

# The Examiner.

"THIS IS TRUE LIBERTY, WHEN FREEBORN MEN—HAVING TO ADVISE THE PUBLIC, MAY SPEAK FREE."—EURIPIDES.

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## SPIRIT OF THE ENGLISH PRESS.

[From the London Tablet.]

### THE COERCION BILL.

On Monday night Sir George Grey, in a speech stuffed full of horrors, introduced a Coercion Bill for Ireland, which had the rare good fortune of not being vigorously opposed. It was accepted with resignation by the O'Connells; supported by Mr. Callaghan; denounced by Feargus O'Connor and Mr. Fagan; welcomed by Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Disraeli; and bewailed for its intolerable mildness by Lords Jocelyn and Barnard. The truth is, that some measure of coercion is absolutely necessary, and is felt to be so by all reasonable men. Some measure either of more stringent administrative coercion under the existing law, if that be possible, or of new legislative severity, if the existing law is unequal to the occasion. Something must be done to repress crime. Those who object to the law now proposed, must show either that the Government possesses (and has not hitherto used) sufficient power to check crime; or that the powers which they now claim are not suited to the emergency. To leave matters as they now stand is absolutely impossible.

Power to proclaim any district, even smaller than a barony or half-barony:

Power to increase the constabulary quartered on a proclaimed district within certain limits; to charge the same on the district instead of on the county; and to levy from the district the estimated charge of the increased constabulary for three months in advance:

In a proclaimed district no person to have or carry, otherwise than in his house, any kind of arms, under the penalty of imprisonment, with or without hard labour for not more than two years:

The exception to these provisions are—Justices, Soldiers, Sailors, Coast-Guard-men, Revenue Officers, Police, constabulary, Special Constables, persons licensed to kill game, and persons specially allowed to carry arms under the authority of deputies nominated by the Lord-Lieutenant, and holding high offices in the Constabulary:

All persons unlawfully carrying arms out-of-doors to be apprehended; all who are suspected of so doing to be searched, and their arms, if any, forfeited:

Further power to the Lord-Lieutenant, by virtue of a supplementary proclamation, to compel all persons not included in the above exceptions, to give up their arms; and power to the Lord-Lieutenant, after second proclamation, to order a search for arms during the day-time, and to compel their surrender:

The Hue and Cry to be put vigorously in force—if possible—for the detection of offenders:

The Act to continue in force till the 1st December, 1849, and till the end of the next session of Parliament:

Such are the provisions of the new law; not severe or stringent, when considered as precautions against wholesale assassination, but thoroughly disgraceful if brought forward without an effectual attempt to grapple with the difficulties of the Tenant Law. If considered as an isolated measure, it is undeniably open to objections of the most opposite kind. It is at once too severe and too lenient; inasmuch as mere severity cannot succeed in the long run; and if severity alone is to be tried, it is absurd to try it in so mild and ineffectual a shape. The worst feature of the case, therefore, is by no means the character of this bill, but the sad evidence of irresolution on the part of the Government as to grappling with the difficulties of the Tenant Law.

The guilt of the murderer is most frightful; but taking class for class, there is no doubt that the moral condition of the tenant, even in the disturbed counties, is perfect innocence compared with that of the landlords. Yet, in punishing the incidental guilt of the tenants, scarcely a hint is given of the original and provocative guilt of the landlord, and nothing like a promise of an intention to

put an effectual check by law on their enormous and overwhelming crimes.

When we see how slowly and with what great difficulty the Government is driven to any measure for the protection of the miserable peasant, one is almost tempted to speculate on the moral fitness of murder in the body politic. For more than a quarter of a century this Pharisical Government, which affects such horror at crime, and which really does experience "sickening disgust" when rich men or pauper landlords are murdered, has allowed the murder of the poor to proceed, wholesale, by force of laws enacted by itself. Not merely have they not stopped these diabolical massacres of the poor—they have not even attempted to do so. Year after year, decade after decade, they have seen thousands and millions of lives slowly extinguished in agony indescribable; have known themselves to be the makers of the legal weapons by which these tenant assassinations have been perpetrated. This they have witnessed, but not one hand or foot have they stirred during all that period to save the lives of the poor, and to stop these dreadful crimes. To all this guilt they—the Parliament, the Ministers, the Opposition—have been accessory. They have supplied the means; they have continued the means; they have refused all solicitations to provide a remedy.

At length a remedy provides itself. Murder, under a more frank and honest shape, makes its appearance. It is not now thousands and millions made to waste and pine away by hunger; not now death spread over a series of weeks, or months, or years; not now the plump and ruddy cheek of youth or infancy becoming lean and hollow, and pale; not now the blood slowly consumed within the frame, and the means of replenishing the veins, empty of life, sternly and with devilish inhumanity refused. No: death now makes its appearance in a sharper form; reaches the heart by a sudden stab; drains the arteries by a shorter process; and spares the victim the hideous spasms and protracted convulsions that characterised the Tower of Famine. By this more merciful end tens and hundreds perish, where before, thousands and millions were despatched by the active crimes of landlords and the permissive iniquity of legislators; and then, at last, when the evil reaches their own class; when it comes in a shape that threatens them; when people in good coats begin to feel insecure; when the snap of the flint or percussion cap is heard throughout Europe, and wakes up a shameful echo over the whole civilised world—then forsooth our statesmen and politicians discover that it will be possible for them, at some distant day, to do something, which shall not exactly redress the evil, but will tend to put the law on a footing which, without absolutely displeasing the rich, will rub off from it a small portion of the Devil's mark.

Oh, it is horrible to reflect on the cold-blooded indifference with which these men, high in station and influence, regard the murders of the poor; their utter unwillingness to make party sacrifices in order to put an end to this evil. If a Minister could be found with the heart and courage of a man, able to say to himself first and to the world afterwards—"I will not be responsible to God and to my fellow-men for the continuance of this giant iniquity. I will peril my whole official career on the suppression of tenant-murder. This evil shall be made to cease, or I will not administer, blood-stained, the affairs of this empire"—If a Minister could be found bold enough to use such language, and to adopt this course, he might command whatever rational measures he pleased from the Parliament and the country. But, alas! there are few such men, and no such Ministers.

Meantime it is an easier task to abuse the only true friends of the poor—the Catholic Priests; and we hear a great deal about those denunciations from the altar, which are necessary and wholesome, because there are no effective denunciations from the right-hand of the Speaker's chair. What a quantity of cant is talked about

these priestly denunciations! The Priest spoke of the landlord as a bad landlord, and the man was shot—therefore the Priest's denunciation was the effective cause of the murder.

What stuff is this! The landlord's inhumanity was in every mouth of the parish before the priest spoke of it. All people in a certain class execrated him. If he had looked through the chink of many a mud hut, or in the shelter of many a ditch, he might have seen his own handiwork, and the curses that it brought him.

"A baby beat its dying mother;  
He had starved the one and was starving the other."

When he rode over his ill-tilled acres, he passed amongst gaunt men, and fleshless women, and famished children. Their tongues moved not as he passed, it may be, but their breaking hearts prayed to God against him—the maker of Orphans, and Widows, and Desolate and Dead. At Mass time some stay away, and others throng around the altar rails. The Priest speaks to them—of what? Of their sins and offence; of the theft in such a field; the gambling in one cottage; the drunkenness in another; the absence from Mass; and such neglect of duties as happens to be most rife. He speaks to them also of their sufferings; for he is a true pastor and shepherd; not a hireling whose own the sheep are not, but the father and keeper of his flock. He speaks to them of their sufferings, laments their hard fate, shows his sympathy with their woes and his indignation at their oppressor, but turns their thoughts to a better world, and exhorts them to resignation and to peace.

The same day the oppressor is shot—and by whom? By anybody in the chapel, or who heard the sermon? By one of the flock of the reverend denouncer? No: but, as in the case of Major Mahon, about whose denunciation we have heard so much, "by two strangers," fetched from some distant parish in pursuance of a conspiracy hatched and ripe for completion long before the Priest raised his voice.

If the police reports are true, it is physically impossible that the Priest's "denunciation,"—as it is called, to make a good thing odious by giving it an evil name—can have had anything to do with the murder. Major Mahon, of course, was the best of landlords—all murdered landlords are; living they are the pests of society, dead they have the odour of saints. This landlord, accordingly, was a pattern to his class. Unfortunately his conduct to his tenants had been such that it had created "an extensive and deep-laid conspiracy against this gentleman's life." Is it pretended that the Priest's utterance of his indignation produced suddenly this conspiracy—extensive, deep-laid, and therefore of old standing? We think few people can be brazen enough to pretend so much. Did it bring the two "strangers" from a distance to execute the deed? Of course this is impossible; and it is hard to believe that any one who has taken pains to inform himself on the subject, can believe other than that this cry against the Priests is got up by that class, who having silenced in their hearts the fear of God, and being for a time a good deal troubled with the fear of man, holding as they do the local press in bondage, and finding no one but the Priest who dares to wag a tongue against their atrocities—wish to clap fetters on that tongue also, and to stifle the only voice that is now raised against the legal murders they are in the habit of committing.

[From the European Times.]

### FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

In Italy tranquility is once more restored; and it is generally understood that the question of the occupation of Ferrara has been finally settled by the withdrawal of the Austrians from the town. In Sicily the insurrection seems quelled for the present, but much dissatisfaction against the Neapolitan Government still prevails.

The speech of the King of the French at the opening of the Chambers will be found in another column. It