Almost every abomination of the old landlord tyranny in full play. Wholesale evictions carried out by a body of 500 police. Seventy five young men of good character committed for trial for resisting the officers of the law (?), and herded with criminals for many weeks before trial; the old packing of juries with men exclusively in the interest of landlords; the conviction of men to six and eighteen months of hard labour, for the offence of resisting the execution of an infamous abuse of law—an abuse of law which an Irish judge declared, on the bench, had aroused the indignation of the Empire, and which drew from a Chief Secretary for Ireland a pointed rebuke. Here is a case from the same estate. A farm is reclaimed from bog, fenced, and drained by the tenant, who builds on it good stone houses with slate roofs. The landlord had not expended one penny, but he had raised the rent of 20 acres, originally worth 6d. per acre, to £15. The fall in value makes the tenant unable to pay. His landlord evicts him, saddles him with £17 in costs, confiscates the tenant's interest, worth £200-300, unroofs the house, which goes to ruin, and leaves the farm to return to bog. Such is landlordism in 1888, after years of legislation.

"At bottom nothing essential is changed. As of old, the mass of wretched peasants have wrung from them their hard gains in distant labour, and even the wages earned by their children in America, to be paid to absentee creditors under a system of legalised extortion and statutory plunder. As of old, the labour of their hands, the homesteads they have created, and the houses they have built, are still confiscated as before, though by an indirect process, which is called by mockery law. As of old, resistance to extortion is a crime to be punished with savage cruelty. The men who counsel them are thrust into felons' cells, and brutally outraged. The men who defend their cause are assailed with malignant passion and organized calumny.

"In the meantime, by the Act of 1887, law is practically and permanently abolished in one of the three kingdoms. What is really martial law is from henceforth virtually the common law of Ireland. Magistrates, who are virtually nothing but police officials, carry out the orders of the Castle Government with as little regard for anything that can be called law as a Turkish cadi. What the Act of last year practically accomplished was this. It threw the whole power of England, armed with the arbitrary machinery which on the Continent is called 'the state of siege,' into the hands of one party in an economical struggle. It armed the rich and Protestant Englishmen, already equipped with all the legal machinery which chicanery could invent, with what is practically martial law, to enable him to crush the wretched Catholic peasantry, and wring from them the last sixpence which organized force can screw out of abject weakness.

"And this is the gigantic, permanent, systematic wickedness which you cover with the name of morality, justice, and honour. To you the money interests of Englishmen, or rather of a few rich Englishmen, are paramount. For the sake of this, you and they fight as the West India slaveholders fought for the accursed system of slavery, vilifying all who condemned it, and filling the air with outcries about the crimes and indolence of the negro. And now again they are filling the air with outcries about the crimes and follies of Irish tenants. One smiles at their crocodile tears over the wrongs of poor boycotted peasants; peasants whom they and their forefathers unto

the third and the fourth generation—nay, unto the tenth and the twentieth generation—have persecuted, starved, and plundered. It is a bitter mockery to hear them dilate upon the atrocity of this and that outrage, when the history of the English in Ireland is one weary story of organized outrage. For every life that has been cruelly taken by a few brutalised peasants in their despair, the English land laws, and the system of extortion they maintain, have as cruelly taken a thousand lives. To us it is as cruel in the name of law to thrust dying men and helpless women and children out of their homes on to the frozen hillside, as it is to shoot a rival in the legs. Our eyes are fixed, not on the scattered instances of wild revenge which you parade as if you really cared for them, and mouth over with professional iteration, but on the three million souls who are lost to their country, on the life-long misery of at least a million souls who remain—misery which you and your friends are now bent on making permanent. Our eyes are strained to watch the tens of thousands of wanton, savage, cowardly evictions, the thousands of brave men whom you persist in treating as felons, and the Russian terrorism which you have permanently substituted for the common law of a kingdom.

"The ascendancy party will die hard, as the West Indian slaveholders' interest died, fighting to the last. They are a fighting order, sprung from fight, nursed in fight for centuries, with every gift and every vice of a dominant class. Trained to regard themselves as the born superiors of the subject class, in race, in religion, in habits, in wealth, in privilege, they are ready to plunge the three kingdoms into confusion for the sake of the old domination. The descendants of conquerors, grantees, adventures, and soldiers of fortune, they combine the rapacity of a conquering race with the arrogance of an aristocratic order. For centuries they have thrust themselves into the family connections and money interests of powerful classes of Englishmen. They are keen, able, and unscrupulous, ready at any moment to shoot down savages in any corner of the Empire, or to work martial law in their dear native country. At the first signal of danger to their privileges, they storm society, the Press, the Church, and Parliament, filling the minds of the official classes and the uneasy ear of wealth with dreadful visions of ruin and chaos.

"We know these shrieks, protestations, and prophecies to be what were those of West Indian slave-holders—a sordid affair of money. All this raving about Empire, and the Sun of England, and the Union Jack, means merely that an order of rich men are trembling to think the days of exhortion are all but ended. Law and Order are very fine words; but they sound strangely in the mouths of men who have organized a system of martial law in order to maintain a system of extortion. All this new-born pity for the poor Irish victim of the League comes ill from those to fill whose pockets tens of thousands of victims have been slowly wrung to their end. Pity first the families from whose heads the roof they built themselves has been torn to glut a millionaire's self-will. Feel something for the stainless and courageous men who were wasting their youth in your cells and suffering your unworthy insults. These are the victims, unnumbered, continual, historic, to whose suffering you are blind and deaf, though in comparison with theirs the sufferings of men, whom you choose to make a stage-show, are but a drop in an ocean of misery.

"This whole contest between us is not really a political question, nor even a social question, in essence it is a question of money. For centuries rich men in England have found in Ireland an unlimited field where the strong might wring wealth out of the weak. There for centuries they have built up a scheme of speculation which they please to call law, maintained by a system of terrorism which they nicknamed Government, and consecrated by a system of religious injustice which they pretend to be a Church. But the end of it all was pecuniary, not political. Boycotting, the Plan of Campaign, and the whole of the resources of the weaker class are precisely what we have known in our own industrial struggles. As in them, the stress of the conflict has often resulted in melancholy acts of outrage and crime. As in them, boycotting, the Plan-