

grievances concerns the tenant class, who have demanded, for so many years, that they should be repaid for the improvements made on the lands held by them, at the expiry of their leases. This point, too, must, sooner or later, be conceded to the applicants, and should rule in every other country as well as in Ireland. It is, in fact, but the extension to tenants of a principle of the civil law in the case of proprietors.

By that law, if a man is compelled to surrender to another a property which he has held by a bad title, but of which he became possessed in good faith, he is entitled to be reimbursed by his evictor to the extent that he has added to the value of the property in question. This last condition sufficiently meets the objection to the measure urged by the Irish landlords, namely, the danger of their being forced to pay for the supposed improvements of the tenant, which might be made by him without their consent, and perhaps without benefit to them, for if the lands or tenements did not acquire an increased value by the outlay, the loss must fall on him who expended his money and labour to no useful purpose. If the tenant of a farm, for instance, laid out one thousand pounds upon it, in what he called improvements, and it was decided that the actual value of these to the property did not exceed one hundred pounds, he would receive the latter sum, and no more. This would be just to both parties, and we trust that the day is not distant when it shall be universally adopted, not only in Ireland, but everywhere. We have strong misgivings as to the practicability of Mr. Bright's third proposal for the cure of Irish discontent. The absence of many great land owners from the country may be an evil, but it is one, we fear, for which legislation can scarcely provide a remedy. The subject, however, demands more time and space for its consideration than is now at our disposal.

That the member for Birmingham has undertaken a great and good work in his endeavours to reconcile Ireland with the rest of the kingdom, few but bigots will deny; and we heartily pray that his efforts will meet with the success that they so richly deserve. A real union of the two peoples would be rendering both a service such as few men, living or dead, have conferred on the empire.

NEW SERIAL TALE.

We shall in our next issue commence the publication of a new serial tale by Miss Bradton, entitled "Birds of Prey." Our readers are familiar with this lady's wide-spread popularity as a writer of fiction; and we believe we shall, in reproducing her last work as rapidly as it appears, be adding a new feature of great interest to the pages of this journal.

BROUGHT TO LIGHT.

BY THOMAS SPEIGHT.

Continued from page 150.

CHAPTER XXXI.—LADY SPENCELAUGH'S APPEAL.

"Her Ladyship's compliments, and she will be glad to see you in her dressing-room after breakfast, if you will kindly go as far."

Thus said one of the Belair Abigail's to Miss Spencelaugh, the morning after Frederica's visit to Grellier's almshouses. More strongly convinced than ever that John English's narrative was based upon truth, and that for her there was now no going back from the cause she had taken in hand, Frederica had pondered through a sleepless night, questioning herself as to what her next step ought to be. She had at last decided to send Lady Spencelaugh a copy of John's Statement, together with a supplement embodying the further information given by Jane Garrod, and the result of Frederica's own visit to the almshouses; with a request that her Ladyship would throw some light upon that portion of the narrative which seemed to inculcate her in some mysterious way, and to

mix up her name in a nefarious transaction, of the workings of which she might, after all, be in utter ignorance. In any case, Frederica decided that she would take no unfair advantage of Lady Spencelaugh, every particular of the case as known to herself should be made known to her Ladyship also. But this request for a personal interview obanged Frederica's decision. "I will see her, and tell her everything," she said to herself. "A few simple words of explanation from her may show how entirely innocent she is of any complicity in this dark plot. I pray Heaven that it may prove so!"

"My dear Frederica, this is really very kind of you," said Lady Spencelaugh with a languid smile, as she extended the tips of her fingers to Miss Spencelaugh. "My nerves are very irritable this weather, and I did not feel equal to the task of looking you up in your own rooms. You have breakfasted of course?—Yes. How I wish that I possessed your energetic habits, and talent for early rising. It is a talent, dear, depend upon it, that of getting up early these dark, cold mornings. But sit down, pray. Not so far off. That is better. I want to have a cozy chat with you this morning. And yet how to begin?—Ah, I see your eyes are taking in the pattern of that embroidery.—Quite new, I assure you. Clotilde did it. She is certainly clever with her needle; but in some things, a pig—yes, *cara mia*, an absolute pig. But her accent is good: I am ready to admit that: good, that is to say, for a person in her position."

Although the day was still young, Lady Spencelaugh had been carefully made up, and looked very fresh and charming in her demitoelet, as she dawdled with her dry toast and chocolate. Frederica wondered in her own mind what her aunt's long preface would lead to: generally speaking, her Ladyship was rigidly polite, and as sparing of words as the occasion would admit of in her intercourse with Miss Spencelaugh.

"You know, dear, I am much older than you," resumed her Ladyship, a little diffidently, "and you must allow me for once to use a matronly privilege, and give you a little wholesome advice."

"Go on, please," said Frederica with a haughty little bend of the head.

"I have lately been informed—how, it matters not," continued her Ladyship, "that for a short time past you have been mixing yourself up in the affairs of a certain Mr. English, a wandering photographer, whom Sir Philip was so injudicious as to ask here to dinner once or twice. I do not seek to know your reasons for doing this, my dear child, that you had some reasons, I will at once assume, but however strong they may have seemed to you, I have every reason to believe that you have been imposed on; and in any case, for you to go roaming about the country, looking after this young man's affairs, is, to say the least of it, both unlady-like and ridiculous. Excuse me, dear, if in the excitement of the moment I use strong language, but really the case seems to me one which demands a strong remedy. The health of Sir Philip, as you are aware, is too precarious for him to be troubled with such details; and this being the case, I consider myself as being in some measure his delegate, and assume an authority in speaking to you which on any other occasion I should be sorry to exercise."

"Pray, make no excuse on that score," said Frederica coldly. "But before deciding that I have been either unladylike or ridiculous, would it not be well to inquire more particularly into the nature of the business which has made me appear either one or the other in your Ladyship's eyes?"

"Certainly not," said Lady Spencelaugh hastily. "I have no wish to know more of this wretched matter than I know already."

"But I think it highly necessary that your Ladyship should at least know as much of the case as I do. When you sent for me, I was about to copy out a certain Statement which is in my possession, and send the copy to you, together with the outline of certain other acts with which I have become acquainted."

"I am very glad you did no such thing," said her Ladyship warmly.

"Let me, at least, fetch the Statement, and read it to you."

"Certainly not. I should consider myself degraded by listening to such a farrago of nonsense."

"Your Ladyship cannot know how serious are the interests involved, or you would not speak thus."

"I know quite sufficient already, and I have set my face against knowing more. I know that this man—this John English, as he calls himself—has put forward some preposterous claim by which he seeks to make people believe that he is a great man who has been defrauded out of his rights. I know further, and from reliable sources, that he is a common swindler and impostor; and that this is neither the first nor the second occasion that he has striven to make himself out as a scion of some family of position; and at the present time, as you yourself are no doubt aware, he is not to be found—no one knows whether he has gone. Is it not so?"

"It is," said Frederica a little shaken.

"But you don't know the reason of his sudden disappearance," went on her Ladyship. "Well, I happen to be in a position to enlighten you. He fled to avoid being arrested and brought to account for his previous impostures. I think he is too wary ever to show his face in this part of the country again; but should he do so, and I become aware of it, I shall certainly have him apprehended as a notorious swindler."

Frederica was staggered. The audacity of Lady Spencelaugh verged on the sublime, but her Ladyship's tone, bold as it was, was wanting in sincerity, and carried no conviction to her listener's heart. "If you would but allow me to tell you all that I know of this matter!" said Frederica in a voice of genuine entreaty.

"Certainly not, Frederica; and I am astonished, after what I have said to you, that you should still persist in such a foolish request. For the heiress of Belair to have her name mixed up in any way with that of this impostor, is a degradation to the family, and one which, were it to reach the ears of Sir Philip, might well, in his delicate state of health, prove fatal to him. Take my advice, my dear child, and have nothing further to do with this man or his affairs. He is trying to compromise your name by trading on your good-nature."

Frederica wrung her hands. "Heaven help me!" she exclaimed. "I know not what to do."

"Do? Why, take my advice, of course," said Lady Spencelaugh, "and don't allow yourself to appear any further in this wretched business."

Frederica sat in painful silence for a few moments, watched eagerly by Lady Spencelaugh. "No," she said at length as she rose from her chair, while a deep flush overspread her face—"No, I cannot think that Mr. English is an impostor. I believe him to be as true and loyal a gentleman as ever breathed. Mistaken he may be, but not intentionally so, I am sure. That he will some day come back, if alive, I fully believe. Meanwhile, I will comply with your Ladyship's wishes in one respect; I will take no further steps in this matter personally, but will put it at once into the hands of Mr. Penning, my lawyer, and leave him to deal with it in whatever way he may think best."

With a little tremulous cry, Lady Spencelaugh started forward from her easy, lounging posture. "Frederica Spencelaugh, you will do no such thing!" she exclaimed. "Do you want to kill your uncle, rash girl! and such a scandal would kill him!"

"It is too late now for me to go back," said Frederica sadly. "The task was not of my seeking; but now that it has been given me to do, I dare not shrink from it till I arrive at the truth. Oh, dear Lady Spencelaugh, pray believe me when I say!"

She stopped suddenly, affrighted at the strange look on the face of the woman before her. Her Ladyship's mask was pushed aside for a moment, and the lurking fiend behind peeped out in all his native hideousness.

"Am I, then, to understand that it is your