

That is Sir Redvers Buller's statement, although he says there are cases in which the League has itself intimidated and coerced.

"Nobody did anything for the tenants till the League, and when the landlords could not let their farms, then they were forced to consider the question of reduction."

Organisation amongst the people in a case in which the rents were intolerably high prevented the landlord from being able profitably to evict, because he could not let again, and obliged him to reduce; and when you remember that up to the latest period at which we have returns the cumbersome machinery of the courts established under the recent Act had actually lowered the rents of no less than 187,000 distinct tenancies in Ireland, which must represent at least 1,000,000 souls, apart altogether from voluntary reductions, who can doubt for an instant that that substratum, that moving cause, to which Sir Redvers Buller alludes, an intolerably high rent, subsisted? I do not mean to say that all the land of Ireland is let too high—not at all. It would be grossly unjust to say that there are not in Ireland liberal, just, devoted landlords. I do not mean to say that there does not exist in many cases a relation between landlord and tenant which is enviable and admirable. But you are dealing with the general condition of the whole people; and if there be those difficulties with the great bulk, it is obvious that there is the greater justification for such methods being adopted, though out of the course of the ordinary law, which seem necessary to protect those who have no other protection. Defenceless each poor cottier is by himself in his unorganised action, and the disorders and injustices which have grown out of this effort are not to be a reason for summary condemnations of that system which Sir Redvers Buller tells us the Irish people think has been their salvation. An hon. gentleman said: Oh! we want to have the law obeyed; the law is dissolved; let us procure this obedience to the law, and then let it be amended. I say: No, in the condition of Ireland it is a fatal mistake to propose to enter upon a period of coercion in the hope to reduce the people to absolute submission, and then propound remedial measures. This is not a new mistake, it is the mistake that has been made long ago, and very often. Everybody remembers, I suppose, about the time that Catholic Emancipation was in agitation, the Duke of Wellington wrote, I forget whether to the Chief Secretary or the Viceroy, some suggestion which unhappily for the Duke became public—to the effect that if it could only be agreed between all the world, the people of Ireland included, that the question should be left in oblivion for a generation or a long series of years, a solution might be arrived at. You will never reach a solution by saying we must banish all open signs of discontent and then amend the law. Let us give the rights that ought to be given, and then seek that obedience, that cheerful obedience, which should be expected, and which will be rendered to a just law by a people holding their just rights. After this discussion, in which the hon. gentlemen criticised our proposed action on the ground that this was not a Crimes Act, on the ground that the circumstances justified a Crimes Act, and on the ground that it was a local matter, they proceeded to argue that we do not know enough about the subject to act. There were some gentlemen who brought forward this argument who did seem to exemplify in their own utterances the proof of it. But I do not think we are so ignorant of the general principles and provisions of the Coercion Act or the condition of Ireland, as to disable us from offering some judgment, and perhaps a calmer judgment than those engaged in the heat of this conflict, upon that question. The hon. gentleman says we have not the evidence; but we have the evidence which the Chief Secretary gave and the explanations of that evidence. On that evidence the English House of Commons was asked to act, and we have that evidence here as well.

Mr. BLAKE.

I think that, with the exception of those who have raised this point, we do know enough to act. Now, it is suggested that there are those who are interested in this question who are violent enemies of the Empire, and the attempt was made, which I was sorry to hear made, to prejudice a candid and fair discussion of this question by introducing that element. I deplore that there are to-day violent enemies in the Empire of the Irish race. I deeply regret it. It is, I think, one of the signs and marks of humiliation of the British Empire that such should be; but the circumstance that men, owing to events which have transpired for so many years in Ireland, have left her shores, not with feelings of amity or concord, but with feelings of despair and hate—the circumstance that those feelings of despair and hate have received still further accentuation and development, and that even to-day when a large portion of the English people, alive at last to the cause of justice and generosity, is deeply engaged in the effort to do that long-delayed justice, rancor and hate have not ceased to glow in those bosoms—that circumstance, regrettable as it is, must not be suffered to confound in one common mass the whole Irish population abroad and at home, and to mark them with the condemnation which we give to these persistent haters. We must recognise the fact, and hope that even they who have resorted to methods which we abhor, and transactions which we condemn, with every breath of our voices, every pulse of our hearts, and every nerve of our intellects—we must hope that even they will be subdued to a better and clearer sense of public affairs by the persistent efforts now being made to do justice to Ireland. But, surely, the course of justice is not to be delayed, the cause of generosity is not to be impeded because of these unhappy circumstances which have their origin and cause in the past misgovernment of Ireland. Well, if the hon. gentlemen want to increase the area of disaffection and hostility, if they want that these sentiments should grow and be fostered, if they desire that they should assume still larger proportions, let them, so far as their voices have strength, speak the sentiments of the Canadian people, hostile to justice to Ireland, hostile to generosity to Ireland. Let them speak the sentiments of the Canadian people in favor of coercive laws and against remedial laws, let them speak the sentiments of a harsh judgment against the people now dwelling in Ireland, and I can tell them they will very rapidly create an unhappy crop of discontent and disaffection. Other words and other sentiments than these are those we must utter, if we would help and heal instead of increasing the wound or aggravating the difficulty. Then the hon. gentleman brought up the letter attributed to Mr. Parnell, and he declared that the circumstance of that letter being produced was the reason why we ought not to act just now. I have no hesitation in saying that from the moment I read that letter, as well from the general circumstances as from the intrinsic evidence, and from all I know and have learned on the subject, I was convinced that Mr. Parnell never wrote that letter. I do not propose to justify or declare free from absolute suspicion all the course that Mr. Parnell and his friends may, in past times, have taken; but I have ever believed, and I have some opportunities of forming a judgment, derived from sources very remote from Mr. Parnell himself, but still highly authoritative, I have believed for years that there was no man under the control of the British Throne who felt so deep a wound as Mr. Parnell did upon the occasion of the massacre of those two gentlemen in Phoenix Park. It is perfectly obvious that just at that moment there was a crisis in the sentiment of England as to Irish affairs, destined, as far as we could see, to be propitious; it is obvious that the aims and objects of which Mr. Parnell had been tending were apparently approaching some measure of consummation, and who, with the slightest grain of common sense, could doubt that the effect of that dreadful and horrid murder, that awful tragedy, would be to blight all those fair prospects